Students get to hold dual posts

Nod for those studying in varsity to take up positions in politics and campus

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KUALA LUMPUR: The Government has agreed to strike off a clause under the Universities and University Colleges Act Amendment Bill that prohibits university students from holding posts in political parties and on campus.

Deputy Higher Education Minister Datuk Saifuddin Abdullah said he was informed that it was a Cabinet decision made last Friday.

This decision came just days after the Backbenchers Club through Rembau MP Khairy Jamaluddin had announced that they would be challenging the clause under the Bill and tabling a supplementary amendment.

"This means that when it is tabled for reading for the second time, it won't be there," said Saifuddin, adding that the Bill was expected to be debated today.

He also said the clause was a "late entry" and came as a shock to the Higher Education Ministry.

"It was never brought up in many of the consultative sessions held months before -- not in the ones I chaired nor those chaired by (International Islamic University of Malaysia deputy rector in charge of student affairs) Prof Dr Nik Ahmad Kamal Nik Mahmod," he said in an interview.

"My understanding is that it was a late entry and the sub-section is actually very difficult to defend. I am happy that the Backbenchers Club has submitted the supplementary amendment," he said.

Saifuddin also applauded the Government's decision, calling it a "milestone".

"If we compare it to the Cabinet's decision back in 2009 when we agreed to amend Section 15 of the UUCA, that may seem like a very small step.

"And now we have come quite far. It is quite refreshing to have the Cabinet finally see it that way," he said, adding that students should have been allowed to take part in politics.

"This amendment, together with the abolishment of the Internal Security Act, is part and parcel of the political transformation that we are in dire need of," he said.