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STUDENT DISCIPLINARY PROCEEDINGS HALTED

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WITH IMMEDIATE EFFECT

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Move is in line with PM's call for greater freedom at varsities ahead of Auku repeal, says ministry

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THE Higher Education Ministry has ordered an immediate halt to disciplinary proceedings against students over public criticism, freedom of expression and peaceful assembly at public universities.

The ministry said the move followed Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim's call for immediate steps to expand students' freedom of expression and right to form associations, ahead of the repeal of the Universities and University Colleges Act 1971 (Auku).

In a statement yesterday, the ministry said it had examined measures that could be implemented under the existing legal framework to give effect to the prime minister's directive.

It added that several provisions under Auku and the Student Disciplinary Rules that restricted students' freedom of expression and association had been identified for exemption from application as an immediate measure.

These included freedom in the management of student associations and clubs, freedom in managing student activities, as well as freedom of expression, assembly, use of communication platforms and the distribution and publication of documents.

"The Higher Education Ministry wishes to announce that all disciplinary proceedings related to freedom of expression, statements of views, public criticism and peaceful assembly at all public universities shall be stopped with immediate effect."

The ministry added that such freedoms had to be exercised alongside responsibility and respect for the rule of law.

It said acts involving violence, vandalism, property damage, criminal offences, academic misconduct or legitimate disciplinary violations would remain subject to laws and regulations.

It said similar reviews would be



The Higher Education Ministry says several provisions under the Universities and University Colleges Act 1971 and the Student Disciplinary Rules that restrict students' freedom of expression and association have been identified for exemption from application. IMAGE GENERATED BY AI FOR ILLUSTRATIVE PURPOSES

carried out for International Islamic University Malaysia and Universiti Teknologi Mara, which were not governed by Auku.

The review would examine provisions concerning students at both institutions to ensure they were aligned with the reforms being introduced.

The ministry said it was committed to developing an open and inclusive higher education governance system with the participation of all stakeholders.

Earlier this month, Anwar announced that the government would move to abolish Auku.

Over the years, students who organised or took part in peaceful assemblies at public universities were subjected to disciplinary proceedings. This led to calls for Auku's repeal.

On July 2, Sekretariat Mansuh Auku, Suara Siswa Universiti Malaya and the Universiti Malaya Association of New Youth called on Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) to drop disciplinary proceedings against student activists Fidaa' Ahmad Fahmi and Abdul Qayyum Ilham Zulizrul.

The two took part in a May 19 protest in solidarity with Kampung Asaon residents whose homes were demolished.

They were also reportedly involved in organising Gempur Rasuah Sabah 3.0, an anti-corruption rally scheduled for July 4 and 5.

On June 24 last year, UMS Vice-Chancellor Professor Datuk Dr Kasim Mansor warned that 13 students who participated in the Gempur Rasuah Sabah 2.0 rally

could face disciplinary action under Auku, including suspension or expulsion.

Of the 13, two were involved in burning a caricature of the prime minister, an act the university strongly condemned.

Kasim had said a disciplinary committee comprising appointed academics would be formed to investigate the matter and determine the appropriate action under Auku.

In Bukit Mertajam later, Anwar said repealing Auku would give students greater freedom to express their views, including on politics, while preparing them to become principled leaders.

He said students, particularly those aged 18 and above who were eligible to vote, should be encouraged to engage in discussions and develop critical thinking skills rather than be constrained by excessive restrictions.

He said students might not always be right in their opinions, but should be given space to debate and learn through discussion.

"They can discuss. Will they always give the right views? No. Some may be wrong. But we discuss, we educate them with love. These are our children."

He said repealing Auku was aimed at avoiding excessive control over students while encouraging creativity, independent thought and critical assessment.

He said the government removed restrictions because it wanted students to develop the confidence to speak freely and form their own views.



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SUMMARIES

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