

Act to be amended promptly

Amendment needed to be studied as some provisions restrict creativity among students



LAUNCHED: Khaled (second right) launching the sports meet witnessed by (from left) Dato Prof Dr Radin Umar Radin Sohadi, Unimas deputy chancellor Prof Dr Khairuddin Ab Hamid and Unimas board of directors chairman Tan Sri Datuk Amar Bujang Mohd Nor. — Photo by Johnathan Bullet

KOTA SAMARAHAN: Amendments to the Universities and University Colleges Act (UUCA) 1971 should be carried out promptly to prevent groups politicising the matter, Higher Education Minister Datuk Seri Mohamed Khaled Nordin said.

He said the ministry had finalised the draft of the amendments and sent it to the Attorney-General's Chamber for scrutiny before it could be sent to the cabinet.

Khaled said this at a media conference after opening an inter-university staff sports meet at Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (Unimas) here on Monday.

A total of 12 teams, comprising 2,900 participants from public universities in the country and the Higher Education Ministry are taking part in the event.

The event began on June 14 and will end on June 22.

On when the revised pledge would

come into effect, Khaled said his ministry had yet to receive a reply from the AG.

"I just want it to be very fast. We have not heard from him concerning whatever amendments or comments. We must hear from him before we can submit the bill to the cabinet," he said.

When appointed to the ministry in March, Mohamed Khalid had said the UUCA needed to be studied as some of the provisions were found to be restricting creativity among students and campus management in the strive for global excellence.

The pledge has been a contentious issue for a long time now. Discontent has been brewing and there were calls from opposition politicians and a growing number of academics to abolish it.

The pledge forces students to disengage from discussions which are deemed culturally and religiously sensitive.

It also prevents university students from participating in politics, which many believe is part and parcel of university life.

Furthermore, students are apparently barred from speaking to the media.

In recent years, a number of petitions containing signatures from prominent academics have been sent to the government.

While their calls have been consistent over the years, it was prior to and after the recent March 8 polls that brought about renewed interests.

When asked about the government's austerity drive, Khaled said: "We have informed all universities to cut costs so that we all can support the initiative."

He said the ministry would let the universities themselves decide how to reduce their spending.

"How they do it is left to them," he said without giving any specifics.