

Varsities to reschedule to accommodate Deepavali
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The government through the Higher Education Ministry will restructure the semester schedule of public universities from this year so that Indian students can go home to celebrate Deepavali.

Announcing the decision when launching the 1Malaysia Indian Student Movement (1MISM) at Universiti Malaya here today, Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak said the adjustment would be made to the universities' curriculum and schedule so that Indian students, just like Malay and Chinese students, would be able to celebrate their festival.

"I would like to announce that from now, the government through the Ministry of Higher Education, will ensure that Indian students can go back to celebrate Deepavali," he said followed by a loud applause by more than 3,000 students who attended the event.

"I want to be able to do something for the Indian community and that's why I'm here this evening, so that I can address your needs, your aspirations and your concerns and overcome some of the long outstanding problems faced by Indian students, particularly those attending our IPTA and universities.

"So I hope with this announcement the outstanding problem will be a distant memory and will not recur in the future," he said.

The event was also attended by Higher Education Minister Mohamed Khaled Nordin, MIC president G Palanivel, Human Resources Minister Dr S Subramaniam and Federal Territories and Urban Well-being Minister Raja Nong Chik Raja Zainal Abidin.

Najib also announced that the Yayasan 1Malaysia Development Bhd (1MDB) scholarships would be awarded to Indian graduates who obtained first class honours to further their studies at Masters and PhD level.

"They must achieve first class honours and come from lower income families. I will leave it to 1MISM to make the suggestion to my office and we can see how much and how many scholarships we can provide to very deserving students," he said.

In addressing the vegetarian community, prime minister said that the Ministry of Higher Education would ensure that appropriate vegetarian food will be made available at the universities in the future.

By doing so, he said, it would not only cater for the Indian students but also for Muslim students since they too like to eat chapatti and dhal curry.

"I don't think it is very difficult to prepare vegetarian food at universities," he added.

Najib also announced that the public universities would be providing buses to transport Indian students to temples on Friday evenings.

On 1MISM, Najib in welcoming its establishment hoped it could work closely with the government for a better nation.

"I look forward to working with you, I thank you for your willingness to work with the government and I believe we can establish a very productive and fruitful long term relationship," he said.

Since its inception three months ago, 1MISM has attracted more than 7,000 students from public, private universities and polytechnics.

- Bernama

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