

## **JPA scholar seeks help from Najib to study abroad**

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Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak was asked to reopen the Ivy League and Setara scholarship programme to assist Public Service Department (JPA) scholars, whose bursaries were [abolished](#) early this year during the recalibration of Budget 2016.

Justine Jason Barnabas, 20, claimed he had presented a counter-proposal during a 10-minute session with Najib at the Prime Minister's Office on June 2.

He had also penned a letter, dated June 1, to the prime minister.

In the letter, Justine appealed to Najib to consider reopening the Ivy League and Setara scholarship programme, and sponsor 30 students to study in the world's 10 best universities.

The JPA scholarship required recipients to serve in the public sector for four to six years after graduation. However, the government cancelled the programme in 2012.

Justine claimed that the programme was to be gradually reopened following the students' appeal.

He said the government would have to spend RM15 million for 15 scholarships.

In a conference held by PKR vice-president Nurul Izzah Anwar (*photo*), Justine claimed that he made the appeal on behalf of 150 scholars, who were unwilling to give up their chance to study abroad.

"When he (Najib) read the proposal, he told me that there were things that they had to consider.

"He said he could not make the decision right away, he had to refer to his advisers," Justine said.

The premier and his aides have yet to get back to the group, he said.

In January, Najib announced that JPA would only provide 744 bursaries for students to study locally.

Justine, an A-Levels graduate from Taylor's College, was offered a place in the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), as well as at King's College, London.

Also present at the press conference was 20-year-old Nick Ung, who was offered political science at UCLA.

They added that the intakes of students at universities abroad, start as early as July.

Nurul said the counter-proposal was a possible compromise between the government and scholarship recipients.

"The government had cited financial difficulties for the slash in the budget for scholarships. The cuts saved the government RM240 million," she said.

"The government reallocated these high calibre students from overseas universities to local ones - a move they said would boost the quality of our local institutions."

However, Nurul said she disagreed with this, saying local higher institutions had instead suffered a steep 18 percent budget cut.

The tertiary education system also lags behind many countries, she alleged.

She called for Najib to accept the scholars' proposal to reconsider the cancellation of the 744 JPA overseas scholarships.

Nurul also called on the private sector to assist by providing sponsorships to deserving students.