

Najib targets 'zero death' in NS programme
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The deputy premier today defended the country's national service programme after a series of deaths that triggered calls for its closure, but urged authorities to take better care of trainees.
MCPX

Sixteen national service trainees have died since the programme was launched four years ago, including an 18-year-old whose parents threatened to sue the government after she succumbed to an infection last month.

najib tun razak"Although there have been one or two incidents, those incidents should not marr the overall success of the NS programme," Deputy Prime Minister Najib Razak told a press conference.

"But I am trying to push for zero deaths in the programme so the level of confidence will be higher," added Najib, who is also defence minister.

"If there are trainees who are ill, they must take quick action. Send them to the nearest hospital even if it's just a normal fever. It's better that they act quickly before something regrettable happens later."

Trainees have benefited from NS

Najib said that despite the deaths, support for the programme had risen and surveys found the majority of trainees felt they had "benefited enormously".

The military-style national service training programme for 18-year-olds was launched in 2004 to boost patriotism and racial integration among the country's multi-ethnic population.

It incorporates firearms training and basic fitness alongside lectures and group workshops designed to foster racial unity.