

Government Not Ready To Provide Free Higher Education
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KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 16 (Bernama) -- The government is not ready to provide free higher education due to concerns it would burden taxpayers, said Higher Education minister Datuk Seri Mohamed Khaled Noordin today.

He said implementing free higher education required rational consideration to avoid disrupting the country's direction towards achieving developed nation status by 2020.

Besides, free higher education could not be expected of private higher learning institutions because they were profit-based business entities, he added.

"The quality of higher education will drop because the 'free' factor will erode the real value of education and students' accountability," he said while winding up the debate on the Supply Bill 2013 for the ministry at the Dewan Rakyat Tuesday.

Mohd Khaled also chided the opposition for having given the "wrong message" about the cost of education resulting in over-education as consumers were misled into making the wrong decisions in their education investments.

Meanwhile, he dismissed the opposition's contention that Turkey provided free education.

He said the country, similar to Malaysia still imposed fees for tertiary and post graduate education.

"A large number of Turkish students were forced to apply for loans through the Higher Education Credit and Dormitories Institution, which was set up in 1961 and the interest imposed was based on the consumer price index (CPI) according to the prevailing inflation rate.

"The CPI average for 2010 was 8.58 percent and 6.46 percent in 2011. The additional interest rate of 2.5 percent of the CPI basic rate will be imposed on students who failed to settle the repayment within the given period," he said.

Mohamed Khaled also described the opposition's proposal for free higher education and abolishment of the National Higher Education Fund Corporation (PTPTN) as mere populist sentiments devoid of concern for its implications.

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