

**Government Prepared To Give More Power To Public Universities – Najib
Bernama
Sept 7, 2015**

SERDANG, Sept 7 (Bernama) -- The government is prepared to give more power to public universities with regard to appointments, promotions and financial management, but this must be accompanied by accountability, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak.

"I say this, so that with it, the central agencies can negotiate on the forms and on how fast the empowerment process can go down to these universities," he said in his speech at the prime minister's programme with higher education officials and staff at Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM), here, Monday.

Najib said the management of public universities needed to find alternatives and generate financial resources to support the universities' increasing management costs due to the increasing number of students.

Hopefully, the universities' board of directors and vice-chancellors could use their intellectual capacity to find the financial resources to manage their respective universities, he said.

"We have a target of increasing access to higher education for 2.5 million students from 1.4 million currently...but to reach that, we need to have financial sources," said Najib, who is also Finance Minister.

He suggested that the Higher Education Minister meet with the public university boards and vice-chancellors twice a year to discuss arising issues related to the universities.

"These are not 'torture' sessions for the chairmen of the university boards and vice-chancellors, but aimed at knowing deeper each problem and to resolve it together for smooth and more effective running of the universities," he said.

Najib reiterated the government's commitment to making the Malaysia National Education Blueprint 2015-2020 (Higher Education) a success, in line with its aspiration of making Malaysia a high-income developed nation.

In the context of making this transformation a success, he said, focus and priority should be given to science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) so that Malaysia could produce competitive individuals in these fields.

The prime minister wants undergraduates' proficiency in the English language be enhanced and carried out in an effective manner without sacrificing Bahasa Melayu, as the language of identity for Malaysians.

He also wants the universities to look at the market needs so that their graduates could fulfil the needs, whether in the public sector or private sector, such as the industries.

At the event, Najib also launched the guidebook titled, 'Enhancing University Board Governance and Effectiveness' in empowering higher education institutions by giving them more management autonomy.

Also present were Higher Education Minister Datuk Seri Idris Jusoh and his deputy, Datuk Mary Yap.

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