

No university fees hike ever since I was education minister, says Najib

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Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak said that while Putrajaya has been forced to make many unpopular decisions such as the removal of oil subsidies, it has never burdened university students by a fee hike. — Bernama pic

KUALA LUMPUR, Dec 7 — Despite rising cost of living, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak said last night that university fees are the only thing in the country that have never been raised, ever since his days as an education minister.

In his closing address at the National Undergraduates Leadership Conference here, Najib said that while Putrajaya has been forced to make many unpopular decisions such as the removal of oil subsidies, it has never burdened university students by a fee hike.

“Though university fees can’t go up maybe others can go up ... Toll can go up maybe, but not university fees ... It won’t be increased.

“From last time, when I was the education minister, it was never raised till today ... it is one of the things which did not see a price hike unlike the rest,” said Najib, adding that a price increase would go against his administration’s goal to ensure access to education.

Najib was the education minister from 1995 until 2000, before returning to the defence portfolio he previously held.

The prime minister also pledged that the government will continue to spend for education, adding that Putrajaya’s budget allocation for education was still the highest among other spending.

In Budget 2016 tabled by Najib in October, the proposed allocation for higher education next year was trimmed by RM2.4 billion from RM15.785 billion this year to RM13.378 billion.

According to a breakdown on funding for public universities, the budgets for 19 out of 20 varsities will face cuts, some as high as over 20 per cent.

Higher Education Minister Datuk Seri Idris Jusoh said the reduced allocation was due to the government’s adversely-affected income as a result of the fall in national oil and commodity prices.

Idris however, gave the government’s assurance that the tuition fees at public universities would not be increased because of the budget cuts.

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