

'More research funds needed for public universities'

NEW STRAITS TIMES (2017 BUDGET) 22/10/2016 m/s 12

KUALA LUMPUR: More funds are needed for public universities to embark on entrepreneurship programmes, **Universiti Malaysia Pahang's (UMP)** vice-chancellor said.

In praising the RM7.4 billion in funds allocated for 20 public universities, Professor Datuk Dr Daing Nasir Ibrahim said he hoped to see more research funds for public universities.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak yesterday announced that RM1.4 billion of the allocation would be distributed to four university hospitals, and RM300 million would be for the empowerment of five research universities.

He said a sum of RM100 million was also allocated to higher education institutions to foster the research culture and to increase publications and intellectual properties.

Daing said the allocations would serve as a new beginning for public universities to soar higher and boost university rankings.

Universiti Teknologi Mara's (UiTM) Vice-Chancellor Professor Emeritus Datuk Dr Hassan Said agreed that the incentives would boost efforts to strengthen the excellence of teaching and research in public universities.

"The increase in ethernet broadband services in public universities up to 100 gigabytes per second is a promising news for students, lecturers, researchers and university administrators as it allows them to be more productive," he said.

National Union of the Teaching Profession (NUTP) secretary-general Datuk Loke Yim Pheng said although the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission

would be giving free tablets to assist teachers, training courses should also be provided in the budget.

The National Parent-Teacher Associations Consultative Council (PIBGN) president Associate Professor Dr Mohd Ali Hassan, on the other hand, said the Textbook Assistance should only be given to low-income families.

He said the association wished for a fund allocation for purpose of holding parent-teacher activities.

The National Higher Education Fund Corporation (PTPTN) expects an increase in the loan repayment following the discount incentives announced in the 2017 Budget.

Its chairman, Datuk Shamsul Anuar Nasarah, said repayments through online or direct debit would see a rise from 30 to 40 per cent and increase in repayment through

salary deduction from 10 to 20 per cent.

He urged the 1.5 million PTPTN borrowers to take the opportunity of the discount incentives to ease the burden of debt incurred.

"With these incentives, PTPTN can ensure the loan repayments to be more consistent and increase the effectiveness of the funding scheme for the next generation," he said.

Najib had announced a 15 per cent discount on the outstanding debt for full settlement, 10 per cent discount for payment of at least 50 per cent of the outstanding debt made in a single payment, and 10 per cent discount for repayment through salary deduction or direct debit in accordance with the repayment schedule.

The incentives are effective from today until December 2017.