SHAH ALAM: Course fees in public universities are subsidised by between 85 and 95 per cent by the government.

As such, said Deputy Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin, it was untrue that undergraduates were burdened by the high cost of education as claimed by the opposition.

“In reality, students only pay a minimal fee. Depending on the course, the government subsidises between 85 and 95 per cent of the fee,” he said in his speech during the IMalaysia Kelantan Undergraduates dinner last night.

Present were Muhyiddin’s wife, Puan Sri Norainee Abdul Rahman, International Trade and Industry Minister Datuk Seri Mustapa Mohamed and Deputy Finance Minister Datuk Dr Awang Adek Hussin.

Pakatan Rakyat had recently proposed to offer free education and abolish the National Higher Education Fund (PTPTN) loan scheme.

Illustrating examples, Muhyiddin said a Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) student only needed to pay RM9,000 for a five-year medical course, which actually cost RM166,000.

This means students only paid 5.4 per cent of the total while the rest was borne by the government.

Citing another example, Muhyiddin said students studying a four-year engineering course at UKM only paid RM5,600 as opposed to its actual cost of RM61,200.

He said the pledge by the opposition to wipe out PTPTN loans would result in many being unable to finance their studies at public institutions of higher learning.

He said before PTPTN was set up in 1996, the government was only able to give out loans to some 26,000 students. Last year, PTPTN lent to 227,209 students.

“With PTPTN, access to higher education has increased by 900 per cent.”

He said for PTPTN to continue giving out loans, it had to seek loans from financial institutions at an annual interest rate of four to five per cent, which the government had been paying.

Muhyiddin pointed out that students only used between 15 and 30 per cent of their loans for academic fees while the rest was used for their daily expenses.