Anti-PTPTN students juggling classes and protest

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STUDENTS camping out at Dataran Merdeka to call for the abolition of the National Higher Education Fund Corporation (PTPTN) feel they can mix activism with academic activities.

Universiti Malaya (UM) law student Haziq Abdul Aziz, 20, said he had been involved in student activism since Semester One.

“I think I can manage my time between attending classes and staying here to protect our tents. Since UM is just a few kilometres away from the Dataran, there is no problem for me.”

The Kuching-born said he had just completed his class, which started at 11am, and rushed to the “protest campsite” at the square here.

Haziq said his university schedule was not packed but he had to discipline himself to attend classes. “Even if I sleep here, I am still doing my assignments.”

Another protestor, Nik Kamaruzaman Nik Lah, 23, from Rantau Panjang, Kelantan, said they did not have a duty roster on who must be present at the protest site due to their different class schedules.

“Everyone has volunteered to be here and if they have a class, they should go to the campus.”

The final-year Islamic studies UM student said he only had to attend three classes a week for his final project.

“Each class is an hour long and it is no problem for me.”

He, however, advised the juniors to attend their classes even if they were sleeping here.

For first-year diploma science student Alif Asyraf Abdul Rahim, 20, on semester break from Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris, he had been staying at the protest site here since Saturday.

“I have sacrificed myself to be here to protect our tents if my other friends were having classes,” said the Tanjung Malim-born, who claimed to have sustained a cut on the back of his neck on Sunday in a scuffle with City Hall enforcement officers when they turned up to dismantle the tents which were deemed illegal structures.

Alif said they had “informal classes” by several activists, such as poetry recitals by National Laureate A. Samad.

“Even during a semester break, I can still gain knowledge here from our nightly activities.”