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Don: Studies on Bumi students hypothetical

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PENANG, Sat. - Academic Tan Sri Professor Dr Awang Had Salleh contended today that studies conducted on the declining performance of Bumiputera students so far were "hypothetical and speculative".

"Although studies had been done in the past, they were only a few isolated ones," Awang Had said, when commenting on reports claiming serious deterioration in the performance of Bumiputera students in institutions of higher learning.

Awang Had, a distinguished academic, proposed a concerted effort by all parties to carry out systematic studies to identify the root causes.

"There is no one single reason, but a combination of multiple factors that is the cause of the decline," Awang Had contended.

He outlined them as:

- * dietary habits - Bumiputera students are more prone to consume food with high cholestrol which often affects their concentration as they become "lethargic";

- * their over-indulgence in non-academic activities;

- * their reluctance to take risks like venturing into difficult areas or subjects or taking on academic challenges.

- * Cumulative deficiency - as most Bumiputera students come from rural primary schools that generally have poor facilites and less experienced teachers. They also have a tendency to be contented with 50 per cent achievement, and this attitude remains even when they move to higher levels of education,

- * Psychological - "sense of security" among Bumiputera students that they "have and will get everything, for being Bumiputeras".

Awang Had was speaking to reporters after launching a "Certificate in Education" training programme for the academic staff of the Informatics group of colleges at Wisma Informatics today.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamed had recently made an emotional appeal to teachers to help alleviate the declining academic performance of Bumiputera students in institutes of higher learning.

"In imparting knowledge, the challenge for the present-day teacher is multi-faceted in that it encompasses the roles of a motivator, facilitator, advisor as well as inspiration-generator," said Awang Had.

Awang Had was vice-chancellor of Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia and later of Universiti Utara Malaysia before being appointed Special Adviser to the Education Ministry.

He retired from government service in 1989 and is currently Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris chairman and Informatics Malaysia's academic advisory board chairman.

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