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Poor show by males

Abdul Razak Ahmad

PETALING JAYA, Fri. - Royal Professor Ungku Abdul Aziz feels that there is something very wrong with Malay men where academic performance is concerned.

This is because Malay males are far behind their female counterparts in this field.

Ungku Aziz said that if the trend holds, Malay men will be wiped out in terms of occupational representation by the next decade.

"Once we enter a cyber-community, we would no longer be dependent on physical strength but dexterity and thinking, and the girls have that.

"I think it's because girls have a clearer and focused will power to succeed. Given another 10 years, they will dominate the civil service, business and academia," he said today after launching the National Co-operative Organisation of Malaysia (Angkasa) Education Loan Fund here.

The poor performance of Malay students has long been a hotly debated issue. As late as last month, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad himself had pointed out the deficiency, chiding Bumiputera students for their generally poor track record.

Dr Mahathir was quoted in a speech delivered at Universiti Sabah Malaysia saying that although 60 per cent of places at local public universities were taken up by Bumiputeras, their pass rate was still "disappointing".

Ungku Aziz said the question that needed an answer in determining the poor performance of Malays should be directed specifically towards the males.

"The question is, what's wrong with the Malay male?"

A well known academic who is president of Angkasa, he disclosed some worrying figures on the performance of Malay males.

He said that 65 per cent of all Malay university students are female, who in turn hold the top 10 per cent in terms of academic performance. The boys are mainly concentrated in the bottom 10 per cent.

Ungku Aziz said that one of the probable causes for the poor showing of Malay students in local varsities could be packed classes.

"Ideally, universities should maintain no more than a 10:1 ratio of students to lecturers," he said.

He added that some lecturers not only had to contend with increasing numbers of students but a workload that sometimes reached 15-20 hours of classes per week.

Ungku Aziz, however, maintained that doing badly in studies had nothing to do with genetic peculiarities between boys and girls.

He said it had a lot to do with a lack of will.

"It's the will to succeed, and in Malaysia this is also more pronounced among the Chinese community."

Asked whether he believed the Chinese community was also seeing its females faring better academically compared to its males, Ungku Aziz said this was not so.

However, he added that historically, the Chinese community has a cultural tendency to favour boys over girls.

"If the family has enough money (to send only one child to university) it will be given to the boy."

Ungku Aziz said the current phenomenon of poor academic performance among the Malays surfaced from the 1980s.

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