

## **Lack of support for Adi Putra hypocritical of Putrajaya, say educationists**

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**By Elizabeth Zachariah**

The lack of support given to child genius Adi Putra Abd Ghani showed that Putrajaya was "hypocritical", said an educationist, who compared the government's treatment of the Mathematics prodigy with a scholar who was convicted of paedophilia in London recently.

Zairil Khir Johari, a DAP parliamentarian who is vocal on education issues, said today Putrajaya's treatment of the 16-year-old Adi Putra was "horrible and hypocritical".

"It makes our country look horrible and hypocritical, especially when the Mathematics scholar in Imperial College was defended and offered a chance to continue his studies, despite his conviction for possession of some of the most extreme child pornography material the London Metropolitan Police had ever seen," he told The Malaysian Insider.

"Why the double standards? Why is it that a true maths genius is not given institutional support, but a delinquent is?"

The Bukit Bendera MP was referring to Malaysian scholar Nur Fitri Azmeer Nordin, also described as a Mathematics genius, who is now serving an 18-month jail sentence for the crime in the United Kingdom.

After it terminated Nur Fitri's study loan upon his conviction on April 30, Majlis Amanah Rakyat (Mara), however, said Nur Fitri will be allowed to resume his studies in any institute once he returns home.

Mara had said that the 23-year-old former scholar should be given a "second chance" to rebuild his character.

Zairil and Parent Action Group for Education (PAGE) chair Datin Noor Azimah Abdul Rahim added that there was a different approach to managing and handling child geniuses such as Adi Putra and hoping that his story can be used to make changes in the education system in the future.

The educationists said child prodigies need to be managed differently to enable them, not only to excel in their fields, but to develop into well-balanced adults.

"At present, there is much emphasis on conformity, which tends to stifle individual excellence and creativity. Intelligence like this is hard to come by and should be nurtured," Noor Azimah said.

Concurring, Zairil said Adi Putra's situation has revealed a "glaring" lack of

institutional support for high-performing individuals.

"This is a fundamental problem in our education system, which is not mature enough to handle children of varying abilities. It's a shame that a true Malaysian high achiever has not been able to fulfil his potential within our country's education system.

"Not only do we not know how to handle geniuses, we also do not know how to handle those with disabilities. It is clear we need to develop better support systems.

"Individuals like Adi Putra, who, despite showing much promise academically, has not been given the right support and backing," he said.

Both Noor Azimah and Zairil said Putrajaya, in particular the Education Ministry, should now take proactive measures and support Adi Putra, who is still actively lecturing.

"If possible, help him get them (Maths formulas) peer reviewed, published and propagated if they are of benefit.

"Perhaps another option is to rope him in to help design a proper support system for other future child geniuses," Zairil said.

"Intelligence like this is hard to come by and should be nurtured. Surely many institutions of higher learning would want to take such talents under their wings and develop it over the years," Noor Azimah added.

In an interview with The Malaysian Insider recently, Adi Putra, who was crowned the Islamic Mathematician of the century by the Riau University in Indonesia in 2009, said the government had broken many promises made to him while under a programme for child geniuses.

He said he used to feel like a "guinea pig" for the government's education development programme.

Adi Putra had produced 235 mathematical formulas and published 12 of them in a book titled "Seni Matematik Islam" (The Art of Islamic Mathematics), which is being used as a reference for primary and secondary students in Brunei.

"I am quite disappointed because if possible, I would like to share this knowledge with my own countrymen. That is the priority. The problem is when decisions are made by people at higher levels," he had said.

"When I teach in schools, I use the book for motivation. The feedback from teachers and students has been really good. It makes them more interested in Mathematics."

Like Zairil and Noor Azimah, Adi Putra also called on Putrajaya to develop a plan for nurturing child geniuses, saying it was high time to stem the brain drain and outflow of skilled labour and knowledge from the country.

"At Nasa (National Aeronautics and Space Administration), there are many Malays. Even in leading universities, many lecturers and students are our people.

"The problem is, why are they abroad? We need to have a module for geniuses. Not for a few but for many. Everyone has their own talent," he said.

The Education Ministry, when contacted by The Malaysian Insider, declined to comment on Adi Putra's claims. – May 26, 2015.

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