

UMS calls for research on ways to help rural students

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KOTA KINABALU: Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) Vice-Chancellor Prof Datuk Dr Mohd Noh Dalimin has called for research into the effects of the external environment on the academic performance of rural students, saying their underperformance could not be blamed merely on rural teachers' inadequate teaching skills but also to factors like lack of electricity, inadequate infrastructure and natural disasters.

Such research, he said, could produce proactive and educated rural students, teachers as well as communities and ultimately close the urban-rural gap in educational attainments.

"The research could suggest ways to overcome rural students' particular problems, such as how the authorities respond to floods or how best to provide electricity (in off-grid areas)," he told reporters

after launching a national seminar on teacher education organised by UMS' School of Education and Social Development (SPPS) and held at a hotel here yesterday.

Mohd Noh said the presence of graduate teachers in rural areas could revive rural people's confidence in the national education system.

"We should not link academic performance to classroom teaching alone, we should also consider external factors like the availability of electricity," he said.

UMS, like other public universities, has programmes for teacher education, and so far 36 school principals have benefited from it, he said, adding it also started a Rural Education Centre (PPLB) two months ago to enhance academic performance of students, teacher education and educational infrastructure in the state's rural areas.

The government's decision to abolish examination fees in the recent Budget will also help to improve rural stu-



Mohd Noh (centre) receiving a memento from Zulikifli after the launch of the seminar

dents' academic performance, as it will ease the burden on poor parents, he added.

Also present was SPPS dean Assoc Prof Dr Zulkifli Mohamed. The seminar

deliberated on 12 papers presented by academic staff of local public universities.