

UMS plays a pivotal role in helping Sabah's rural students

By [Olivia Miwil](#) - September 18, 2024 @ 4:13pm



Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) is playing a pivotal role in addressing the challenges faced by rural students, its vice-chancellor Professor Datuk Dr Kasim Mansor said today. - NSTP/MOHD ADAM ARININ

KOTA KINABALU: Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) is playing a pivotal role in addressing the challenges faced by rural students, its vice-chancellor Professor Datuk Dr Kasim Mansor said today.

Speaking during the official opening of the Conference on Rural Education, Dr Kasim highlighted the various obstacles that students in rural Sabah encounter, particularly the lack of basic facilities.

"One of the biggest challenges faced by rural students is the absence of proper infrastructure. It's not just about road connectivity, but also the lack of Internet access, electricity and clean water. These are major barriers for schools in remote areas," he said.

He added that UMS, as a full-fledged higher learning institution in Sabah, had a strong responsibility to assist rural schools in improving their educational performance.

"Since our establishment 30 years ago, UMS has been implementing programmes specifically focused on STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics).

"We guide rural students in subjects like Mathematics and Science, and also help schools access necessities such as clean water and electricity."

In addressing the lack of necessities, Kasim said the varsity had installed solar power in three villages in Pitas, ensuring that these schools have a stable electricity supply. It also helped to set up underground wells to provide clean water in areas lacking such amenities.

"We have also opened computer labs in rural areas like Pitas and Long Pasia, powered by solar energy, to allow students to access information in this digital age."

Kasim, who is a board member of the National Examination Council, also expressed concern over Sabah's current ranking in national education.

"Sabah ranks 14th in terms of STPM performance compared with other states, and this has remained unchanged for several years, despite some improvements.

"One of the main reasons is the lack of qualified teachers, especially in rural schools," he said.

Despite these challenges, he said UMS continued to play a leading role in advancing education across Sabah, particularly focusing on rural students.

"With 1,130 academic staff, 80 per cent of whom hold PhDs, UMS aims to mobilise its resources to uplift the educational standards of children in rural areas, including those in Sabah's surrounding islands."