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Plans for special needs students

THE Education Ministry will be able to formulate more specific action plans for students with special needs from the feedback obtained from various parties attending the seventh annual National Special Education Seminar.

Special Education Department (Training and Support Services Division) director Dr Mohamad Nor Mohamad Taib says this is to ensure each child, irrespective of the degree of needs, has access to education.

"We want to be able to formulate plans and policies based on the resolutions and empirical data from the seminar.

"By empirical data, I mean the research was carried out based on practical experiences and experiments, and not just based on theory," he says.

This is in line with the thrusts under the National Education Blueprint, which emphasises the need to provide quality education

to all irrespective of background.

Dr Mohamad Nor says the Special Education Department cannot work alone in wanting to provide effective and quality education for students with special needs.

"This is why the seminar can serve as a platform for all parties to exchange ideas," he adds.

Presently, the Education Ministry provides special schools as well as integrated and inclusive classes for students with special needs and ensures they are given opportunities to participate in activities outside the classroom including co-curricular activities.

More than 150 participants comprising academics, teachers, representatives from non-governmental organisations and the private sector are attending the national special education seminar,

from today to Wednesday, at the Puteri Pan Pacific Hotel in Johor Baru.

Six papers will be discussed at the seminar, including research reports from the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM), Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) and Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM).

Dr Mohamad Nor says IIUM carried out research on the impact of co-curricular activities on students with special needs.

"The research findings from IIUM will help us to understand the restrictions faced in carrying out these activities."

UPM, he adds, carried out research on the factors affecting special needs students in public examinations such as the UPSR, PMR and SPM, while USM's study was on the effectiveness of the

integrated and inclusive programmes for special needs children.

Representatives from the National Autism Society of Malaysia (Nasom) will share their experiences in dealing with autistic children.

"This will help the department in ensuring we can provide for the needs of autistic children in schools."

He says representatives from a private company will also speak on their experiences in sponsoring a programme in a school.

"We will be able to understand how the private sector can help in this area, too," adds Dr Mohamad Nor.

The sixth paper, from USM Hospital, will be on the smart partnership between the department and the hospital.

"This will be the medical perspective as many of our special needs students need rehabilitation or additional health assistance," he adds. — **By KAREN CHAPMAN**



Dr Mohamad Nor: The seminar will serve as a platform for all parties to exchange ideas.