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UMS Pro-Chancellor warns: English proficiency in Malaysia plummets, urges immediate education reforms

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(FILE PHOTO) Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) pro-chancellor Tan Sri Azman Hashim. -NSTP FILE/MOHAMAD SHAHRIL BADRI SAALI

KOTA KINABALU: The standard of English proficiency has significantly declined, primarily attributed to the shortcomings in the education system, said Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) pro-chancellor Tan Sri Azman Hashim.

"The leaders know the issues, problems, solutions and promise reforms.

"(But after) more than two decades, there has been no improvement as there is no political will to make the appropriate changes.

"We need to supplement the existing system in whatever ways to improve and make extra efforts (for English) to be proficient," he said during the opening of the varsity's 25th convocation ceremony here.

Present at the ceremony was UMS Vice-Chancellor Professor Datuk Dr Kasim Mansor.

Azman added that graduates lacking English mastery lose job opportunities as they struggle to communicate effectively during job interviews.

Despite public universities claiming a high employment rate of 90 per cent among their graduates, he said the latest government Statistics Department report indicated that 37 per cent of graduates are employed in semi-skilled and low-skilled sectors.

The pro-chancellor also reminded graduates to uphold good values such as accountability, responsibility, humility, honesty, integrity, and respect for others.

"In Malaysia, anything can happen; even corruption is already endemic and considered part of our culture.

"This can pull the country down economically and morally," he cautioned, referring to instances like the 1Malaysia Development Board Bhd (1MDB) and the Littoral Combat Ship scandals.

Azman also added the importance of financial literacy for young students, citing instances where senior individuals with high-income jobs and retirees incurred financial losses due to financial scams.