

Wish list for Education Blueprint

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■ **By Koh Lay Chin**
laych@nst.com.my

KUALA LUMPUR: An A-to-Z of the education system and plans for the future of Malaysian students will be unveiled today by Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

The Prime Minister, in launching the National Education Blueprint 2006-2010, will outline what the people can expect in education over the next four years.

On the cards are better racial integration in schools, better trained teachers, and most importantly, better implementation of education strategies.

Parents, teachers and education watchers want a holistic education for their children with the stress on dedicated teachers, an effective curriculum, better policies in schools and multi-culturalism.

Their wish list includes:

- teachers who are dedicated and make teaching and learning interesting;

- a curriculum which encourages the development of all-round students, equipped with language skills and a strong base to continue on to tertiary education;

- an Education Ministry which monitors and takes care of the development of education at state and district levels for a smoother, more efficient running of schools and policies; and

- national schools becoming the top choice again for students where multi-racialism rules and education standards are high.

These wishes are at the heart of what most people interviewed by the *New Straits Times* wanted from the blueprint.

Some talked about a single stream of education, a halt to what they see as increased is-

lamisation of national schools, and the often-touted "total reform" for the entire education system.

Parent S. Viswa Nathan said there had been recent examples of certain schools coming out with their own ruling on "wet" food which excluded non-halal food and Muslim students being singled out for additional attention.

"We hope there is fair treatment for all students as it is worrying when these things happen.

"Teachers should not do anything that widens the gap between Malays and non-Malays."

She said they should not do things which promoted ill-feelings among the races.

While education officials point out that there are no ground-shattering new policies in the blueprint, they are keen for the public to see how they intend to make their

wishes come true.

"Stating what the wishes are is easy, and there is no doubt that we all want them to happen.

"But what is hard is to show them how we want to get there. So we try to be realistic and let them see the time-frame for our efforts, and how we are going to assess the successes," said an official.

Education Minister Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Hussein has said that the public should not expect dramatic reforms as they are not his style.

Member of Parliament for Cameron Highlands S.K. Devamany, a former teacher, said it was important to ensure transparency in the billions spent on education.

The blueprint is essentially an explanatory handbook on education and not a be-all and end-all, with the ministry eager to get feedback from stakeholders, officials said.