

# High impact projects to help rural schools

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**PUTRAJAYA:** A slew of initiatives to narrow the gap between rural and urban schools will be announced by the prime minister on Feb 15.

The Premier Leap for Rural Education is a programme comprising additional projects and strategies to place rural schools on a level playing field with urban schools, giving rural students more chances at bringing their academic performance on par with their urban counterparts.

Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi will launch the programme on Pulau Bum Bum, off Semporna, Sabah.

Education Minister Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Hussein said as part of the programme, the ministry would work with the National Implementation Task Force and the National Implementation Directorate on speeding up improvements to the infrastructure and facilities of rural schools.

"To close the gap between rural and urban schools, we will implement High Impact Projects (HIPs) which are new projects in addition to those existing under the Ninth Malaysia Plan.

"The implementation of the high impact projects will be in line with the agenda to catapult rural education to a level where all students have equal chance and capacity to excel," Hishammuddin said in a Press statement yesterday.

Narrowing the gap between urban and rural schools is one of the thrusts of the National Education Development Plan 2006-2010 launched by the prime minister last month.

Of the 7,513 primary schools nationwide, 5,077 are in rural areas. Thirty-three per cent or 2,260 of the total number of primary schools have less than 150 students enrolled. These low-enrolment schools face difficulties in terms of finances, infrastructure and teacher quality.

Of 2,045 secondary schools nationwide, 792 are in rural locations.

Besides contending with the inadequacies of rural schools, rural students face a daily struggle with poverty and nutrition, leading to unbalanced academic achievement between them and urban students.

Hishammuddin said this was evident from the results of the Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM) in 2005.



Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Hussein says High Impact Projects will be implemented to narrow the gap between schools

## SCHOOLS IN MALAYSIA

**7,513**

Primary schools nationwide

**5,077**

Primary schools in rural areas

**2,260**

Primary schools with fewer than 150 students enrolled

**2,045**

Secondary schools nationwide

**792**

Secondary schools in rural areas

The pass rate for English among urban students was 79.3 per cent compared with 65.2 per cent for rural students, 79.2 per cent for urban and 69.9 per cent for rural in Mathematics, 97.7 per cent for urban and 96.7 for rural in Physics, 93.8 per cent for urban and 91.4 per cent for rural in Chemistry; and 96.8 per cent and 94.3 per cent for Biology.