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2006/2007



'Time to build platform for education reform'

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KUALA LUMPUR: Education Minister Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Hussein is out to prove the sceptics wrong.

He is confident the National Education Blueprint 2006-2010, which will begin to be implemented from next month, will succeed.

"We have to prove that the National Education Blueprint is not just a plan that looks good on paper, but a workable plan, one that we will implement wholeheartedly, keeping in mind that we are responsible for the education of the nation's children.

"It is time for us to work hard to prepare the right platform for a full reform of education by 2020.

"Beginning next month, and every month thereafter, we will focus on one particular strategic thrust in the blueprint," he said in his New Year message to his ministry officials at the Putrajaya International Convention Centre yesterday.

The six strategic thrusts of the blueprint are: Building a united country, developing human capital, strengthening national schools, narrowing the education gap, uplifting the teaching profession, and boosting the excellence of edu-

cation institutions.

Next month, the focus is on reducing the education gap between urban and rural students.

Hishammuddin said, if all went well, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi would launch the drive to narrow this disparity on Feb 12.

The focus in March would be on improving the excellence of education institutions. The ministry will then be informing the public on the criteria for a school to be included in the cluster of excellence.

In April, the focus would shift to strengthening national schools.

"If before we were caught up with all the political, racial, and religious polemics and perceptions, fears and phobias, I believe that right now, the environment is conducive for us to look at the education agenda in a holistic manner without a fear of the unknown," he said later.

Also present were the ministry's two deputy ministers Datuk Hon Choon Kim and Datuk Noh Omar, parliamentary-secretary P. Komala Devi and director-general Datuk Dr Ahamad Sipon.