

Only the best for cluster schools

The Star - 13/11/2007

Education Ministry invites institutions to apply for prestigious upgrade

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PUTRAJAYA: The creme de la creme. That's what the Education Ministry wants for its soon to be instituted "cluster schools."

Only the best teachers will be hired and principals will be given at least a five-year tenure to mould their schools to give them their own distinctive characteristics.

If any school thinks it has the makings of a cluster school, it is welcome to submit a proposal to be considered for the prestigious upgrade. Education Minister Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Tun Hussein

Although it was announced earlier that the first roll-out of 300 cluster schools would be selected by the ministry under its blueprint

What are cluster schools?

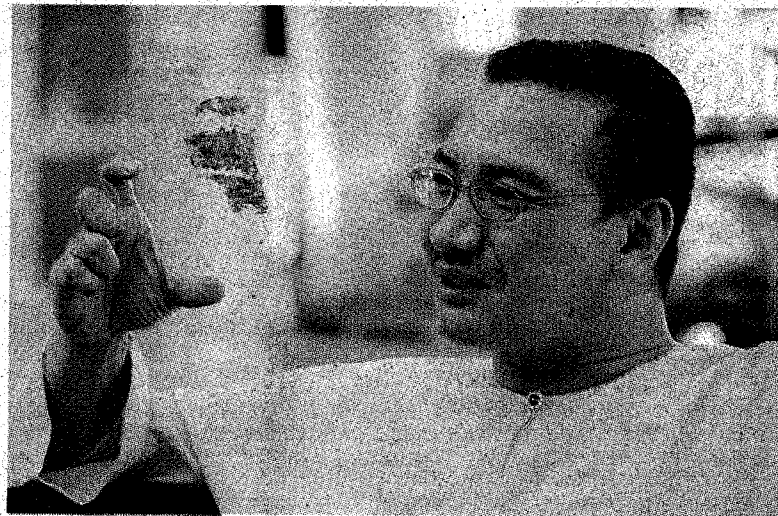
Cluster schools are centres of excellence (within each school grouping) focusing on niche areas like music, sports, ICT, sciences, languages and special education.

to be launched next week, schools are now welcome to apply to become a cluster school.

Hishammuddin said the ministry would publish the guidelines, criteria and eligibility so schools could apply.

"We will release these details in March," he said in an interview, giving a sneak preview of what's to come in the blueprint that will provide the framework of the ministry's mission up to 2010.

The cluster school concept is one of the six key strategies under the ministry's blueprint to be



Hishammuddin: 'I am confident that what we have planned can be implemented effectively'

launched by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi on Tuesday.

Other key areas are related to

leadership at the school level, incentives for teachers, a change in mindset and perception, and how the ministry would monitor

the implementation of the blueprint.

Hishammuddin said he had presented 43 papers on the matter to the Cabinet since 2004.

"We have been working on it for the last two years and I am confident that what we have planned can be implemented effectively."

The minister stressed that the blueprint was not about major reforms but a process that the education system should go through -and has been going through -since Independence.

"If you look at the theme of the blueprint, *Pioneering Change: A National Mission*, we are really talking about the process which I hope will take place," he said.