

30 'top' schools to be picked for special benefits

NST-28/2/2007

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

KUALA LUMPUR: Thirty schools — the *crème de la crème* — will soon be the first to enter the “clusters of excellence”. They can look forward to more autonomy, funding and resources.

Education Minister Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Hussein said yesterday that the names of the schools would be announced next month.

However, other schools seeking to join the illustrious list would not be overlooked.

The ministry welcomed applications from all schools seeking to be one of the 30 “special” schools.

And more schools would be added to this list.

“Schools should think twice or three times before they ap-

ply because if they are selected, they will have a heavy responsibility as I expect them to perform,” he said at a news conference after a meeting with ministry officials on the clusters of excellence.

Next month, a select committee will be formed to pick the 30 schools that will qualify to become role models for others.

They will need to have achieved a certain level of excellence, according to criteria determined by the ministry.

Academic performance, infrastructure and other requirements, to be announced later, will be taken into account.

The selection process and the concept of the clusters would not be elitist. Clusters would include rural schools and even Orang Asli schools.

He said the ministry would meet with parent-teacher as-

sociations and alumni of the candidate schools to determine what they actually need, such as a different principal or headmaster.

“We could have a fast-track mechanism where qualified teachers become heads of these schools, and Institut Aminuddin Baki can provide in-house training.

“What we are looking for is heads of schools who will serve for five years, and be completely responsible for what happens in their school.”

Hishammuddin also commented that the restructuring of state education departments would not result in fewer opportunities for teachers.

Last week, the National Union of the Teaching Profession said several elements of the restructuring, such as the presence of administrative and

diplomatic officers and the limited posts for those in the DG44 grade, would see fewer opportunities for teachers to move up the ranks.

The union said this would cause unhappiness within the profession.

There are only seven positions at the DG44 grade in state education departments under the restructuring exercise, compared with the numerous positions in the “lower-ranking” DG41.

Hishammuddin said many positions of various grades had been added to provide more opportunities for teachers. This was only the first phase of the restructuring.

“Don’t fear what may or may not happen, and do not just look at the micro details. It will distract people from doing their jobs.”

