

Najib's call for revised school system 'timely'

NST - 18/4/2007.

■ **By Sonia Ramachandran**
sonia@nst.com.my

KUALA LUMPUR: The deputy prime minister's call for a massive change to the school system has been hailed as timely.

Academician and historian Professor Emeritus Datuk Khoo Kay Kim was pleased that Datuk Seri Najib Razak had stressed the need to help children develop their creativity and give them the opportunity to learn and think.

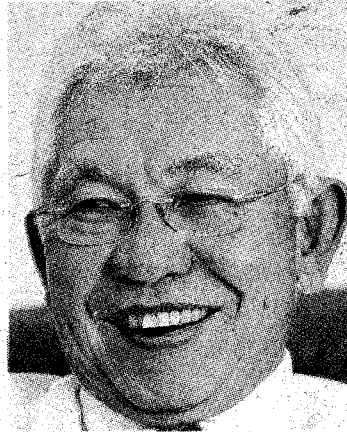
Otherwise, Khoo said, the term "smart school" could be easily misunderstood by the public.

"I just returned from London where they are already beginning to question how beneficial technology is in human development.

"To make technology do things for people is to weaken human beings. Human beings are capable of doing so many things and when they fall back on technology, they become mentally, physically and intellectually lazy," he told the *New Straits Times*.

At the Smart School International Conference Malaysia 2007 on Monday, Najib had called for a massive overhaul of the way smart schools were managed. He had said there was a need for a massive change in the "processes and procedures" entrenched in the school system.

Najib had said students should



Professor Emeritus Datuk Tengku Shamsul Bahrin says the change is long overdue

become the focus of the system again and that if the examination-based national curriculum needed to be revamped, so be it.

The deputy prime minister had said students must be taught to master the English language and that the curriculum should challenge them to think, to create and to be inquisitive.

Khoo said it was important to have teachers who were well trained, passionate and interested in every student they taught.

"Their job is not just to impart information, which is what they are doing now. They have to help



Professor Emeritus Datuk Khoo Kay Kim says teachers should be interested in every student

children develop as individuals.

"That's why a teacher's job is very difficult and teachers should not be doing unnecessary tasks like filling up forms and going for courses."

He said a "smart school" should be a school where children were given the opportunity to think and develop their own individuality and not just acquire technology.

"Unfortunately, to most people, a smart school is associated with just the ability to use a computer. To me, that is not human development."

Nilai International College pres-

ident Professor Emeritus Datuk Tengku Shamsul Bahrin said the earlier Najib's recommendations were put into place the better.

"It's long overdue. The education system should have taken this into account and we should be in the implementation stage right now, instead of at the thinking stage," said Tengku Shamsul, who was also the former president of the Malaysian Association of Private Colleges and Universities.

President of the National Council of the Parent-Teacher Associations Associate Prof Dr Mohamad Ali Hassan said Najib's statement was timely and should be taken seriously.

He said what was needed was an independent commission to look at the overall long-term needs, priorities and adjustments needed in the education system.

Ali said the current examination-oriented system needed to be revamped to encourage lifelong learning.

The entry age for the education system also needed to be overhauled to make it comparable to other countries, he said.

Agreeing with Najib on the need for students to master the English language, Ali said students also needed to master Bahasa Malaysia, Mandarin, Arabic and the languages of the new commercial superpowers.