

## PRIME NEWS

# Target to be in top tier of higher education

**10 SHIFTS:** Our grads must meet global benchmarks to be among top one third, says PM

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**T**HE Malaysia Education Blueprint (Higher Education) 2015-2025 is set to propel the country's higher education system to among the top one third in the world and to boost competitiveness at the global level.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak said under the blueprint, which outlined 10 shifts, the higher education system was set to undergo sweeping reforms aimed at achieving three main goals, dubbed the three Bs — *bakat* (talent), benchmarking to global standards and balance.

Malaysia, he said, must be able to generate top talents to be globally competitive.



"To do that, we must raise the performance of our graduates to meet international benchmarks. We want to be among the top one third in the world in higher education. That is our target," he said at the launch of the blueprint here yesterday.

Present were Deputy Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin, who is also education minister, Second Education Minister Datuk Seri Idris Jusoh, Media Prima Bhd chairman Tan Sri Johan Jaaffar, Khazanah Nasional Bhd managing director Tan Sri Azman Mokhtar and AirAsia Group chief executive officer Tan Sri Tony Fernandes.

In the blueprint, the reforms will



Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak thumbing through a copy of the Malaysia Education Blueprint (Higher Education) 2015-2025 with Deputy Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin (right) and student representatives of institutions of higher learning at the launch of the blueprint in Kuala Lumpur yesterday. Pic by Khairull Azry Bidin

be exercised through 10 shifts, which will address key performance issues, especially system quality and efficiency.

It also takes into account global trends and changes affecting the higher education landscape. The first four shifts focus on outcomes for key stakeholders, including students in the technical vocational education and training (TVET) pathways, the academic community and those in lifelong learning.

The other six shifts will focus on critical components of the system, such as funding, governance, innovation, internationalisation, online learning and delivery.

The reforms, Najib said, would be value-driven, aimed at producing well-rounded and balanced individuals who would use knowledge for the greater good. Students should be imbued with positive traits, including leadership and higher order thinking skills, he said.

"Among the attributes stressed for our students are ethics, spir-

itual strength and moral values. "It is not enough to be intelligent. The most extreme example is a highly-educated student who ends up using their knowledge to make bombs. "It is not impossible to imagine something like this happening in today's context."

He said the reforms stressed on the need for students to be fluent in Bahasa Malaysia, English and a third language to improve their communication skills and develop a strong sense of national identity.

The blueprint would also give greater autonomy to universities, which Najib said needed to be more self-sufficient and find new ways to raise revenue.

The universities, he said, would have to raise RM4 billion annually to supplement the government's allocation of RM17 billion.

"It's not impossible. There are universities with over 2,000 acres (809ha) in land bank.

"Surely, they can generate a few hundred million there? You can

monetise these assets. "They can demand, even beg, their alumni for more endowments and donations and earn money from research and development projects."

He said financial sustainability was important given Malaysia's high education spending, with the government covering 90 per cent of the cost per student at public universities.

The average cost per student stands at RM18,000, only RM2,000 of which is borne by the student, he said, adding the government would also consider providing a supplementary budget to universities that performed well.

He said universities should step up productivity and efficiency to ensure the marketability of their graduates.

Najib stressed, however, that the government's biggest challenge would be implementing the blueprint's recommendations effectively.

"It's all about the execution, execution, execution."