

STAR

1 March 2009.

Priority is to have better varsities, says Najib

By **SIMON KHOO**

simonkhoo@thestar.com.my

KUANTAN: No new university will be built as the present 41, including private institutions of higher learning, are adequate, said Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak. Instead, he said, the priority would be to improve the existing universities.

"All the states, including those that we lost, already have universities.

"Our priority now is to enhance and develop the present establishments in terms of physical and intellectual capital," he said after opening the national higher learning carnival at the Universiti Malaysia Pahang (UMP) here yesterday.

He said intellectual capital required time to be developed, citing the standard fixed by the Higher Education Ministry for 70% of university lecturers to have a doctorate.

"Not all of our universities have reached that standard and for instance, UMP is expected to achieve 20% by the end of this year," he said.

On the Times Higher Education-QS World University ranking, Najib said Malaysia had to accept it despite some reservations.

In the latest ranking, no Malaysian university made it to the top 200, but four out of five recorded an improvement on their positions.

They are Universiti Malaya (ranked 240), Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (250), Universiti Putra Malaysia (320) and Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (356) while Universiti Sains Malaysia (313) went down.

At the Pahang Bar Annual Dinner last night, Najib advised lawyers to return to the culture of service and do more to help the less fortunate.

"I believe that it would do the profession a great deal of good if lawyers were to take an introspective look at themselves and make a conscious effort to think less of the bottom line and more of helping the less fortunate," he said.

Najib said he was not suggesting that law firms should behave like charities but merely proposing that such good deeds ought to be done more often by lawyers and certainly by bigger law firms.