

National pre-school plan

Study on early childhood intervention centres to gauge effectiveness

MALACCA: The Government is considering a national plan to implement the early childhood intervention policy for pre-schooling children by the middle of this year.

Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak said a study would be carried out on the current 15 early childhood intervention centres, or Permata, to gauge the effectiveness of the programme.

"An in-depth study will be carried out by Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris and its input will be used to formulate a national policy," he told reporters after officiating the Bukit Peringgit Early Childhood Intervention Centre here yesterday.

Najib, who is the chairman of the Permata National Coordination Policy Council, said the decision would also be based on several other factors such as cost, manpower, parental involvement and curriculum.

"The best time for us to decide is when the Government carries out the mid-term review of the Ninth Malaysia Plan. Once the policy is formulated, we will then decide on a national rollout plan," he said.

Since the pilot programme was launched last November, a total of 266 children below the age of five have enrolled in 15 Permata centres nationwide.

However, Najib said that parental involvement in a child's early development was crucial to the success of such a programme.

Earlier, Chief Minister Datuk Seri Mohd Ali Rustam, in his speech thanked Datin Seri Rosmah Mansor for advocating the setting up of such centres in the country.

He said the Federal Government had allocated RM120,000 while the state government had contributed RM133,000 for the renovations as well as the necessary infrastructure and teaching aid for the centre, which has 20 students.

After a closed-door meeting with several fishermen and the chief minister in Kampung Umbai, Najib announced that an allocation of RM15mil has been approved for the construction of four new jetties.

Addressing a dinner with the people at Taman Malim later, Najib said the opposition's claim of uniting to serve the people was ficti-



Starting 'em young: Najib being amused by the antics of Mohammad Nazirul Mubin with Rosmah looking over his shoulder during the launch of the Bukit Peringgit Malacca Permata Centre yesterday. Looking on are Mohd Ali (left) and his wife Datin Seri Asmah Abd Rahman (right).

tious, adding that Opposition Leader Lim Kit Siang and PAS president Datuk Seri Abdul Hadi Awang were rarely photographed together.

He said this only showed the duo's distrust of each other.

"If they are afraid of being photographed together, don't even bother talking about poli-

tics," he stressed in his speech.

Najib also had an *ang pow* surprise – in the form of a RM400,000 community hall in Malim, RM100,000 grant to the Pay Fong secondary independent Chinese school, and RM15,000 each to SRJK (C) Chung Kok and SRJK (C) Ayer Keroh.