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PRIME NEWS

Rosmah's proud day in Perth

DOCTORAL RECOGNITION: Curtin confers honorary degree on PM's wife for work on childhood education

PERTH

DATIN Seri Rosmah Mansor was on Saturday conferred the honorary Doctor of Letters degree by Australia's Curtin University in recognition of her efforts in the development of education, particularly children's education, through the Permata Negara programme.

Chancellor of Curtin University Dr Jim Gill presented the doctorate to the prime minister's wife at its convocation here.

Present at the event were Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak, Foreign Affairs Minister Datuk Seri Anifah Aman, Malaysia's High Commissioner to Australia Datuk Salman Ahmad and Malaysia's consul-general here Hamidah Ashari.

More than 500 graduates also received their degrees at the convocation.

Rosmah, in her acceptance speech, expressed her deepest gratitude to the council members of Curtin University for the conferment.

Emphasising the importance of early education, Rosmah said many of the world's social ills could be mitigated when education was made accessible to all, including rural people and the urban poor.

She said that when the young were prepared from an early age, they would be mentally, emotionally and psychologically more adept in projecting the best of themselves by the time they received tertiary education.

"It is proven that the formative years of a child, to at least 5 years of age, significantly determine his or her ability to succeed later in life. There could potentially be a lost opportunity if we do not invest in the right kind of early education for



Datin Seri Rosmah Mansor (left) being conferred the *honorary Doctor of Letters degree* by Curtin University chancellor Dr Jim Gill at its convocation in Perth on Saturday. **Bernama pic**

our children."

Rosmah said the early childhood education and care programme (ECEC) under the banner of Permata Negara was to ensure that Malaysia's education focused on holistic human development from an early age.

She said that it was with this conviction, and through discussions with a wide range of professionals and volunteers in Malaysia, that the programme was

launched in 2007 and known as Permata, meaning jewel or gem, to symbolise the young as invaluable assets of the country.

Rosmah said the Permata programme provided opportunities for children below the age of 5, from rural and urban families in the lower socio-economic group, to experience a holistic learning environment.

"Learning is based on exploration, experience and experiment-

ation designed to instil and promote inquisitiveness and curiosity in a child.

"We benchmarked Permata to several high-performing programmes from around the world."

Rosmah said that in just five years, the Permata Negara programme had expanded from five pilot projects to more than 600 Permata childcare centres around the country.

"Our work continues with fur-

ther expansion to ensure that no child is left behind or deprived of quality education."

The Permata programme also encompasses four other programmes. A centre for the academically gifted and talented has a school for students aged 16 to 17 attached to Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia.

Rosmah thanked her family, especially her husband and children, for enabling her to contribute to the country. **Bernama**