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Boost for children's healthcare

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SPECIALIST HOSPITAL:
 The joint Permata, UKM, Health Ministry set-up will also serve as a teaching facility

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PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak yesterday launched the country's first paediatric specialist hospital project in Bandar Tun Razak, in further effort to improve the quality of healthcare in the country.

At the ground-breaking of Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia Permata Children's Specialist Hospital, Najib said the facility would be built on a 5.5ha land near the UKM Medical Centre. Construction is expected to be completed by 2017.

The RM606-million hospital is a joint initiative between UKM, the Health Ministry and Permata.

Permata is a movement that focuses on the development of early childhood education and care, spearheaded by Najib's wife, Datin Seri Rosmah Mansor.

Najib described the hospital as another milestone in the national healthcare plan, on a par with developed countries such as the United Kingdom, the United States and Singapore.

"The development of the Women and Children's Hospital (in Sabah) and, now, a children's spe-



Datuk Seri Najib Razak and his wife, **Datin Seri Rosmah Mansor**, looking at a **model** of **Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia Permata Children's Specialist Hospital** after the ground-breaking at the **UKM Medical Centre auditorium** yesterday. With them are hospital project organising committee chairman **Professor Datuk A. Rahman A. Jamal** (right) and **UKM Vice-Chancellor Professor Tan Sri Dr Sharifah Hapsah Syed Hasan Shahabudin**. Pic by **Abdullah Yusof**

cialist hospital here shows that we are on track to be in the same league with developed countries, especially in healthcare.

"If they have Great Ormond Street Hospital for Sick Children in London, Children's Hospital in Los Angeles and Kangar Kerbau Women and Children's Hospital in Singapore, we have UKM Permata Children's Specialist Hospital here."

He said the specialist hospital would offer niche treatment programmes such as minimally invasive surgery, cardiology and cardiothoracic services as well as

cochlear implants and bone-marrow transplants, among others.

"The issue of health among children is crucial. Since independence, the government has provided comprehensive healthcare at minimal cost. For example, the 1Malaysia clinics require patients to pay only RM1 for treatment."

About 250 beds will be available in the hospital, which includes gardens and a playground. The building will emphasise on natural lighting and its parking bays can accommodate 1,600 vehicles.

Najib said the hospital would also function as a teaching hos-

pital, similar to Universiti Sains Malaysia Hospital in Kubang Kerian, the UKMMC in Cheras and the University Malaya Medical Centre here.

"There are three teaching university hospitals and to date, more than 12,000 medical doctors have been produced.

"Now, there is (a ratio of) one doctor to every 800 patients. By 2015, the ratio is expected to improve to 1:600.

"The children's specialist hospital is also a manifestation of the private-public partnership under the National Key Economic Areas

as stipulated in the 10th Malaysia Plan."

In crediting Permata for its endeavours, Najib said the movement had made great leaps in unlocking the potential of children from the initial Permata Negara programme, which promoted early childhood education and care, to Permata Pintar and Permata Seni.

"I understand that all of Permata's initiatives have borne fruit. Permata children were given exposure (to realise their potential). I would like to thank my wife for being the backbone of Permata."