

BASIC NEEDS

PM: Education, health are govt's focus this year

SERDANG: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim yesterday said the government's priority this year is to solve problems in education and health.

He said the move did not mean that other areas were not given attention, but the government wanted to focus on basic needs of the people, especially involving schools and health infrastructure.

"With the country's financial constraints and debts, we are unable to resolve many things within a short period.

"Therefore, in the budget this year I had to focus on schools and health.

"We decided to take a firm and brave decision to solve basic matters such as improving facilities in schools, including its buildings and toilets, and also health clinics, along with issues related to health.

"Everyone can see that there was a sudden increase in the allocation for the Health and Education ministries.

"I did not want to belittle other aspects, but... in addition to improving the performance of all ministries, I want the solutions to



New Year One pupils undergoing their orientation at a school in Penang on Wednesday. PIC BY DANIAL SAAD

problems in our schools and health facilities, that touch everyone, to be expedited," he said in his speech during the opening of the MRT Putrajaya Line today.

Present were Transport Minister Anthony Loke, Home Minister Datuk Seri Saifuddin Nasution Ismail, Local Government Development Minister Nga Kor Ming, Deputy Finance Minister Steven

Sim Ghee Keong, Chief Secretary to the Government Tan Sri Mohd Zuki Ali and Mass Rapid Transit Corp Sdn Bhd (MRT Corp) chief executive officer Datuk Mohd Zarif Hashim.

Anwar said next year, the government would focus on other areas, including public transport.

"The issue of traffic congestion relates to productivity. The coun-

try's productivity will be affected as the time taken to travel to work can cause loss of productivity.

"Based on a study conducted in Bangkok a few years ago, the loss of productivity due to traffic congestion had caused billions of dollars in losses.

"As such, the answer to this is having efficient public transport," he said.