

YEAR 1 EARLY ENTRY

# GOVT SCRAPS SCREENING TEST

**Rejected children risk being labelled as unfit or less intelligent, says PM**

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**T**HE government has dropped plans to introduce a diagnostic screening test for 6-year-olds prior to early entry into Year One as it "could be discriminatory and psychologically harmful to children".

However, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said the optional early enrolment would proceed next year, with some RM800 million allocated to prepare schools, expand facilities and recruit teachers.

"Malaysia cannot afford to lag behind international education standards," he said during Prime Minister's Question Time in the Dewan Rakyat yesterday.

He said the screening proposal was initially well-intentioned but concerns were raised after further review.

Anwar said it could result in children being labelled as unfit or less intelligent if they were denied entry and sent back to preschool.

"This may have a lasting psychological impact on a child," he said, adding that Education Minister Fadhlina Sidek had recommended scrapping the test to simplify enrolment.

"Based on the minister's recommendation, I agree that it should

be scrapped," he said in response to a question from Syed Saddiq Syed Abdul Rahman (Muda-

Muar), who had urged the government to re-evaluate the screening proposal.

Previously, Fadhlina said both diagnostic screening results and parental choice would determine admission of 6-year-olds into Year One.

The screening has been intended to assess children's learning readiness and adaptability to formal education.

Citing data from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and

***"Malaysia cannot afford to lag behind international education standards."***

**PRIME MINISTER DATUK SERI ANWAR IBRAHIM**

## WHEN DO CHILDREN START PRIMARY SCHOOL?

**WHILE** most education systems worldwide begin formal schooling at age 6, some countries enrol children as early as 4, while others wait until 7



Cultural Organisation, Anwar said more than 137 countries — over 71 per cent globally — begin formal schooling at 6.

Addressing concerns over system readiness, he said discussions were ongoing with the Finance Ministry to secure an additional RM800 million this year to address urgent teacher needs.

"If we delay it by another year, our children lose a year. We cannot be left behind. To support the transition, the 2027 Budget is expected to allocate RM800 million.

"This will be used to fund for the recruitment of 18,000 teachers and expansion of facilities across primary and secondary schools, vocational colleges, matriculation colleges and teacher training institutes."

Anwar said preschool capacity had been significantly strengthened, with 10,514 classrooms across 6,469 institutions expanded nationwide.

He said an additional 150 preschool classrooms were added last year, with a further 350 planned for this year, bringing total government preschool capacity to 110,889 places. \*