



(From left) **Dr Zalilah Shariff**, Nutrition Society of Malaysia president **Dr Tee E Siong**, **Khor Geok Lin** from International Medical University, Danone Dumex (Malaysia) Sdn Bhd managing director **Toni Brendish**, and **Dr Mary Huang Soo Lee** from Universiti Putra Malaysia were among those at the seminar to share and discuss findings.

More obese, stunted Malaysian children

KUALA LUMPUR: The consumption of major food groups among Malaysian children is not in accordance to recommendation. While grains, meat and fish are consumed adequately or in excess, the consumption of fruits, vegetables and legumes, which are the major sources of dietary fibre, is way below the recommended 20g to 30g per day.

These were some of the findings from NutriPlanet, the first dietary study of Malaysian children by child nutrition specialist, Danone Dumex (Malaysia) Sdn Bhd, in collaboration with International Medical University (IMU) and Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM).

According to UPM's Prof Dr Zalilah Mohd Shariff, the study assessed the overall nutritional and growth status of Malaysian children based on the weight and height for different age groups. This was then compared with the World Health Organisation (WHO)'s global growth curves.

"Besides the unhealthy food in-

take, the findings suggested the problem of stunting persists, along with a rise in obesity," said IMU's Prof Khor Geok Lin.

"Stunting was most prominent at the age of two years old, and more evident among Malay children and the poor."

"We also identified a 'double burden' in that approximately 30 per cent of children who were classified as stunted were also categorised as overweight or obese," added Khor.

In addition, it was found that the influence of family income on overweight or obesity to be relatively small, indicating that this is a problem fairly independent of socio-economic status.

According to Dr Jacques Bindels, scientific director of Danone Dumex Asia Pacific Research and Development, the findings showed there is a need to address the issue of food intake imbalances across the socio-economic classes and different age groups.

"The double burden of under and over consumption in children grow-

ing up in urban areas also deserves timely action, albeit the educational approaches and messages need to be subtle, as only shifting the average condition may solve some problems on the one hand, but cause new ones on the other," said Dr Bindels.

"Studies such as NutriPlanet are vital as the findings allow us to have deeper insights into the nutritional and health status of Malaysian children."

"This in turn enables organisations to offer nutritional products and services that are tailored to local needs," added Dr Bindels.

NutriPlanet is a scientific dossier on the nutritional status of Malaysian children aged between 1 and 10. It is culled from critical analysis of literature and interviews with health experts and stakeholders.

Done in the Klang Valley, NutriPlanet looked at three age groups — 1 to 3 years old, 4 to 6 years old and 7 to 10 years old — from three socio-economic classes and a racial distribution in line with the national average.