



#### For a better lifestyle:

Dr Wee signing a plaque after launching the 'Cara Hidup Sihat' programme. Looking on are Vogt and Universiti Putra Malaysia department of nutrition & dietetics senior lecturer Assoc Prof Dr Norhaizan Mohd Esa.

# Awareness programme to help students eat healthy

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**KUALA LUMPUR:** A public-private initiative to educate teenagers on healthy eating habits and encourage an active lifestyle among students to reduce obesity has kicked off.

The three-year "Cara Hidup Sihat" programme, which started last September, was carried out jointly by the Education Ministry, Nestle Malaysia Bhd and Universiti Putra Malaysia.

Deputy Education Minister Datuk Dr Wee Ka Siong said it aimed to create awareness among students on how to make informed choices on their daily intake of food.

"The programme will also measure the weight and height of the students twice a year and teach them to calculate their own BMI (body mass index) as a reference to stay healthy," he said after launching the programme here yesterday.

The ministry, he said, would monitor the programme closely to see if there was any improvement in the students' eating habits and their body weight.

The programme involved some 5,000 lower secondary school students from 100 day boarding schools nationwide as well as their teachers, wardens and food operators.

Currently, 203 teachers and wardens have received training on modules that will be used

to teach students to understand body weight, the importance of healthy eating and ways to keep active.

Another 332 food operators had been trained on how to prepare food low in salt and fat.

Dr Wee said he hoped the programme could be expanded to other boarding schools, adding that other private companies and non-governmental organisations were welcomed to take up similar projects.

The National Health Morbidity Survey 2011 had shown that one in five Malaysian teenagers was either overweight or obese.

Nestle managing director Peter R. Vogt said good food did not mean more food, adding that this was about balanced and healthy meals.

"We believe it is crucial to educate teenagers on the importance of eating the right food and living a healthy lifestyle as this would affect their growth and development as adults," he said.

Dr Wee also said the ministry had acknowledged Malaysia's unsatisfactory performance in two international assessments – the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study and the Programme for International Student Assessment (Pisa) – in the recently launched National Education Blueprint.

"We will have to find a way on how to improve this. It is high time our students view this seriously," he said.