

# UMSKAL sets up centre for autistic children

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LABUAN: Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) Labuan International Campus (UMSKAL) here will set up a centre for autistic children.

Its director, Assoc Prof Dr Murnizam Halik said the establishment of the autism centre was part of UMSKAL's social efforts for the society.

"We will set up a centre for autistic children to do their activities there. UMSKAL is the centre of education here in Labuan.

"We will support the efforts of the National Autism Society of Malaysia (NASOM)," he told Bernama at a joint press conference with autism based film 'Redha', its director and actors before the premier

show at Labuan Perdana Cineplex last week.

The establishment of the centre was an expansion of UMS Kota Kinabalu Faculty of Psychology and Education's efforts which established the centre several years ago.

"We are getting the assistance and expertise from UMS Kota Kinabalu to assist us in setting up the centre and other needs."

Dr Murnizam said more than 100 children in Labuan have autism and some unrecorded numbers are being sent to certain private special pre-schools.

Labuan is facing a shortage of specialists to properly diagnose children with autism spectrum disorder

(ASD).

"We are focusing on having specialists to come here to make proper diagnosis. We cannot simply look at them and confirm they are autistic. They must be thoroughly diagnosed."

Dr Murnizam said UMSKAL would bring in child psychiatrists and specialists from UMS Kota Kinabalu to give talks and teach parents to deal with autistic children.

"Based on our observation, the awareness of autism among parents is still low. With more campaign and via the telecast of films such as like 'Redha,' we can enhance the people's awareness of autism," he added.

--Bernama