



TODAY FILE PHOTO

## Study to better help kids with special needs

**SINGAPORE** – A major study on the impact of early intervention programmes for children with special needs is about to begin.

Expected to take several years, the study's key objective is to get a more evidence-based approach to the way special needs children are managed.

Commissioned by the Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports and led by the National Institute of Education, the study will also include different disability experts and seek industry feedback, Minister Vivian Balakrishnan said

yesterday in reply to a suggestion by Member of Parliament Denise Phua (Jalan Besar GRC).

He said: "I want to have a system in which we can truly assess and then, based on those assessments, advise parents on what works and what doesn't work."

The results of the study, which also involves the Education and Health Ministries as well as the National University Hospital and KK Women's and Children's Hospital, will help the MCYS to make necessary adjustments to existing programmes, such as the Early In-

tervention Programme for Infants and Children (Epic).

The initial study phase, which Dr Balakrishnan hopes will commence next year, aims to develop standardised disability coding and assessment tools for evaluating children's outcomes in the developmental domains of fine and gross motor skills, cognition and perception, communication as well as social and self-help skills.

These tools will enable MCYS to assess how well children in the 12 Epic centres are improving in each of the key domains. ZUL OTHMAN