

Need for more daycare centres at govt workplaces in Sabah

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KOTA KINABALU: The Sabah Government is urged to set up daycare centres at government workplaces - changing the culture - to boost staff morale ultimately leading to higher productivity.

Deputy Women, Family and Community Development Minister, Hannah Yeoh said the federal government would set up 66 daycares nationwide costing RM10 million.

"Six of them are for Sabah which are located at the State Administrative Centre, UMS and MRSM in Sandakan, and the Women's Affairs, Printing and Prison Departments," she said.

Sabah receives almost 10 per cent of the funding with RM923,400 divided by the Welfare Department amongst the six daycares. The money will go into renovation and assets purchase.

"Operations will begin in the soonest as things are in the final stages.

"The waiting list is already open with more than 40 chil-

dren from the State Administrative Centre and the Printing Department, have pre-registered," she told a press conference on Tuesday after visiting the printing department to check on the work progress.

Hannah stressed the necessity of daycares especially for young parents. With the current minimum wage at RM1,100 she said in addition to monthly bills paying for daycare is an added burden.

The proposed fees for the workplace daycares are RM480 for infants up to 18 months and RM430 for toddlers.

"All daycares are built with breastfeeding rooms where parents can go to feed their child every two hours or so," she said.

The ministry encourages infants to be breastfed for up to six months and on top of saving on gas money so that anxiety in parents might be soothed knowing their kids are in the same building.

"Audits have revealed 541 government agencies are

without daycares. It is our responsibility to lead by example so this policy might be adopted by the private sector.

"We are prioritizing agencies that rely on shift workers like those at the hospital or prison and the police. Our frontliners must be taken care of.

"The working hours for nannies at the Prison Department are two shifts from 6am to 9pm shifts.

"That is something most people don't see. Most if not all daycares close at 5pm, forcing parents to send their kids down to aunties down the road with no proper training ending in their kids getting hurt in the process," she said.

Currently there are 228 daycares in government agencies nationwide with 14 of them being in Sabah. The state with the most daycares is Selangor followed by Kuala Lumpur because of the high population.

She said in the city area it is quite challenging to find affordable childcare centre.



ENCOURAGING ... Hannah (2nd right) handing a mock cheque for RM198,400 to the State Printing Department.

"Not many want to care for kids professionally and the move will give a career development path for nannies to see themselves grow," Hannah said.

Only 54 per cent of women in Malaysia are of the nation

workforce and this was due to the lack of supporting infrastructures, like daycares, she said.

"Don't wait for funding to come. If an organisation's operational budget is reviewed and small cutbacks are made of

course a daycare can be established at the workplace.

"Some may feel they would need at least RM200,000 to get the ball rolling but starting small and putting the welfare of your employees first should be the way," she added.