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Help single mothers to buy houses, State Governments told

KOTA KINABALU, Sat. - The Women and Family Development Ministry hopes State Governments will consider the plight of single mothers who earn less than RM600 a month by giving them priority to own low-cost homes.

Minister Datuk Seri Shahrizat Abdul Jalil said one of the main complaints received from single mothers who did not earn much was their inability to purchase houses.

"State Governments should take heed of this. Implementation on the ground should be smooth to enable single mothers to own low-cost houses," she said.

Shahrizat was reacting to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's 2003 Budget speech yesterday that priority would be given to single mothers with an income of less than RM600 to own low-cost houses.

Speaking to reporters at the National Population and Family Development Board (Sabah branch) office at Jalan Tuaran here today, Shahrizat said the Government's decision to increase paternity leave for male civil servants from three days to seven days should also be lauded.

She said the ministry also welcomed the suggestion to provide civil servants with three days unrecorded leave to take care of family members during the demise of their immediate family members.

On the "Family First Programme: Bring Your Heart Home" launched to enable all quarters to foster awareness on the importance of the family institution, Shahrizat said the private sector must stop viewing the family issue as a "soft issue."

"The private sector should organise activities for families. When an employee is happy with his family, it will increase productivity at the workplace," she said.

Shahrizat also touched on the need for women to take advantage of various allocations provided to other ministries under next year's budget.