

13 SEP 2003

Zaharah-Centre

BE COMMITTED IN SETTING UP CHILDCARE CENTRES, EMPLOYERS TOLD

KUALA BERANG, Sept 13 (Bernama) -- Employers especially big companies should show greater commitment in providing childcare centres for their workers, National Unity and Social Development Minister Datuk Dr Siti Zaharah Sulaiman said today.

She said although it was not mandatory for employers to provide childcare centres at the workplace, they should be more serious about responding to the government's efforts to make the facility available.

The fact that Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad mentioned the subject when tabling the 2004 Budget yesterday showed how seriously the government viewed it, she said.

"The ministry is prepared to provide help to employers, especially in terms of licensing, preparation of modules and training, to facilitate the opening of such centres," she told reporters after closing the Hulu Terengganu-level "Because of You Malaysia" run here.

Dr Mahathir, who is also Finance Minister, had said the government might consider the establishment of childcare centres as a condition in the development order of local authorities.

Although the government had provided several tax incentives to employers to establish childcare centres at the workplace, the response from private employers had not been encouraging, he said.

Zaharah said employers who did not have many workers could use childcare centres near their premises.

"We feel that employers will gain from this programme by way of increased productivity of workers, who no longer need to worry about the problem of looking after their children," she said.

-- BERNAMA

HIS YBY