

DAP applauds '30 percent club' for women
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DAP welcomed the government's move to consider setting up the "30 Percent Club" in Malaysia, but said more work needs to be done to increase the number of women in decision-making positions.

The party's assistant national publicity secretary Teo Nie Ching (right) said women's participation in the country's labour force is 52.4 percent in 2013, and is among the lowest in East Asia.

The areas that need improvement are access to childcare, legislation against gender discrimination, and better parental leave policies, she said in a statement today.

"Lack of affordable and high quality childcare options outside the home influences women's decision to stay out of the labour force.

"Despite the fact that a Roadmap for Leveraging Women's Talent was developed in 2011, as at July 31, there are only 26 daycare centres registered at private companies, looking after 929 children up to age six, while 115 daycare centres provided for civil servants nationwide.

"The government needs to urgently review its effort to improve the access to childcare," the Kulai MP said.

The 30 Percent Club is an initiative that was launched by a group of business leaders in the UK on 2010.

Its goal is to increase the proportion of women in the board of directors of the top 100 companies on the Financial Times Stock Exchange (FTSE) to 30 percent by the end of 2015.

The idea has since spread to other countries like Hong Kong, the US and Ireland.

Yesterday, Deputy Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin announced that the government is studying the possibility of setting up the initiative here in Malaysia.

"In this matter, I understand that the Women, Family and Community Development Ministry and Pemandu (Performance Management Delivery Unit) are studying the possibility of Malaysia to have such a club using its own mechanism and mould," Bernama quoted him as saying in his opening speech at the Women's Summit 2014 yesterday.

Aside from better childcare, Teo said laws need to be strengthened to protect against sexual harassment, as well as instituting 'equal pay for equal work' laws in the private

sector.

As for parental leave, she employers are reluctant to hire women because they are legally entitled to 60 days of maternity leave, whereas there is no similar requirement for male employees. This makes it more costly for companies to hire women, especially those who are still young.

“To overcome this problem, countries like UK, Norway, Sweden and Iceland have adopted the shared parental leave policy,” she said.

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