

## **PM wants more childcare centres**

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Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak wants organisations with a high number of staff to give priority to setting up childcare centres to facilitate working mothers.

"This is for the sake of women who want to work but still have the responsibility to take care of their children. I want approval on the placement location of childcare centres in commercial buildings to be settled quickly," he said when launching the National Women's Day 2016 celebrations today.

Najib said although he was happy that the private sector was providing childcare centres in commercial buildings, the initiative however needed to be continuously improved with cooperation between the private sector and the government.

On the participation of women in workforce, the prime minister said overall, the national rate had reached 54 percent last year, while in the public sector; it had exceeded the target, at 57.22 percent.

He also believed that the most effective measure to increase the average income of B40 households (the 40 percent of the population in the lower income bracket) was to provide housewives opportunities and assistance to enter the working world or venture into business.

He said the government had established several programmes and initiatives to raise the women's economic position, among others, the National Entrepreneurial Group Economic Fund, Amanah Ikhtiar Malaysia and 1AZAM.

He said the programmes and initiatives had helped close to 2.5 million women with microcredit loans and assistance amounting to more than RM13.5 billion since 2009.

"What is more amazing is that 98 percent of these women had successfully paid up their loans in full. Congratulations!" he said to thunderous applause from the women present.

Najib said that the government would continue to strive to have more women in top level management in the public and corporate sectors.

As of April 2016, he said, 34 percent of the JUSA C top management level in the public sector comprised women.

"However, the corporate sector is a bit behind, with only 26 percent at top management level in public listed companies last year as compared to the target of 30 percent.

"As for the top 100 public listed companies, their achievement was just 28 percent (women at top level)," he said.

Najib also touched on the theme of the National Women's Day 2016 which is 'United Effort: No Woman Left Out', describing it as timely in supporting the efforts by government to ensure that women were not left behind in national development.

It is also in line with the efforts by the government to see all sectors work hand in hand towards ensuring that women could also enjoy the benefits of the nation's economic growth, he said.

"No one can deny the magnitude and importance of the role of women either as civil servants, entrepreneurs, professionals or even as a wife and mother," he added.

- *Bernama*