



Alternative to nurseries: Children playing under the care of a worker at a childcare centre.

Set up childcare centres, govt urged

PETALING JAYA: The Government should look into setting up community-based childcare centres in residential areas nationwide as a measure to address shortage of foreign maids.

The Malaysian Employers Federation (MEF) had proposed that such centres be started on a franchise basis between the Government and entrepreneurs, compelling them to abide by standard guidelines.

Commenting on the acute shortage of foreign maids, MEF executive director Shamsuddin Bardan said such centres would allow children to grow up with their peers within the same neighbourhood, which was similar to what was being done in Singapore.

Shamsuddin said having such centres would also help employees who could not afford to pay exorbitant fees imposed by nurseries, which were more profit-oriented.

"Why leave children to foreign maids from different cultures. This is not the kind of environment we want our children to grow up in.

"The Government should look into more effective ways of providing childcare services," he added.

He said MEF had proposed the idea during former prime minister Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi's administration, with a childcare centre set up in Sungai Buloh as a pilot project, but it had yet to be set up in other parts of the country.

He said MEF would raise the matter through Pemudah and through meetings with the Women, Family and Community Development and Human Resources ministries.

He also proposed that the Government grant tax relief for employers who assist employees by providing allowance for childcare fees.

Shamsuddin pointed out that the Government's proposal to set up creches at the workplace was not popular among employers because it was not cost-effective for employers but also difficult for employees, especially factory workers, to ferry their children in factory buses.