

Child councillors to take part in MBPJ's Special Area Plan focus group

By SHEILA SRI PRIYA
sheilasripriya@thestar.com.my

CHILD councillors in Petaling Jaya will be invited to participate and give input in Petaling Jaya City Council's (MBPJ) upcoming Special Area Plan focus group.

Petaling Jaya deputy mayor Sharipah Marhaini Syed Ali said this after witnessing 40 children, between the ages of nine and 17, being appointed child councillors under the Petaling Jaya Child Council 2022-2023 term.

"Petaling Jaya is the only city in the country to have children as councillors," she said, adding that the first line-up of child councillors were appointed in 2018.

"So far, they have created an action plan for a child-friendly city and spoken up on children's rights.

"Moving forward, we want to get children involved in planning and development, and even the decision-making process.

"I want to include these children in the Special Area Plan for Section 52, 52A and Section 19.

"We want them to be a part of our focus groups so that MBPJ can take into account their ideas," said Sharipah, who mooted the formation of a child councillors board in Petaling Jaya.



Forty children posing for a group photo after being appointed to the Petaling Jaya Child Council 2022-2023 term. (Right) Child councillors writing out their ideas and suggestions during the group discussion.

She said cities needed to be built for the present and future generations.

"We include feedback from the Rukun Tetangga, residents associations and professionals in city planning.

"Now, we want children to have a say in how they want their city to look in the future.

"We are building a city for them as they too are stakeholders.

"We must acknowledge children as an important asset of the city.

"MBPJ also has a long-term plan

to be a Smart Sustainable City by 2030 and the voices of our children will be included in the plan," Sharipah added.

Group discussions for children to share their views on child participation and their protection also took place at the event.

There was also a briefing on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

Child councillor Asha Deana Krishnan said her group focused on child labour.

"I did not have much under-



standing on child labour before this, but now I understand children cannot be exploited for work.

"In some parts of the world, children are forced into labour due to poverty," she said.

Asha has participated in child-related workshops organised by MBPJ and enjoyed the sharing platform because she is able to voice her ideas and learn from others.

"We discussed many topics and children are keen to have our say on how we want our schools to be.

"Many of us want water dispens-

ers in schools for free.

"Toilets need to be clean and in good working condition as this is a child's right.

"I also believe that children should be taught money management," she added.

Asha said children should also be taught how to manage their emotions properly and know who they could reach out to in times of need.

"I think that cybersecurity awareness should be made compulsory for children too," she said.