

MEF: THE CULTURE OF PROVIDING ADEQUATE FACILITIES TO AGED SOCIETY MUST BE BUILT PROGRESSIVELY BEFORE MALAYSIA REACHES STATUS OF SUPER AGED NATION

PETALING JAYA: Malaysia reached an ageing nation – in 2020. World Bank study found that at least 14% of the population is expected to be aged above 60 years by 2044. Those above 60 years are expected to exceed 20% of the population by 2056, giving Malaysia the status of a “super-aged nation”.

MEF President Datuk Dr Syed Hussain Syed Husman, P.J.N, J.P., states that “Apart from an increase in the aged population, the aged are living longer as seen by increase in life expectancy. Rising costs see retirement funds dwindling rapidly and this led more seniors looking to re-enter the workforce. Most senior citizen want to stay active mentally and socially. Some senior citizen want to continue working to support themselves or even to better manage the increasing cost of healthcare while also enabling them to maintain or enjoy a better lifestyle. Most senior citizen are happy to be given the opportunity to contribute through their experience and skills”.

“Senior citizens are driven towards employment so they can keep earning a steady income, allowing them to sustain expenses and a lifestyle developed in their prime working years while being financially independent from other family members. Remaining in employment also aids senior citizens to put their spare time to better use by keeping their minds honed on industry developments and not settle into an otherwise boring routine”.

“However not all senior citizens may be able to continue working. Some senior citizens are less healthy and associated with increase in prevalence of ill health.

The physical and social changes associated with ageing are combined with the debilitating effects of multiple, acute and chronic diseases problem afflicting the elderly increase with the rise in the number of elderly population and this has important implications on the country's resources. This requires the government to build up and allocate adequate resources so that the needs of the aged society in terms of health and emotion are being addressed". Adds Datuk Dr Syed Hussain.

"The health care system is primarily geared towards short term care and hospitalisation. The elderly with their chronic diseases and problems require long term care. Rehabilitation from acute illness to help the elderly patient is lacking in our hospitals. The present health care system is thus inadequate and even inappropriate to service the elderly with their chronic diseases and disabilities. The trend currently is on prevention and primary health care as hospital-based care is increasing in costs. Though Malaysia has quite a comprehensive medical and health care services for the general population, special programmes for the aged need to be established. More trained personnel in giving care to the elderly need to be prioritized".

Datuk Dr Syed Hussain states further that, "The increase in the ageing population in Malaysia is real. The senior citizens have their own unique problems and will generate new challenges and demands on the health, facilities and social services. These require a sharing of responsibilities between the government, private sector, non-governmental agencies and the community. We all will age and we will require the services for the aged at some point in time. So start to build up resources and culture to care for the aged from now".

For further information, contact the MEF Secretariat at 03-7498 7200 or email mef-hq@mef.org.my.

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