

Old is now the new gold

Demand for retirement homes rising due to ageing society

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PETALING JAYA: Senior citizens are doing it their way by choosing to spend their golden years in retirement homes which has resulted in a rising demand for “retirement villages” or alternative living arrangements away from their adult children.

Property developers and businesses are jumping on the bandwagon by offering projects with “senior living” facilities to cater for the growing number of people who decide that staying on their own would be the best option, according to experts.

Malaysian Research Institute on Ageing, Universiti Putra Malaysia senior research officer Chai Sen Tyng said the senior housing concept has emerged as companies market specific products to cater to the needs of the seniors.

The senior market care, he said, is dominated by demand for caring services, particularly for the frail elderly, step-down care, those with cognitive disorders such as dementia and Alzheimer’s as well as round-the-clock care or bedridden but stable patients.

“Charitable homes for older persons are serving a different kind of target group, unmarried and poor elderly who cannot fend for themselves.

“There is naturally a growing market for retirement homes tar-

geting affluent, wealthy and healthy seniors, but ultimately we are not talking enough about home-based or community-based care and support,” he said.

“Instead, the focus and pre-occupation is on real estate and lifestyle plays that are not really reflecting a need but a want. I think at any age, we would all love to live in a full-service residence where all the cleaning, cooking and washing are done for us.

“Health and social care are needed in old age, especially when the family can no longer or unable to provide such services,” he added.

“So it is not just shelters for the poor and needy but also dignified care and residential support for older persons who wish to remain living in their own homes or community,” he said.

Living arrangements for senior citizens can be in the form of co-housing, multigenerational households, granny-flats, assisted living facilities or nursing homes.

However, he said there is also a question whether this will be affordable given the absence of a long-term care financing model.

Business operators, meanwhile, said their establishments have been gaining traction.

According to Sunway Senior Living Sdn Bhd, the take-up rate for its Sunway Sanctuary senior living facility has hit 30%.

“The response to the project has been positive, particularly consid-

ering that many people were initially unaware of such private retirement facilities.

“However, once they gain a better understanding of the concept, there is a significant level of interest and willingness to explore the services and living options further,” said a spokesperson for Sunway Senior Living.

The minimum age for residents is 55. The youngest resident at Sunway Sactuary is 62 years old while the eldest is 96.

The spokesperson said there has been a trend of more seniors signing up for retirement homes in recent years due to factors such as an ageing population in the country, access to healthcare, changing lifestyle, security, amenities and services, maintenance-free living, and social isolation.

Komune Care general manager Fong Muntoh said the assisted living facility has 60% occupancy currently.

“The demand for retirement homes is indeed increasing, reflecting a shift in societal norms and preferences. The take-up age for retirement is also lower from over 75 years to below 70 years. There are several factors contributing to this trend,” he said.

He added that senior citizens are seeking active and engaged lifestyles as well as professional care and specialised services.

The Social Welfare Department said there are 406 care homes for the aged registered under the

Breakdown of registered care homes for the aged according to states



Selangor	104
Perak	83
Johor	64
Penang	34
Kuala Lumpur/ Putrajaya	33
Negeri Sembilan	27
Melaka	17
Kedah	11
Sarawak	9
Sabah	8
Pahang	7
Perlis	3
Kelantan	3
Terengganu	2
Labuan	1
Total	406

Source: Welfare Department

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Care Centres Act 1993.

The highest number of facilities is in Selangor at 104, followed by Perak with 83 and Johor (64). The lowest is in Labuan where there is only one such facility. There are no separate statistics for private retirement homes.