

'Senior Citizen Bill unlikely to be tabled next month'

➤ Engagements with stakeholders still ongoing to identify areas requiring improvements, says minister

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KUALA LUMPUR: It is unlikely that the proposed Senior Citizen Bill would be tabled in the upcoming Parliament sitting scheduled next month.

Women, Family and Community Development Minister Datuk Seri Nancy Shukri said the ministry and relevant authorities are still engaging stakeholders to gather feedback and refine its contents.

She said while a special project team has been set up, ongoing engagement remains crucial as the ministry continues to get input and identify areas in the Bill that require improvement.

"As we were just getting ready, we received a lot of feedback and realised there are still many gaps in the Bill.

"Turns out many stakeholders are interested in this matter, and we don't want to be seen as leaving anyone behind, so continuous engagement is important," she said at the Women Gig and Business in

Technology event yesterday.

Nancy added that once the Bill is finalised, it will be presented to the Cabinet before being forwarded to the Attorney-General's Chambers.

She also stressed the importance of ensuring all relevant parties are thoroughly briefed so they can provide meaningful input.

"Looking globally, we see growing attention towards issues concerning senior citizens. Being a senior doesn't necessarily mean being sick – many are still strong and energetic.

"So, we must look at what kind of development, particularly in infrastructure, is needed to support them.

"There's still a lot that needs to be done, and through this process, we've come to realise we need to do more, and listen more, to those working in this sector.

"Hence, tabling the Bill will only take place once all engagement processes are completed," she said.

In April, *theSun* reported mounting concern over the protection of Malaysia's ageing population, spotlighting a severe shortage of geriatric care and rising cases of elderly abandonment – issues experts say underscore an urgent need for dedicated legislation.

Malaysia's demographic shift is exposing deep cracks in its eldercare system, exacerbated by weak policy enforcement and a critical lack of specialised services.

Universiti Putra Malaysia Malaysian Research Institute on Ageing director Assoc Prof Dr Rahimah Ibrahim said the absence of comprehensive legislation has left older

individuals increasingly vulnerable, with poor accountability across care systems.

She added that among the most pressing concerns is a nationwide shortfall of geriatricians – only 60 as of 2024.

Malaysia would need at least 549 geriatricians by 2030 to meet the ideal ratio of one per 10,000 seniors, with the elderly population expected to reach 5.49 million. But at the current training rate of just eight specialists annually, the country is projected to have only 108 by then.

Rahimah also pointed to broader pressures, including limited healthcare access and weakening family support networks.

Reports of elderly individuals being abandoned in hospitals and care homes are rising, fuelled by urban migration, dual-income household stress and the erosion of traditional caregiving roles, she said.

Universiti Teknologi Mara senior lecturer Dr Nur Amalina Aziz noted that while the National Policy for Older Persons was introduced in 1995 and updated in 2011, no specific law prioritises the rights and needs of seniors.

She emphasised that the elderly should not be treated as a burden, but rather supported to live independently and remain active participants in society.

Third Age Media Association founding president Cheah Tuck Wing added that legislation alone is not enough. He urged the government to provide targeted financial support for caregiving families, expand geriatric training and partner with NGOs to develop community-based eldercare services.