

# Little control over nursing homes

## Group calls on govt to beef up checks on unregulated homes for the elderly

By LOH FOON FONG

foonfong@thestar.com.my

**KUALA LUMPUR:** The Government must address the situation of the many unregulated homes for the elderly and nursing centres, says Universiti Putra Malaysia's Malaysian Research Institute on Ageing.

Its director Prof Dr Tengku Aizan Hamid said anyone could get a business licence to operate such facilities but there was a lack of provision to control the quality provided and rates charged.

Other issues included questionable operating practices and standards, reliance on foreign workers and the elderly being sent to homes



**Dr Knodel:**

'Elderly need community-based support'

without their consent, she said.

"Many people are not aware of unlicensed homes and they even generously donate funds and food to them," she said when asked



**Dr Tengku Aizan:**

'Many not aware of unlicensed homes'

about measures for better elderly care during the recent Regional Expert Forum on Ageing and Development 2015.

Dr Tengku Aizan said there were now 17 nursing homes registered under the Health Ministry and more than 200 homes for the elderly registered with the Department of Social Welfare.

In her preliminary findings on residential aged care facilities here and in Selangor, Institute of Gerontology deputy director Dr Rahimah Ibrahim said there were 66 unregistered homes as of August 2013, while there were 50 registered ones.

Dr Tengku Aizan said operators could not or did not register their

homes with the relevant authorities.

Unfortunately, the two relevant bodies – Women, Family and Community Development Ministry and Health Ministry – could only monitor those registered with them but not the unregistered ones unless someone lodged a complaint, she said.

The Malaysian Research Institute on Ageing research officer Chai Sen Tyng said there was a great need for more affordable long-term care services.

Dr Tengku Aizan said the Employees Provident Fund needed to look into funding mechanisms for long-term care, if not include it in the long-discussed National Healthcare Insurance.

At a press conference, University of Michigan Population Studies Centre Prof Emeritus Dr John Knodel concurred that the need for long-term care was a major challenge in Asean.

"With children migrating to another place, some form of community-based support is needed for the elderly," he said, citing Thailand as an example of actively experimenting with the programme.

National Population and Family Development Board chairman Datuk Mariam Mas Yacob said long-term care would mainly be left to the private sector while the Government would look into setting up community-based care under the 11th Malaysia Plan.