

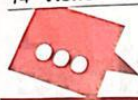
TARIKH : 20 OGOS 2025

AKHBAR : THE STAR

MUKA : 14
SURAT

13MP addresses realities of a rapidly ageing society

14 Views



YOUR OPINION

THE STAR, WEDNESDAY 20 AUGUST

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THE 13th Malaysia Plan (13MP) signals a significant turning point in Malaysia's development planning, particularly in addressing the realities of a rapidly ageing society. As the final national development plan before 2030, it aligns with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the United Nations Decade of Healthy Ageing (2021-2030), providing a strong foundation for inclusive, sustainable and future-ready policy implementation.

The Malaysian Research Institute on Ageing (MyAgeing®) at Universiti Putra Malaysia commends the government's foresight in highlighting demographic change as a major national megatrend.

One of the landmark features of the 13MP is the introduction of the National Ageing Blueprint (NAB), which adopts a life-course approach to ageing.

This blueprint is a strategic policy direction aimed at guiding Malaysia through its transformation into an aged nation.

While the NAB has been presented at the National Economic Action Council (MTEN) and discussed during the plan's development workshops, MyAgeing® encourages the government to finalise and publicly release the document to facilitate broader stakeholder engagement and implementation.

Interestingly, the 13MP also replaces the long-used term "warga emas" with "warga berusia" when referring to older persons, reflecting a shift towards more inclusive and respectful terminology.

However, it is the comprehensive and systemic approach to ageing policy rather than just terminology that sets the plan apart.

13MP addresses realities of a rapidly ageing society



Planning for an ageing population: Customers watching Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim tabling the 13th Malaysia Plan on July 31. One of the landmark features of the 13MP is the introduction of the National Ageing Blueprint, which adopts a life-course approach to ageing. — AZMAN GHANI/The Star

For the first time in Malaysian development planning history, long-term care (LTC) is being recognised as a national strategy (Strategy D2.1). The 13MP proposes a sustainable LTC ecosystem governed by a central authority to oversee childcare, disability care, eldercare and faith-based institutions. This reflects an integrated ageing work that spans all age groups and support needs.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) defines LTC as encompassing "personal, social and medical services" to help individuals with or at risk of reduced capacity to maintain dignity and independence.

MyAgeing® fully supports this broad view and emphasises the importance of collaborative regulation involving the government, private sector and civil society. The plan highlights both institutional and community-based

LTC models, focusing on quality assurance, professional training and equitable access.

The recognition of LTC as a driver of economic growth also opens up opportunities in gerontechnology, retirement migration, senior living services and job creation in what is now being termed the purple economy.

These developments are aligned with Malaysia's ongoing efforts to increase female labour force participation by redistributing care responsibilities.

Complementing this is Strategy D2.3, which outlines major social protection reforms. The introduction of a hybrid Employees Provident Fund (EPF) payout system, offering both lump sum and monthly pensions, is a bold move to enhance income security in later life.

While the plan does not yet detail contribution caps or risk-pooling mechanisms, it signals strong political will for meaningful pension reform.

Sustainability of the civil service pension scheme is also addressed (Strategy C3.4), encouraging a holistic view across major pension institutions including KWAP, PERKESO, EPF and LTAT (Armed Forces Fund Board).

In addition to occupational pension reforms, attention must

also be given to voluntary retirement savings and the expansion of social assistance into basic pension coverage for vulnerable seniors.

The 13MP advances beyond the traditional retirement age debate by focusing on employment reform, flexible work arrangements and reskilling via Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) and lifelong learning initiatives.

MyAgeing® applauds the plan's aim to increase labour force participation among adults aged 60 and above, and recommends prioritising schemes for re-employment as a phased retirement strategy.

As Malaysia navigates its demographic transition, the 13MP offers a historic opportunity to reimagine the nation as one that embraces ageing with dignity, inclusivity and sustainability.

MyAgeing® stands ready to support the implementation of the 13MP through its multidisciplinary research, policy consultation and capacity-building initiatives.

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