

Date : 28 October 2018
Title : Ministry mulls better elderly care
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Page :

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Finding ways forward: Yeoh attending the Empowering Women Summit 2018. Looking on are (left) Universiti Tenaga Nasional deputy vice-chancellor (management and development) Prof Dr Siti Salbiah Mohamed Shariff and Universiti Tenaga Nasional student council member Kishantini Sinnapan.



NEWSPAPER CLIPPING

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Page	:	

KAJANG: The Women, Family and Community Development Ministry will be looking into providing better care for the elderly, especially for single women who must care for their aged parents.

Its deputy minister Hannah Yeoh said women labour participation tends to dip in two phases in women's lives: when they have children and when parents become older.

Although a majority of women have tertiary education, she said, they tend to leave jobs when they have to care for children or parents.

"If you want women to come back to the workforce, it's about providing support for childcare and for when their parents are old," she said at the Empowering Women Summit 2018 at Universiti Tenaga Nasional yesterday.

She also said the ministry would conduct an impact study on the provision of aged care, adding that there was a need to help single women who supported their elderly parents.

There was a trend of women marrying late in life, contributing to the country's declining fertility rate and lack of a support structure for the nuclear family, she said.

Malaysia's Selected Demographic Indicator 2018 states that the overall fertility rate of Malaysian women aged 15 to 49 is estimated at 1.9 children, which is below the replacement level of 2.1 children, compared to an average of six children per woman in 1963.

Meanwhile, in light of the introduction of e-textbooks next year, she said her ministry would be helping school children with Internet protection, managing screen time and dealing with phone addiction.

At a separate event in Shah Alam, Yeoh said childcare employers will soon be able to screen their potential employees to see if they are fit to work with children.



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Her ministry is working on developing a screening process for those who will be employed in the childcare industry.

“For those who want to work with children, especially children below four years old, a screening process can ensure that those who are safe enough to be around children will have access to them,” she said at the closing of the National Early Childhood Education Week 2018.

She explained that it would be similar to the bankruptcy search done by employers and is meant to ensure that the person is not a sex offender or has any record of child abuse.

Yeoh said the ministry is working together with the Early Childhood Care and Education Council and also the Caretaker Association (Persatuan Pengasuh) to “see how they can help legalise” unregistered childcare centres.

Yeoh said utility bills for childcare centres are high and fall under the commercial category.

“We (ministry) are trying to talk to the utility company to see how we can help them,” she said.