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**SUHAKAM CALLS FOR RIGHTS-BASED APPROACH TO SUPPORT LONGER,
DIGNIFIED LIVES FOR OLDER PERSONS**

KUALA LUMPUR (1 OCTOBER 2026) - The Human Rights Commission of Malaysia (SUHAKAM) commemorates the International Day of Older Persons 2026 under the theme '**The Age of Longevity: Rethinking Systems for Longer Lives**'. The theme highlights the need to rethink policies, institutions and systems in response to longer life expectancy and ensure that older persons can continue to enjoy their rights with dignity, equality and independence.

Malaysia is experiencing a significant demographic shift. According to the Department of Statistics Malaysia (DOSM), persons aged 60 years and above accounted for an estimated 4.1 million people, or 12% of Malaysia's population in 2025, compared with 3.9 million or 11.6% in 2024. DOSM projects that Malaysia will become an ageing nation by 2036, when the proportion of persons aged 60 years and above is expected to exceed 15% of the total population. This demographic change underscores the need for Malaysia to strengthen its preparedness for an ageing society and ensure that policies, services and systems remain responsive to the changing needs of its population.

SUHAKAM stresses that preparing for an ageing society requires more than providing care and welfare assistance. Older persons must have meaningful access to economic security, employment, affordable and accessible healthcare, adequate housing and social protection. They must also be protected from abuse, neglect, exploitation and discrimination and have access to public spaces and services. As digitalisation increasingly shapes access to information and essential public services, efforts towards digital inclusion should also be strengthened to ensure that older persons are not left behind by technological changes.

Meaningful participation must remain central to policies and decisions affecting older persons. Their experiences, knowledge and contributions should be recognised and valued, with opportunities for them to participate in family, community, economic and social life according to their abilities and choices. The protection and well-being of older persons also form part of Malaysia's broader human rights commitments, including recommendations made during Malaysia's fourth Universal Periodic Review in 2024 to enhance the rights, protection and well-being of older persons.

SUHAKAM has continued to advance discussions on the rights of older persons through forums and engagements focusing on economic, social and cultural rights, including social protection, healthcare, housing, employment and other aspects of well-being. These engagements have also examined the implications of an ageing population and Malaysia's preparedness to respond to the needs and rights of older persons at the national and state levels. At the regional level, SUHAKAM in its capacity as Chair of the South East Asia National Human Rights Institutions Forum (SEANF) for 2026, has also brought the rights of older persons into regional discussions as an emerging and cross-cutting human rights issue.

SUHAKAM also reiterates its longstanding support for the development of specific legislation to protect the rights of older persons in Malaysia. As early as 2018, SUHAKAM fully supported the development of an Older Persons Bill following efforts by the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development to address gaps in existing laws, including in relation to elder abuse and neglect. SUHAKAM maintains that a dedicated legal framework would strengthen the protection of older persons and help ensure that their rights, dignity and well-being are upheld as Malaysia transitions towards an ageing society.

In conjunction with the International Day of Older Persons 2026, SUHAKAM will also commemorate Older Persons' Day on 7 October 2026 at Rumah Seri Kenangan Cheras under the theme '**Celebrating Our Older Persons!**', honouring the wisdom, experience and contributions of older persons to our communities and nation. The programme reflects SUHAKAM's commitment not only to advocate for the rights of older persons, but also to engage with them meaningfully, recognise their contributions and affirm their place as valued members of society.

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MEDIA STATEMENT HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION OF MALAYSIA (SUHAKAM)

On this International Day of Older Persons, SUHAKAM calls on the Government, relevant institutions, civil society, communities and families to strengthen collective efforts towards an inclusive society where people can age with dignity, remain active and independent according to their abilities and choices, participate meaningfully in decisions and communities, and continue to enjoy their human rights throughout all stages of life.

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**Human Rights Commission of Malaysia (SUHAKAM)
1 October 2026**