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Do give the retired 'deadwood' a fair pension to live decently by

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I REFER to the report (NST, Feb 13) "Pensioners call for review of formula for calculating pensions" and wish to respond.

The issue of a reasonable pension for retired government officers has often been commented on by various parties, including Cuepacs, MTUC and the Government Servants Pensioners' Association.

Even the retirement age and the calculation of the pension factor has been debated and discussed in the media.

The sore point is that the various parties seem to be lost in the woods because they "do not see the trees because of the wood". The big picture is that retired government servants seem to be deadwood and a liability to the Government.

Huge sums are allocated in the Budget to maintain and sustain these so-called non-productive people who are deemed to be in the twilight zone although most of them are physically and mentally productive.

Instead of arguing over the retirement age of 58, it would do well for all parties to agree on calculating the pension factor based on the total years of service whereby the retired "deadwood" would earn a decent pension which is above the hardcore poverty line.

Those in the lower category should get a minimum of RM500 which can to some extent make their life a bit comfortable although the amount is barely sufficient to sustain them. Prices of consumer goods, particularly foodstuff and medication, have sky-rocketed over the last few years.

Life expectancy has also increased. Geriatric care and maintaining and sustaining such care and making available provision for the aged and senior citizens should be a major concern of the Government.

Data projected by the Population and Family Development Board and the Ministry of Health shows seven per cent of the population would be aged people in the year 2020 which means Malaysia will join the other aged country groups like Singapore, Japan, Fiji and a few developed countries.

Instead of churning out figures, the Government should seriously put into effect relevant policies that address problems of the aged and senior citizens not only in the government sector but also all those in the private sector and who are self-employed.

A comprehensive policy should be implemented. Pensioners and veterans also form a large section of the voting population and their votes are crucial for any future political discussions.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad announced some time back that pensioners would get their dues when the economy picks up. The share market is doing well and is bullish. Other sectors are also picking up.

It is time that all pensioners and senior citizens enjoy quality life in their twilight years, particularly now that the extended family is breaking up and children have no time for their parents.

The Government should fulfil what it has announced earlier.