

Legislation to protect the senior citizens?

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The Bar Council will be holding a forum next week to determine if specific laws are needed to protect the rights of senior citizens.

The forum, titled 'Senior Citizens Protection: Is there a need to enact laws?', will see about 200 participants, especially senior citizens, discussing and debating if the rights of these section of the community can only be protected through legislation.

"The forum will highlight the issues faced by elderly parents and senior citizens, the ways and means of addressing their plight from legal and non-legal perspective," said the council's chairperson of law reform committee M Ramachelvam at a press conference today.

The forum will be held on March 10, at 8.30am at the Bar Council secretariat in Kuala Lumpur. Attendance is free and open to the public.

Ramachelvam said the aim of the forum was to create awareness among legal practitioners and members of public that the elderly also play an equally important role in their families and the society.

Among the speakers at the forum are S Chandra Mohan, from the Tribunal for the Maintenance of Parents from Singapore, Dr Tengku Aizan Hamid, a gerontologist from Universiti Putra Malaysia and Suhakam commissioner, Dr Raj Abdul Karim.

Ramachelvam added that the Bar Council will take the lead if the participants at the forum felt that there was a need for a specific law to safeguard the senior citizens.

No legal protection now

He said that the forum should not just be attended by senior citizens as the issue concerned everyone.

He urged working adults, students and children of senior citizens to also attend the forum to enable the Bar Council to have a diversity of viewpoints on the topic of discussion.

Ramachelvam said the Bar Council will be drafting a model legislation, if required, based on the United Nations Millennium Goals and Madrid International Plan of Action.

He said legislations from other countries that have implemented laws to protect senior citizens will also be referred.

He added that at present there is no specific law in Malaysia to protect the rights of the senior citizens.

He said while there were some services available to take care the needs of the senior citizens, these services were not based on any legislation, but on moral responsibility, which was not compulsory.

"For these service providers, it is a matter of charity, they can choose whether they want to implement it or not, but with a law in place, they will have no choice but to take care of the interests of the senior citizens," he said.

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