

The Health Ministry building



## Ministry: Elderly care services strengthened

THE Health Ministry continues its efforts to optimise healthcare services for the elderly and individuals in need of care, according to a statement issued by the ministry on Tuesday.

As part of the "Home Care Project", individuals over the age of 65 and patients requiring medical care receive healthcare services, the ministry pointed out.

The statement noted that these services are provided at home during regular intervals by the Primary Health Care Services Department's medical centres' healthcare teams.

Additionally, healthcare teams cater to the needs of those who reach out to the department for assistance.

The "Home Care" service has been further strengthened through collaborations with several municipalities, enhancing its reach and effectiveness, the Health Ministry added.

"For patients needing inpatient medical care and treatment, the Inpatient Treatment Institutions Department's Bülent Ecevit Rehabilitation Centre provides the necessary facilities and services," the statement said.

"Furthermore, healthcare services

are also offered in nursing homes under the responsibility of the Labour and Social Security Ministry.

"In cases of urgent medical need, patients are swiftly transported to hospitals by ambulances. . . Healthcare assistance continues to be provided to the Kalkanlı Nursing Home, which has been transferred to the Labour and Social Security Ministry.

"Similarly, healthcare support doctor visits are regularly conducted to the Lapta Nursing Home, ensuring that the residents receive appropriate healthcare services in a timely manner."

# Demonstration for better elderly care

REPRESENTATIVES of non-governmental organisations took to the streets of Lefkoşa on Wednesday to call for better rights and care for elderly people.

They demanded the construction of new nursing homes and improvements in existing facilities.

During the protest, placards were raised bearing messages such as "The elderly are alone in hospitals", "Being without medicine is worse than death" and "We want a nursing home, not a promise".

Led by the Association of Elderly Rights and Mental Health, the demonstrators marched from the Health Ministry to the Prime Ministry to make their voices heard.

In a statement to the press outside the Health Ministry, Prof Hatice Jenkins, head of the Elderly Rights and Mental Health Association, highlighted the disappointment over "unfulfilled promises" made to improve elderly care.

"It has been 49 years since this state was established," she said. "A nursing home could not be built in 49 years. We are incapable of building a nursing home, this is our reality."

"Our elderly, who are poor and are left alone in state hospitals because they have no-one to take care of them, pray for death to save them."

Prof Jenkins stressed the urgency of developing a law to raise the standards of nursing homes for the elderly, which they are currently waiting to be passed by Parliament.

She questioned the government's commitment to monitoring nursing homes' compliance with the law, stating: "None of our nursing homes currently has the standards required by law, everyone should know that."

She asked whether the government would provide land and loans for nursing homes, and also sought clarification on



Demonstrators marching from the Health Ministry to the Prime Ministry

Photo: TAK

funding allocated for elderly care in the 2024 fiscal year budget and measures taken to train nursing home staff effectively.

Drawing attention to the growing number of elderly individuals in need of care, Prof Jenkins stressed that there is not enough room in existing nursing homes and expressed concern over the state of private nursing homes.

"Our private nursing homes are deplorable," she said. "Elderly people who receive a 5,000TL social support allowance are cared for in these nursing homes, which receive no state support, but the cost of their care is around 15,000TL today."

She added that there are around 13,000 people who are retired but whose pensions from the Social Security Department are below the minimum wage.

Referring to the Sınırüstü Nursing Home, which was closed down last year after a video of the appalling conditions there went viral, Prof Jenkins said the home has yet to be repaired and reopened.

She emphasised that some elderly indi-

viduals have no-one to care for them, are denied access to state healthcare services, and continue to suffer in nursing homes.

Calling on ministers to prioritise the elderly and develop public policy with allocated funding in the 2024 budget, Prof Jenkins added: "Care worthy of human dignity is the most basic human right. What kind of care do you promise our elderly?"



Association of Elderly Rights and Mental Health head Prof Hatice Jenkins speaking at the protest

## Doctors hail 'milestone' single-use plastics ban

THE Cyprus Turkish Medical Association (KTTB) has hailed the ban on single-use plastics as a milestone for protecting the environment and public health.

In a joint statement on behalf of the KTTB Environmental Committee, Dr Osman Erçal and Prof Ceyhan Dalkan stressed the significance of the ban on items such as plastic straws, plates and cutlery, which came into effect on July 11, despite industry opposition.

The KTTB Environmental Committee underscored the serious public health concerns related to plastic products, particularly the release of chemicals like BPA, which they said can lead to increased cancer risks and adverse effects on the thyroid and reproductive system.

They highlighted that limiting plastic usage aligns with the practices of developed nations, particularly EU countries. They called for proper enforcement and monitoring of the ban.

"As a country striving to eliminate single-use plastic products and promote a plastic-free lifestyle, we must adopt a zero plastic waste policy," the statement said, urging a well-planned transition to non-plastic alternatives for other single-use plastic items that are not currently banned such as shopping bags and water bottles.

The statement emphasised the need for plastic production and supply companies to immediately shift their production or imports to more environmentally friendly alternatives rather than seeking to postpone the ban.

They called for the government to provide support for institutions taking such eco-friendly steps by offering incentives, tax breaks, and appropriate legislation.

"We emphasise that we will stand by such attitudes, as we think that any step that prioritises the public interest will be the igniting factor for subsequent positive steps," the statement concluded.

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