

GREY GENERATION

**AGED NUMBERS
RISING AS THEIR
CARE DECLINES**

Ubon says 15% of population will soon be over 60 years

DUANGKAMON SAJIRAWATTANAKUL
THE NATION

Authorities caring for the aged report growing complaints about paid nursing care given to elderly people – a rapidly growing sector of the community already straining resources.

The grievances range from poor services, to abuses, to thefts and more.

“Some attendants give sleeping pills to old people under their charge, and some others have stolen valuables,” Social Development and Human Security Ministry deputy permanent secretary Ubon Limsakul said yesterday.

She was speaking at a forum on government policy on how to establish a nursing-care system for the elderly.

The Health Systems Research Institute and the Foundation of Thai Gerontology Research and Development institute jointly organised the forum.

“We should set a standard for nursing homes or nursing services for the

elderly. Such business is set to grow in the future,” Ubon said.

She estimated that in the next few years, 15.3 per cent of the country’s population—about 10.77 million—will be older than 60 years. With younger people leaving their home provinces for jobs in Bangkok, more elderly people will need paid service.

“Among elderly people, about 25 per cent are too ill to live independently,” Dr Siriphan Sasat of the Chulalongkorn University’s Faculty of Nursing said yesterday.

According to Siriphan, the number of dependent elderly will reach 742,000 by 2020.

Dr Nonglak Pagaiya, an academic at the Human Resource for Health Research and Development Office, said there were now just 97,972 registered nurses in the country. Of them, less than 25 per cent are taking care of the elderly. Other health workers like nursing assistants and physical therapists, psychologists and social workers are also few in number.

“Demands are much higher than available human resources,” Siriphan said, “This problem must be tackled from the policy level.”

She also called for the establishment of a national-level committee to tackle problems relating to the care given to the elderly.