

Safeguard dignity of elderly workers

I refer to the article, "You're so old. Why are you cleaning toilets?" (The Sunday Times, May 4). The elderly are not only asked to do such "demeaning" jobs but are often exploited by the agencies that employ them.

They are paid unfairly and often work long hours. Many are also denied benefits such as medical leave ("No work means no pay"). It is a shame the elderly have to do such jobs in their golden years and, even worse, you hear the occasional story of one exploited by greedy bosses.

I echo the comment by Acting Minister for Manpower Gan Kim Yong that such workers should be treated with respect, especially the older ones.

With an ageing population, it is important to see how we can put in place a system to safeguard the rights and dignity of elderly. Ageism is defined as systematic stereotyping of, and discrimination against, people because they are old.

According to Manpower Ministry figures, a large number of those aged 65 and above work as cleaners or labourers. So is there ageism in Singapore? It is a question that needs serious consideration.

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