With the oldest elected leader in the world, Malaysia has taken the definition of active ageing to a whole new level. At 93, Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad is setting new benchmarks. After all, if a nonagenarian can clock in a full day of work, what’s anyone else’s excuse?

While the ways in which people age aren’t mutually exclusive, Malaysians now have an opportunity to challenge preconceived ideas about ageing, says Assoc Prof Dr Noran Mohd Hairi from Universiti Malaya’s Department of Social and Preventive Medicine.

“Our new PM and his wife and the entire Council of Eminent
Persons are challenging society's outdated beliefs. They are changing conversations on ageing and encouraging us to rethink the negative stories we sometimes tell ourselves and each other about growing old.

“They inspire us and show us the ability to live longer is not impossible. Their healthy (physically and mentally) lives is a great achievement, and this tells us that we should embrace ageing as something to look forward to and not something to fear.

“They have proven to us that the later years can be just as productive, meaningful, purposeful as previous years – what you do after 90 is as amazing as what you do in your 30s, or 40s or even 50s,” says Dr Noran, who is part of a study on preventing neglect and abuse among elder persons.

Negative stereotyping about age, she says, hurts society as it places artificial barriers on what people believe, thus preventing them from “living the best years of their lives” regardless of their age.

“Socially ingrained ageism can dangerously become self-fulfilling. We need to take control of our own age and our health – no smoking, no alcohol, never overeat and save more so we don’t outlive our wealth.”
“Ageism must be socially unacceptable and we must challenge negative stereotypes. Now we have once again proven that Malaysia Boleh, with our own examples,” says Dr Noran.

She believes ageing stereotypes are already changing. Young people are amazed at the country’s elder leaders’ commitment to helping the country move forward while seniors can redeem their rightful place as contributing members of society.

Retired clinical dietitian Marion Lee, who turns 81 in July 2018, says retirement is not necessarily a time to slow down.

“This is a false stereotype as there are many active seniors in their 70s, 80s and even 90s. Look at our current prime minister,” says Lee, who resides in Sydney, Australia, and is enjoying her life to the fullest.

“I’ve never thought about ageing as it’s never crossed my mind. You just get on with your life. It’s a natural progression. There is nothing to worry about and I just go on doing...
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what I like. Actually it’s a period where I have time to indulge in doing things I didn’t have time for before.

“My interests now are my family and especially my grandchildren, playing mahjong, eating durian, a lot of reading, travelling, attending musicals and concerts, and connecting with friends and relatives all over the world.

“I hope I’ll be able to keep doing this for a long time and be fully independent until my time is up. Life is meant to be an adventure and there is no age when we should stop discovering new pleasures and adventures,” says Lee.

For retired physicist Prof Datuk Dr Chatar Singh, maintaining a purpose in life is key to being alert and active in his golden years. Although he retired from teaching 34 years ago, the former physics professor from Universiti Sains Malaysia hasn’t been sitting idle.

Instead of teaching students theories and concepts, he now manages a scholarship programme for deserving Sikh students. He started the Penang Sikh Education Aid Fund, which has disbursed about scholarships for many deserving students.

“As an educationist, I believe that for any community to progress, its people must be educated. Any amount of wealth will not move you forward. People may rob you of your money or you may gamble it away, but nobody and nothing can take education away from you,” he says.
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Dr Chatar speaks from experience – education helped lift his family out of poverty. Born in Taiping in 1929, he worked all through his schooling years to help his family.

“I had a hard life. I worked as a watchman in a Nibong Tebal rubber estate. I also worked at a tin dredge in Kamunting, ploughed land in Tanjung Rambutan, and delivered milk to a hospital there. I drove a bullock cart at some point, too.

“But still I managed to get an education and, by God’s grace, I am alive and kicking. I garden and plant my own vegetables. I golf a few times a week and still drive around town. But it’s my social work that keeps me busy,” says the proud Penangite.

For 90-year-old retired school teacher Abraham Ninan, the secret to active ageing is quite simple: be active.

“I always advised my students to engage in some form of activity apart from their studies. And it should be the same for us all throughout our lives. Even after retirement, activity should be a part of our everyday life,” says Niman, who goes for a walk or a hike – no less than one kilometre – everyday.

“As long as we are able, and in whatever capacity, we must contribute to society and help those in need. We need to be useful and helpful until the end,” he says.

TAGS  ACTIVE AGEING (HTTPS://WWW.STAR2.COM/TAG/ACTIVE-AGEING/)

AGEING (HTTPS://WWW.STAR2.COM/TAG/AGEING/)

FAMILY COMMUNITY (HTTPS://WWW.STAR2.COM/TAG/FAMILY-COMMUNITY/)

OLD AGE (HTTPS://WWW.STAR2.COM/TAG/OLD-AGE/)
Dear sir, God choosen you to come back and rule Malaysia hope we
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expecting benifit of malaysian welfare your great sir crosby peter Indian

Parameswari June 1, 2018 at 7:30 pm
REPLY ↓ (HTTPS://WWW.STAR2.COM/FAMILY/2018/06/01/DR-M-AGE-NO-EXCUSE-TO-SLOW-DOWN/?REPLYTOCOM=54293#RESPOND)

Dear Dr M,
Is it possible to increase our retirement age to above 60, at least to 62

Cueious June 3, 2018 at 7:04 pm
REPLY ↓ (HTTPS://WWW.STAR2.COM/FAMILY/2018/06/01/DR-M-AGE-NO-EXCUSE-TO-SLOW-DOWN/?REPLYTOCOM=54618#RESPOND)

please retire and leave the opportunities to the youngs .. my head is 63 yet he still doesnt want to retired. why??!!

Izzy June 1, 2018 at 7:34 pm
REPLY ↓ (HTTPS://WWW.STAR2.COM/FAMILY/2018/06/01/DR-M-AGE-NO-EXCUSE-TO-SLOW-DOWN/?REPLYTOCOM=54294#RESPOND)

Please Dr Noran.. dont generalize everyone based on Tun M case and others. U must consider every other
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factors such as income level etc before saying that ageing is socially unacceptable.

G.Kukanthan (http://None) June 1, 2018 at 11:41 pm
REPLY ↓ (HTTPS://WWW.STAR2.COM/FAMILY/2018/06/01/DR-M-AGE-NO-EXCUSE-TO-SLOW-DOWN/?REPLYTOCOM=54322#RESPOND)
We are extremely fortunate for Malaysia to get world applause for its unprecedented democratic development galvanised by the tenacity and wisdom of Tun M despite his age and all the barriers he had to surmount. It augurs well for the new young leaders, almost have his age, to generate positive momentum in gratitude to this gift from this cherished elder nation builder,

Bendict July 10, 2018 at 10:16 am
REPLY ↓ (HTTPS://WWW.STAR2.COM/FAMILY/2018/06/01/DR-M-AGE-NO-EXCUSE-TO-SLOW-DOWN/?REPLYTOCOM=58088#RESPOND)
Dear Tun M, once again Sir u have put Malaysia on the world map n this time u have proved that age is not the barrier n how much u love Malaysia. Pls this is humble request that time to time take n rest, the nation needs u for the future. We Malaysian will pray to the almighty ALLAH for the blessings good health for u Sir. Many happy returns of the day n many more to come. MALAYSIAN LOVE U