

Government calls on social welfare practitioners to ensure services and users' interests are not affected

Regarding the appeal by organisations to hold a so-called "referendum on strike" on June 14, a spokesman for the Government today (June 12) called on all social welfare practitioners to display professionalism to ensure that services and users' interests will not be affected by any strike.

Social welfare services have been seriously disrupted since January this year when coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) began to strike the community. The Government has been providing financial support and supplies to social welfare service units, and has worked closely with non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to maintain welfare services as far as practicable to ensure that people in need are taken care of.

Of late, in the light of the latest epidemic situation, most social welfare services have resumed or will soon resume, but some will need to continue operation in a reduced mode until a further relaxation of social distancing.

The Government is appreciative of the social welfare sector's dedication and perseverance in maintaining services. Such efforts notwithstanding, both NGOs and service users have reflected that more effort needs to be made because of the continued reduced availability of some services, and because some service users, such as elderly persons and persons with disabilities, need to re-learn skills that have been lost due to reduced training and exercises in the last few months. There has also been an increased demand for various services because of economic and social stresses such as heightened family tensions brought about by the continuing epidemic. Thus, any action that will reduce the supply of services will deprive the rights of the needy to receive such services.

The Government looks to the social welfare sector to display professionalism to ensure that services and users' interests will not be affected during this trying period when the community is still fighting against the COVID-19 virus and having a high demand for social welfare services.