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Mr Chair/Madam Chair

Excellencies/Distinguished Delegates

Ladies and Gentlemen

The elderly persons in the society constitute an important element of nation building process. They have rich experience, wisdom, enthusiasm and ability to contribute to the society. Respect to the elders, therefore, is one of the basic tenets of the Indian Culture. The Indian family system has historically taken care of the elderly in the household, and therefore it has acted as the social security net for the elderly.

The National Policy on Older Persons (NPOP), announced in 1999 envisaged State support to ensure wellbeing of the elderly. The Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens' Act was enacted in 2007 to provide effective provisions for the maintenance and welfare of parents and older persons above the age of 60 years, who have been defined as 'senior citizens'.

In India, the size and percentage of older person's population have been increasing at a faster rate in recent years and the trend is likely to accelerate in the coming decades. The substantial increase in life expectancy is because of the advancement in technology, health care facilities, and improvement in the economy. According to Census 2011, out of 121.06 crores, 10.38 crores persons are above 60 years and 1.13 crores are above 80 years of age. As population of senior citizens increases, programmes for their welfare are also required to be increased.

The changing demographic profile, the changes in family system, the need to build livelihoods for the elders and the rise of the private providers for the elders have created newer challenges and opportunities in the country. Therefore, we are in the process to revise the existing policy. The New National Policy for Senior Citizens which aims to create a society in which senior citizens live a healthy,

happy, empowered, dignified and self-reliant life along with strong social and inter-generational bonding.

To achieve the vision, India has already taken many initiatives to take care of Sr Citizens.

1. The existing Act is proposed to be amended taking into consideration the feedbacks received from all the stakeholders. Under Other Welfare measures for Senior Citizens, provisions of empowering senior citizens through skilling, reskilling, livelihood options, digital and financial literacy, promoting silver economy and awareness generation have been included. The Amendment Bill will benefit a large number of parents and senior citizens in combating against neglect and discrimination and enhancing skills to lead a life of dignity.
2. An IT portal has been developed for the purpose of bringing the employment seeker i.e senior citizens and employment providers in the country. Many senior citizens have experience, time and energy which can be used by the business enterprises looking for stable employees with experience. This IT portal allows bringing these people together by virtual matching of preferences. This platform was launched on 1st October, 2021.
3. The Senior Citizens are encouraged to form Elderly Self-Help Groups (SHGs), which will provide them with a platform to share the time constructively with each other.
4. In order to provide an IT based solution for resolving grievances of the elders, a National Helpline called 'Elderline' Short Code "14567" was launched on 1st October, 2021.
5. There are destitute elders who require support of the Old Age Homes. The Govt. has taken the responsibility of opening one Old Age Home in every district which will be fully funded by the Government but run by an NGO/Trust/Society. This collaboration between government and non-governmental organizations is going to help in addressing the problems of indigents.
6. The social security net for the elderly has been one of the biggest programmes of the Government of India. Both union and State governments have together identified millions of elders who

receive pension from the government on a monthly basis through direct Transfer mode.

7. The healthcare for the elderly is one of the pious duties of the State. A National Programme of Healthcare for Elderly has been started to provide geriatric care facilities to the lowest echelons of the health care system i.e. Primary Healthcare Centres.
8. The country launched a scheme named Rashtriya Vayoshri Yojana which is a national programme for providing assisted living devices free of cost to the Sr Citizens of economically weaker sections. This programme is being implemented on a campaign mode and all the districts of the country will be covered.
9. The private sector has been active in creating products and services meant for the elderly i.e. promoting 'silver economy'.
10. We also recognize the contributions made by individuals, institutions and non-government organizations for the welfare of elders in the country. National Awards called Vayoshreshtha Samman are given to the such eminent Sr citizens and institutions on the International Day of Older persons i.e. 1st Oct every year.

Taking care of elders has to be a national programme where the governments, non-governmental organizations, private sector, families and society at large including children should participate actively. We can achieve the vision of a society in which all the Senior Citizens live a healthy, happy, empowered, dignified and self-reliant life along with strong social and inter-generational bonding and this is possible by taking all the required initiatives based on trusted information, details and experiences we share here with each other.

Best wishes to all the participants

Jai Hind