

NHRC, India supported a day-long National Conference on 'Ageing in India: Emerging Realities, Evolving Responses' organised by Sankala Foundation in collaboration with NITI Aayog, Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment and Ministry of Health and Family Welfare

NHRC Chairperson, Justice Shri V. Ramasubramanian calls for integrating ancient Indian cultural principles into modern policy frameworks to ensure the dignity, protection and well-being of senior citizens, in alignment with the NHRC's mandate to uphold human rights

Viewing ageing as a national asset, NHRC Secretary General, Shri Bharat Lal calls for adapting Scandinavian and Japanese models into India's policy frameworks entwined with its cultural context

A report, 'Ageing in India: Challenges and Opportunities,' for inclusive, sustainable elderly care released at the conference addressed by several eminent experts

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in New Delhi on 1st August, 2025. The conference focused on protecting the human rights and dignity of senior citizens and redefining ageing as an opportunity. It aimed to promote innovative policies, encourage stakeholder dialogue and highlight scalable best practices in response to the evolving challenges and opportunities of India's ageing population.



In his inaugural address, NHRC Chairperson, Justice Shri V. Ramasubramanian said that India has a rich cultural tradition advocating care and reverence for the elderly as a fundamental societal value. In this context, he also drew references from the Sangam literature and the Yajur Veda. He called for the integration of these ancient values and principles into modern policy frameworks to ensure the dignity, protection and well-being of senior citizens, in alignment with the NHRC's mandate to uphold human rights. Underscoring the Commission's commitment to protecting the rights of the elderly, he highlighted its various initiatives, including advisories, core group meetings, research studies and suo motu cognizance cases.

In his special address, Dr. Vinod K. Paul, Member (Health, Nutrition and Education), NITI Aayog, emphasised the importance of healthcare and social security frameworks for the ageing population. He said that empowering families to take care of their elderly should remain the foundation of India's approach.



Before this, in his keynote address, the NHRC Secretary General, Shri Bharat Lal setting the agenda of the conference said that India will have nearly 35 crore elderly people by 2050, when one in every five will be a senior citizen, posing a critical policy challenge. He stressed the need to evolve family and community-based care models rooted in India's family value system and supplemented by global best practices. He cited the NHRC Advisory on the Rights of Widows issued in 2024, which urged state authorities to ensure access to pensions, housing and healthcare for destitute and elderly widows. He also recalled the NHRC Advisory on

Protecting Older Persons during the COVID-19 Pandemic, which focused on equitable access to vaccination, home-based care, mental health support and protection from neglect or abandonment during lockdowns.



Viewing elderly people as men and women of knowledge, experience and wisdom, Shri Lal emphasised community-based services and inter-generational engagements for elderly care on the models of Scandinavian countries and Japan by adapting them to the Indian cultural context. He called on stakeholders to study the report titled 'Ageing in India: Challenges and Opportunities' released in the inaugural session for inclusive and community-led healthcare and enable them to play a continued meaningful role in nation building.



Earlier, Shri Devendra Kumar Nim, Director, Sankala Foundation, outlined the objectives of the conference. It was spread into four thematic sessions addressed by eminent experts. These included 'Strengthening Elderly Welfare: Policy and Practice' chaired by Shri Amit Yadav, Secretary, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, 'Health and Mental Wellbeing of the Elderly' by Smt Preeti Sudan, Former Chairperson, UPSC and Former Secretary, Health and Family Welfare, 'Leveraging Ageing for Growth and Development' by Shri Amitabh Kant, Former G20 Sherpa, India and Former CEO, NITI Aayog and 'Shaping Futures: Preparing for an Ageing Society' by Dr. Vinod K. Paul, Member (Health, Nutrition & Education), NITI Aayog.



Some other eminent speakers were: Dr. Kiran Bedi, Former Lt. Governor of Puducherry; Shri Amarjeet Sinha, Former Secretary, Department of Rural Development & Former Advisor, Prime Minister's Office; Shri V. Srinivas, Secretary, Department of Pension and Pensioners' Welfare; Shri Manoj Yadava, former DGP, Haryana and DG Railway Protection Force, and former DG (Inv.), NHRC; HE Amb'r Lim Sang Woo, Charge d'Affaires, Embassy of the Republic of Korea in New Delhi; Shri Vijay Nehra, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare; Ms. Preeti Nath, Economic Adviser, MEITY; Dr. Sanjay Wadhwa, Professor & Head, Dept. of Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation, AIIMS, New Delhi; Shri Mathew Cherian, Global Ambassador for Ageing, HelpAge International; Dr. Manohar Agnani, Former Addl. Secretary, MoH&FW and Professor of Public Health, Azim Premji University, Bhopal; Professor T. V. Shekhar, International Institute for Population Sciences, Mumbai; Smt Pavithra Reddy, COO, Vayah Vikas, Bengaluru; Shri Jaydeep Biswas, Chief of Policy, Advocacy and Partnerships at UNFPA India; Shri Asheesh Gupta, Founder and MD, Samarth Elder Care; Shri Yudhistir Govinda Das, Director of Communication, ISKCON India, among others.



The participants included senior government functionaries, member of academia, research organisations, startups, tech and healthcare companies, representatives of civil society, geriatric care and palliative care institutions, among others.

Some of the key outcomes of the deliberation were:

- Better nutrition and improved healthcare have increased the life expectancy, resulting in a growing elderly population. This creates both challenges as well as opportunities for a developing country like India amid

‘ageing without affluence’.

- Need to make ageing aspirational through early preparation, active and productive ageing, by adopting a lifestyle approach with investment from a younger age.
- Technological advancements reduce labour-intensive work. However, efficiency and productivity are on the increase with the use of knowledge, skills and wisdom. It provides an opportunity to 60+ aged people to make meaningful contributions.
- Need to provide more opportunities to elderly people, enabling them to continue making meaningful contributions.
- Need for creating a competitive environment among states to improve elderly care, along with greater decentralisation, where local self-governments take on larger responsibilities.
- Model programme like Kerala’s Palliative Care may be adopted for elderly care.
- Ensuring financial security, digital literacy, long-term care insurance, digital healthcare, assistive devices and platforms for engagement are necessary for integrating the elderly into India’s ‘silver economy.’
- The Indian model for elderly care and support must give primacy to family and community-led initiatives.



The conference called upon all stakeholders, including government institutions, civil society organisations and the public, to actively engage in initiatives aimed at upholding the dignity and rights of the elderly population, thereby contributing to the establishment of a just and equitable society.

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