



## **SHEHJAAR HOMES FOR SENIOR CITIZENS**

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Dr. Virendra Kumar,  
Minister of Social Justice & Empowerment,  
Government of India,  
Shastri Bhawan, New Delhi -110001

Date: 29/07/2021

Dear Sir,

### **Sub: - Submission from Senior Citizens for your kind consideration.**

It was a moment of great pleasure for the senior citizens segment of the country to know that our Honorable Prime Minister, in the recent cabinet expansion, has entrusted you with very important Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment. In your good self the country got a Minister who is aware of the social ground realities and the conditions of the seniors living in urban as well as in rural areas. We compliment you for your commitment to social service and particularly to Elderly.

According to 2011 census figures, out of total population of 121.06 crores, senior citizens constitute 10.38 crores (8.4%) with 70 % living in rural areas and out of these 5.1 crore live below the poverty line. The population of senior citizens is increasing steadily and is estimated to touch 32.4 crores (19.4%) by 2050.

Besides, due to fragmentation of the joint family system this increased number of senior citizens is exposed to lack of emotional, physical & financial support. There is inadequate social security for the aged. Thus, ageing has become a major social challenge and needs to be attended on priority.

The welfare of senior citizens was mandated in the Constitution of India under Article 41 and as was further elaborated in National Policy on Older Persons, 1999. This policy is under revision since 2016 and needs to be approved and released at the earliest.

Government of India also passed Maintenance and Welfare of Parents & Senior Citizens Act 2007. Implementation of this Act by States was very slow and not effective. Government of India has introduced the amendment bill in 2019 in parliament which needs to be passed immediately.

Just observing the above state of affairs so far, regarding the Revised National Policy & Amendment to Act 2007, Senior Citizens in the country are feeling not being treated fairly while they deserved better reverence and attention. During Covid pandemic the initiative of Govt.of India , however, to get vulnerable elderly vaccinated first as per medical advice has been gratefully acknowledged and very well appreciated by the Senior Citizens.

We are sure you will leave no stone unturned to address the ageism issues and are very hopeful that under your leadership, the welfare of senior citizens will receive the due attention the segment deserves.

Senior Citizens do appreciate that Governments alone cannot provide all the services needed by the Elderly. To complement Govt. efforts during Covidpandemic,NGOs in the field like HelpAge India, Senior Citizens Forums & Confederations of AISCCON, Silver Innings, FESCOM ,ILC, ShehjaarHomes and others provided commendable services to Elderly in need. During Covid times we used virtual platforms to meet, interact and keep our physical and mental health in shape. Organized digital literacy classes for our hesitant friends. Being socially connected made us useful for those who needed food, medicine, oxygen or a drop to hospital.

Our this NGO,Shehjaar Homes for Senior Citizens, is affiliated to All India Senior Citizens Confederation. In view of our association nationwide with Senior Citizens bodies, it is our duty to bring to your kind notice the following suggestions:

1. A separate department headed by a Secretary rank is required in the Centre and as well as in States to start doing justice to the issues concerning Elderly welfare.
2. There must be an effective monitoring & review at Centre and in States for ensuring the implementation of Revised National Policy (hope it is issued shortly ) and also the Amended Act of Maintenance and Welfare of Parents & Senior Citizens ( it is also hoped to be passed by Parliament in this session).Govts. must see that the effect reaches the ground level by monitoring at district levels.
3. Senior Citizen Welfare Commissions/Councils, headed by the concerned Ministers/Secretaries, need be constituted in all the States, so that important concerns get focused attention. The commission/councils should meet regularly, at least once in three months to ensure the process of implementation of National Policy as well as the Maintenance and Welfare Act. The Commission/ Council should also include members from State Senior Citizen Federations & other NGOs working in the Elderly welfare areas. You are aware how appointment of a Commission for Senior

Citizens by Govt. of MP helped in attitudinal changes in the implementation of various welfare initiatives for Elderly in MP state.

#### 4. Review of Ministry Initiatives to ensure the same are user friendly:

Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment has come out with two initiatives:

a) An Umbrella Scheme for Senior Citizens ,  
National Action Plan for Welfare of Senior Citizens (NAPSrC)in  
April 2020

b) Annual Action Plan (2021-22), Atal VayoAbhyudayYojna  
(AVVAY) in March 2021.

Both the schemes need to be reviewed for its usefulness and user friendliness to the senior citizen living in villages or in small towns. Senior Citizens are, in fact a resource and has potential of being of much help if used in synergy with Govt. initiatives.

The test about the usefulness of these initiatives is to ascertain how many states have understood and implemented these schemes. Social Justice Ministry in Centre & in States should be interacting / meeting (even virtual) periodically, so that the ground gets scratched. Otherwise schemes will remain on papers as before.

#### 5. Pension.

The monthly pension paid to BPL Senior Citizens under Indira Gandhi National Old Age Pension Scheme (IGNOAPS) is quite paltry ranging from Rs 200 upto 79 years age and Rs 500 per month thereafter being paid since Nov 2007 despite spiraling increase in price index. How far can this sustain an Elderly? It is also observed that few States are paying pension ranging from Rs400 to Rs3000 pm. Uniformity in pension based on basic needs and reasonability has to be brought in the Pension Scheme. Review is urgently required.

#### 6. Bank Interest on Deposits

In absence of any pension, retired and older persons are generally dependent on the interest income on their savings in banks. However, the interest rates are getting reduced continuously over a period. This has put their living in difficulty. Govt. should at least keep the minimum interest rates fixed, say at 8.5 percent on schemes like Senior Citizen Saving Schemes or PMVVY so that the cost of living is not suddenly becoming difficult leading to frustrations for Elderly.

7. Definition of Multi-Service Day Care Centres is required in the MWPSA (Amendment )Bill 2019 to exclude Meeting Halls/Rooms/Chaupals/senior citizens clubs from provision of registration/regulations.

It is suggested to ensure that Elderly meeting like in above mentioned places for a social interaction under self-sustained and non-commercial arrangements must be specifically excluded from the newly proposed provisions of registration as a service provider in case of Multi-Service Day Care Centres.

Multi-Service Day Care Centres must be defined clearly vis-à-vis normal meeting Centres or otherwise these self-sustained social interactions happening under non-commercial circumstances and very much required for active, happy and healthy ageing will get discouraged if brought under regulatory body, resulting in restricting/damaging health care of the Elderly.

We have submitted above status of Senior Citizens in the country in general and touched on a few areas that need your immediate kind attention.

Thanking you,

MK Raina  
Director

Sarvesh Gupta  
Director

Suresh Palgay  
President (HC)

**Copy to :**

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2. President, All India Senior Citizens Confederation ,  
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