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NATHEALTH puts forward recommendations to galvanize senior care

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The cross sectorial national forum is also coming up with a white paper to strengthen the Centreâ??s Draft National Policy for Senior Citizens 2020



Recognizing the urgent need for immediate action on senior and elderly care in India, Healthcare Federation of India-NATHEALTH has convened a cross-sectorial national forum which brings together all the key stakeholders with relevant experience and expertise in senior care.

As part of is immediate initiatives, the forum has assessed and put forth key recommendations to strengthen the Center's Draft National Policy on Senior Citizens, 2020.

These recommendations are significant considering the changing demographic pattern, socioeconomic needs of the senior citizens, social value system, and advancement in the field of science and technology over the last decade. The new policy will replace the "National Policy on Older Persons, 1999".

The objective of the forum is to drive the right policy structure and governance framework for the Indian Government and establish a coalesced view of the action imperatives for each of the participant and stakeholder segments. It has also initiated work on a joint whitepaper that proposes solutions and ties together a roadmap on priority action areas pertaining to senior care in India. In the engagements so far, the forum has reached an agreement on common priority blocks/solution areas to formulate the agenda for the white paper with the relevant task forces being set up to conduct research and synthesize recommendations.

The recommendations for areas that need immediate intervention as suggested by the forum are:

- Financial security: Critical to support senior citizens via additional tax incentives, higher savings rate, Registered Retirement Saving Plan and pension schemes, similar to those present in other advanced economies.
- Health care insurance: Major expenses arising from health care needs to be addressed by greater penetration and coverage through health insurances and ironing out issues related to insurance pricing such as the Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana), flexibility, claim management, among others.
- Shelter for senior citizens: Rental accommodation for senior citizen needs to be encouraged with relevant accreditation, financing, and incentives for private sector to cater to citizens wanting to stay alone
- Rehab care: Comprehensive policy needed for short term rehab facilities covering all critical aspects such as guidelines, financing, human resources, technology, monitoring, etc.
- Reskilling and employment: Avenues for active & productive ageing need to be massively increased, especially in the private sector by allowing for such hiring as part of CSR
- Capacity building: Enhancing human capital to cater to the needs of senior care for medical and non-medical needs is important; establishing "senior care" as a career option via the creation of courses as part of skill training programs, etc. will help address this issue
- Focus on securing senior women citizens: Special emphasis needed on securing financial and other wellbeing of senior women citizens
- Investment in technology and promoting innovation and role of start-ups: There is significant scope for investment in technology for the creation of medical devices, dedicated apps, etc. senior citizen use and active startup ecosystem to encourage to help cater to needs of senior citizen and address them through innovative solutions