

Parliamentarians Deliberate on India's Rapidly Ageing Population and Declining Fertility - Call for a National Commission for the Elderly

MEETING OF IAPPD STANDING COMMITTEE MEMBERS

on

"India's Rapidly Ageing Population and Declining Fertility — Role of Parliamentarians"

16 December 2025 | New Delhi

The Indian Association of Parliamentarians on Population and Development (IAPPD), successfully organised a meeting of its Standing Committee Members on the theme **"India's Rapidly Ageing Population and Declining Fertility — Role of Parliamentarians"** in New Delhi on 16 December 2025. The meeting was attended by Parliamentarians representing diverse political affiliations and subject experts.



The meeting was presided over by **Prof. P.J. Kurien**, former Deputy Chairman, Rajya Sabha, and Chairman, IAPPD. **Shri Harivansh Narayan Singh**, Hon'ble Deputy Chairman, Rajya Sabha, graced the occasion as the **Chief Guest**. The meeting was also attended by **Shri Bhubaneswar Kalita**, Hon'ble Member of Parliament, and **Shri Avinash Rai Khanna**, former Member of Parliament, Vice-Chairpersons of IAPPD, also shared their valuable insights on the subject.

Several distinguished Parliamentarians participated in the deliberations. **Dr. T. V. Sekher**, Professor, International Institute for Population Sciences (IIPS), Mumbai, made a detailed presentation on *"Population Ageing in India: Issues and Challenges."* **Dr. P. P. Talwar**, Senior Member of the IAPPD Technical Advisory Committee, also shared his perspectives on ageing and declining fertility in India, which was informative and thought provoking, and liked by all.

Following is the briefs of participants expressed views:

While welcoming the participants, **Prof. P. J. Kurien** emphasised that India stands at a critical demographic crossroads. He noted that while the population is ageing rapidly, fertility rates are steadily declining. Life expectancy, which was less than 50 years at the time of Independence, has now crossed 70 years. This demographic shift has resulted in a growing elderly population and a relative decline in the youth population, thereby impacting the country's demographic dividend. He underscored that these trends pose serious social and economic challenges that demand urgent attention.



In his address, **Shri Harivansh Narayan Singh**, Hon'ble Deputy Chairman, Rajya Sabha, remarked that he always give priority to participate in IAPPD meetings, to witness deeply enriching deliberations. He underscored the significance of the day's theme, noting that in the coming years, demographic trends will have a profound impact on India's economic growth, socio-economic structures, and inter-generational systems.

He emphasised that demography is not confined to population statistics alone, but has far-reaching implications for the labour market, healthcare systems, and social cohesion. India, he observed, is undergoing a rapid demographic transition marked by declining fertility and a rising ageing population, with the pace of change far outstripping the country's current preparedness and institutional frameworks.

He called for addressing these challenges through informed, inclusive, and forward-looking public policy measures, highlighting the critical role of legislatures, budgetary priorities, and parliamentary oversight in shaping effective responses. He concluded by stressing that sustained parliamentary engagement and evidence-based policymaking will be key to ensuring that India's demographic transition becomes an opportunity rather than a constraint for the nation's future development.

Presentation on Old Age Care

During the meeting, **Shri Avinash Rai Khanna** made a presentation on *"Importance of Taking Care of Our Parents and Elders."* The presentation highlighted the rapidly increasing ageing population in Asia and India and underscored the moral, social, and emotional responsibility of caring for parents and elders. Emphasising that service to elders is a pathway to social harmony and spiritual fulfilment, the presentation illustrated how family-based care strengthens values, happiness, and inter-generational bonding.



Through personal reflections, the inspiring narrative *"Bridhashram Se Ghar Vapsi,"* (*Return Home from the Old Age Home*) and examples of community initiatives, the presentation demonstrated the positive contributions of elders to family life and society. It showcased practical efforts such as student-led community support programmes and exemplary institutions like *Sanjeevni Sharnam*, which promote dignity, companionship, and holistic care for the elderly. Overall, the presentation called for collective action to reinforce family values, community engagement, and compassionate elder care.

Shri Khanna also offered several policy-oriented suggestions, providing a comprehensive and pragmatic perspective on the challenges associated with population ageing, particularly in the areas of long-term care, social security, healthcare access, and community-based support systems. His proposals—especially the establishment of a **Commission for Senior Citizen at both the State and Central levels**, and the promotion of **Educational Social Responsibility** at the school and college levels—were widely appreciated by the participants and added significant value to the discussions.



Presentation on Population Ageing in India: Issues and Challenges

In his presentation, **Dr. T. V. Sekher**, IIPS, Mumbai, highlighted that India is undergoing a rapid demographic transition, with the proportion of persons aged 60 years and above projected to rise from **8.6% in 2011 to nearly 19.5% by 2050**, meaning almost one in every five Indians will be elderly. Increased life expectancy—particularly among women—has led to higher levels of widowhood and socio-economic vulnerability.



Drawing on evidence from the **Longitudinal Ageing Study in India (LASI)**, Dr. Sekher pointed to the high prevalence of chronic diseases, disabilities, multi-morbidities, and nutritional imbalances among older adults, alongside limited health insurance coverage. While several social security and welfare schemes exist, their awareness, coverage, and utilisation remain uneven and inadequate.

The presentation underscored the urgent need for an updated and comprehensive national policy on ageing, strengthened social security systems, improved access to affordable healthcare, and greater parliamentary engagement in advocacy, legislation, and effective implementation to ensure dignity, security, and well-being for India's growing elderly population.

Supplementing the discussion, **Prof. P. P. Talwar** outlined three key roles for Parliamentarians in addressing the challenges of population ageing. He emphasised the need for dedicated policies and programmes for the elderly, effective monitoring of scheme implementation at the constituency level through engagement with officials, and greater efforts to create public awareness so that eligible beneficiaries can fully avail themselves of existing schemes.



Noting that India has achieved replacement-level fertility, he observed that the national focus must now shift towards ageing-related concerns. He urged Parliamentarians to take these responsibilities seriously at the parliamentary, constituency, and community levels to ensure meaningful outcomes for the elderly population.

During the discussion, **Shri Bhubaneswar Kalita**, Hon'ble Member of Parliament and Vice Chairman, IAPPD, highlighted that India's rapidly ageing population is a matter of serious concern and requires focused attention from Parliamentarians and governments alike. He underscored the role of MPs in ensuring effective delivery of welfare schemes for the elderly.



Sharing his experience, he noted that old age homes established in his constituency function not only as residential facilities but also as centres for care and recreation, offering physiotherapy, yoga, and wellness services. He also highlighted the benefits of Ayushman Bharat, including its extension to all citizens above 70 years, and the additional healthcare support provided under Ayushman Assam. He emphasised the need for sustained parliamentary commitment to ensure dignity, healthcare, and social security for the elderly.

Mr. D. Raja, senior Parliamentarian, appreciated both presentations, stating that they provided valuable insight into the challenges of India's ageing population. He highlighted the growing difficulties faced by elderly persons living without family support, especially in the context of smaller families and changing social norms. He emphasized that society and government must share responsibility to ensure dignified living for senior citizens, as guaranteed by the Constitution. He supported the proposal for a **Senior Citizens Commission**, promotion of **Education Social Responsibility**, and greater awareness at the village level about old-age pension schemes.

Stressing the need for love and compassion, he quoted Abraham Lincoln's words, "*malice towards none and compassion for all*," and cited the example of a senior citizens' centre in Hyderabad providing comprehensive health and welfare services.

Mr. Nadimul Haque, MP, appreciated IAPPD for organizing the meeting and suggested developing **state-wise and constituency-wise implementation modules** on ageing issues for both Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha MPs. He emphasized that Parliamentarians must proactively hold the government accountable through well-framed questions and suggested that IAPPD share draft questions and issue briefs with MPs. Referring to West Bengal, he mentioned schemes such as widow pension and *Lakshmi Bhandar*, and urged IAPPD to undertake more surveys and studies to support MPs.

Mr. Prakash Chik Baraik, MP, supported the proposal for establishing a **Commission for the Elderly** and appealed to all MPs to back it. He expressed concern over the neglect of ageing parents and referred to long-standing welfare schemes for senior citizens in West Bengal. He assured that he would raise the issue in the forthcoming Parliament session.

Mr. Anand Bhaskar Ropulu, former MP, appreciated Dr. T.V. Sekher's presentation for sensitizing the nation on ageing issues and commended IAPPD for organizing the meeting. He noted that social security for the elderly has emerged as an electoral mandate and emphasized the need for comprehensive life- and health-related support. He highlighted that nearly 90% of elderly persons in India are still supported by families, but stressed the urgency of addressing loneliness and insecurity among nearly 30 crore senior citizens. He advocated integrating student, employer, and corporate social responsibility and suggested dedicated court days for speedy redressal of senior citizens' grievances.



Mr. Kodikunnil Suresh, MP, stated that IAPPD is an appropriate forum to deliberate on ageing-related challenges, which MPs encounter regularly in their constituencies. He highlighted rising health issues among the elderly, particularly in rural areas, due to lack of awareness and guidance. He appreciated IAPPD's efforts and expressed his willingness to actively participate in future initiatives.

Mr. Ritabrata Banerjee, MP, articulated the opinion that the challenge presented by the aging population requires a multi-pronged approach, involving coordinated action at the governmental, non-governmental, and individual levels. He emphasized that the welfare of senior citizens is a shared responsibility, falling on every member of society.

Deliberations and Outcomes

The deliberations reaffirmed the urgent need for a holistic and forward-looking policy framework to address the twin challenges of population ageing and declining fertility. The Standing Committee unanimously endorsed the proposal for the **establishment of a Commission for the Elderly**, and it was decided that IAPPD would submit a formal representation to the Government in this regard.

During the interactive question-and-answer session, Members of Parliament sought clarifications from the experts on various aspects of ageing, fertility decline, health systems preparedness, and social protection mechanisms, reflecting keen parliamentary interest in the subject.

Outcome of the Meeting

- Consensus on the need to establish a **National Commission for the Elderly** to coordinate policies, programmes, and legal safeguards at both Central and State levels.
- Recommendation to promote **Educational Social Responsibility** at school and college levels to foster inter-generational sensitivity, social responsibility, and respect for senior citizens among students.
- Agreement on clearly defining and operationalizing the respective roles of **society, government, and institutions** in upholding the constitutional right of senior citizens to live with dignity.



- Emphasis on strengthening **last-mile awareness and access** to existing welfare schemes, particularly old-age pensions and health services, at village and grassroots levels.
- Endorsement of developing **state-wise and constituency-wise action modules** on ageing issues to enable Members of Parliament to effectively address region-specific challenges.
- Recommendation that IAPPD prepare and disseminate **issue briefs, policy notes, and draft parliamentary questions (starred and unstarred)** to support informed parliamentary oversight and government accountability.
- Recognition of effective **state-level best practices**, including widow pension and women-centric support schemes, for potential replication across other states.
- Acknowledgement that **social security for the elderly has emerged as an electoral priority**, warranting its integration into governance agendas and party manifestos.
- Emphasis on addressing **loneliness, neglect, and emotional well-being** of senior citizens, alongside economic security and healthcare access.
- Support for promoting a **multi-stakeholder approach**, including student, employer, and corporate social responsibility, to complement government efforts in elder care.
- Recommendation to explore **special judicial mechanisms**, such as dedicated court days or fast-track processes, to ensure timely redressal of senior citizens' grievances.
- Recognition of the increasing burden of **age-related and non-communicable diseases**, particularly in rural areas, and the need for enhanced health awareness, preventive care, and guidance.
- Assurance from participating Members of Parliament to **raise ageing-related issues in forthcoming Parliamentary sessions** and remain actively engaged with IAPPD initiatives.
- Recognition of **population ageing and declining fertility** as critical national challenges requiring sustained parliamentary focus.
- Emphasis on strengthening **long-term care systems**, healthcare infrastructure, and comprehensive social security for the elderly.
- Acknowledgement of the vital role of **family- and community-based care**, complemented by appropriate institutional support mechanisms.
- Commitment by **IAPPD** to continue engaging Parliamentarians, experts, and stakeholders to advance **evidence-based policy dialogue and advocacy** on population and development issues.

The meeting provided a valuable platform for in-depth discussions and exchange of perspectives on India's emerging demographic realities, highlighting the pivotal role of Parliamentarians in shaping responsive, inclusive, and forward-looking policies.



