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Kerala Establishes India's First Dedicated Department for Senior Citizens

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Kerala has become the first state in India to establish a dedicated department exclusively for the welfare of senior citizens. The initiative aims to address the growing challenges associated with the state's rapidly ageing population by improving healthcare services, social security measures, rehabilitation support, and age-friendly governance systems for elderly citizens. The decision reflects Kerala's proactive approach toward demographic changes and elderly care.?

Why the Department Was Created

Kerala is witnessing a sharp rise in its elderly population due to factors such as low fertility rates, higher life expectancy, and migration of younger people to other states and countries for employment. According to the Elderly in India Report 2021, nearly 16.5% of Kerala's population is above 60 years of age, and this percentage is projected to increase significantly in the coming decades. The government felt the need for a specialised department to coordinate welfare policies, healthcare support, pension schemes, and social inclusion programmes for senior citizens.

Existing Elderly Welfare Measures in Kerala

Kerala has already introduced several elderly welfare initiatives over the years. The state has a State Elderly Commission, dedicated welfare policies for senior citizens, and schemes such as Vayomitram, Vayo Amritham, and Sayamprabha. Kerala also introduced a separate "Elderly Budget" in 2026 with large allocations for elderly healthcare, pensions, and social assistance programmes. Additionally, the Elderline Helpline (14567) provides counselling, rescue support, and legal assistance to senior citizens.

Significance of the Initiative

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The creation of a dedicated elderly welfare department is considered an important administrative reform in India. Experts believe Kerala's model may encourage other Indian states to adopt similar policies as India's elderly population continues to rise. The move is also significant in achieving inclusive development and ensuring dignity, healthcare access, and financial security for senior citizens. (indianexpress.com)

Additional Key Facts

Kerala is regarded as India's fastest-ageing state.

The proportion of elderly people in Kerala is expected to cross 20% by 2031.

The India Ageing Report 2023 highlighted that Kerala has a higher proportion of elderly women, especially in the 80+ age group.

The Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act was enacted in India in 2007.

Elderline (14567) is a national helpline dedicated to senior citizens.

Important Facts:

Kerala Capital: Thiruvananthapuram

Kerala Governor: Rajendra Vishwanath Arlekar

National Policy on Older Persons: 1999

Senior Citizens Welfare Act: Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act, 2007