

Coming up, 603 homes for India's elderly destitutes

Here is heart-warming news for India's 21 million destitutes who have crossed the age of 60. The government has initiated the setting up of 603 old age homes for such people - one in each district of the country.

The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment will provide a grant of Rs.20 million to state governments for constructing each home that would accommodate not less than 150 destitute senior citizens.

There are around 70 million people who have crossed 60 in India, of whom an estimated 30 percent are destitute. While the figure works out to 21 million, the new old age homes would accommodate only 90,450 destitutes.

'It is just a great beginning. If needed, we will certainly double the number. A lot depends on the response of the state governments as well. If more such homes are needed, we will make funds available for them,' a senior ministry official, requesting anonymity, told IANS.

As per existing norms, the state governments would bear the maintenance cost for these homes. The construction process would start during the coming fiscal.

The government would provide food, clothes and other facilities free to the inmates of these homes. 'Everything would be free of cost for them,' the official said.

At present, the ministry grants aid to as many as 450 old age homes and an equal number of day care centres countrywide. These homes are run by NGOs.

For the first time, the government has chipped in to construct so many old age homes for destitutes under a centrally sponsored programme.

'The ministry is in the process of making available extra funds to the state governments to ensure the effective maintenance of these homes,' the official said.

Each home would be equipped with facilities so that senior citizens can take care of their health. For entertainment too, they will get television sets so they not only feel at home but also do not suffer from any kind of boredom.

If any of them can do some lucrative jobs like making candles and other such stuff, both edible and non-edible, the management of the home will do the needful.

'Instead of whiling away their time, they will be encouraged to keep themselves engaged in economic activities and the proceeds will be spent on their welfare,' the official said.

The setting up of old age homes for senior citizens 'who are indigent' is an important component of the Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act, 2007.

The Section 19 (I) of the Act stipulates, 'The state government may establish and maintain such number of old age homes at accessible places as it may deem necessary, in a phased manner.'

Rajeev Ranjan Roy (© IANS / India eNews)