A New Vision for Old Age Care

What is the issue?

A formal approach to homes for the elderly is an important policy and planning issue for India.

What is the status of old age population in India?

- The UN World Population Ageing Report notes that India's ageing population (those aged 60 and above) is projected to increase to nearly 20% by 2050 from about 8%.
- By 2050, the percentage of elderly people will increase by 326%, with those aged 80 years and above set to increase by 700%, making them the fastest-growing age group in India.
- A recent set of research papers from Hyderabad highlight the fact that good intentions and a sense of charity are often inadequate when it comes to addressing the basic health needs of their elderly residents.
- As people age, and their motor skills weaken, they are at a greater risk of falling down and hurting themselves.
- Instead of planning for accessible and elderly-friendly structures that allow them to operate safely, we reduce their mobility.
- It also reduces their sociability, their sense of independence and well-being leading up to mental health issues and depression.

What is the need for public policy support to old age population?

- **Rising old age homes**-As India becomes increasingly urbanised and families break up into smaller units, homes for the elderly have risen.
- These homes are either paid for, or offer free or subsidised services which are run by NGOs, religious or voluntary organisations with support from the government, or by local philanthropists.
- **Lack of regulatory oversight**- They provide accommodation, timely care, and a sense of security for their residents but the quality of service varies as these homes lack regulatory oversight.
- **No proper SOP**- Many homes lack clearly established standard operating procedures (SOP), and their referral paths to health care are informal.
- **Impact on residents**- There is an urgent need to understand the quality of life at such institutions, including the impact of these homes on the mental health of their residents.

What is the way forward?

- **Health screening**- Formal pathways can be built for basic health screening for blood sugar, blood pressure, periodic vision and hearing screening, and a simple questionnaire to assess mental health.
- Such interventions are inexpensive and could go a long way in identifying health issues and

offering support.

- **Addressing health issues**- The next step would be to build formal pathways to address any health issues that such screenings identify with the aid of hospitals NGO and private care.
- **Public policy support- There** is a need for robust public policy to support homes for the elderly.
- Health institutions will also need to offer a comprehensive set of packages that are tailored for the elderly.
- Homes for the elderly must be guided by policy, to make their facilities, buildings and social environment elderly and disabled-friendly.
- Design, architecture and civic facilities must be thought from the ground up and these innovations must be available for all residents.

Reference

1. https://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-opinion/a-new-vision-for-old-age-care/article65209198.ece

