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'Retirement India expo' a big hit

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The show for the elderly features customised products, services and housing

In youth, the days are short and years long, in old age the years are short and days long. That's exactly the problem with the senior citizens. Most of them want privacy but no isolation, company but no crowd.

The 'Retirement India expo', billed as the first such expo for the elderly, that commenced here on Saturday, attracted a good number of oldies. Most of them were seen making enquiries for customised products, services and housing. With children settled abroad or too busy with their own lives, the elderly couples, widows and widowers searched for a cosy place to stay with someone at hand to attend.

The two-day expo is being organised jointly by Dignity Foundation, Athashri and A.P. Rajiv Swagruha Corporation at Taj Deccan hotel. The expo has stalls catering to healthy aging, leisure, lifestyle, consumables, insurance. Besides lively discussions are arranged on subjects such as critical appreciation of music, how to make safe money in stock market, art of making salads, fitness.

Cold shouldered

Sheilu Sreenivasan, founder-president, Dignity Foundation, said the 97 million senior citizens constituted an important political constituency and yet they were given a cold shoulder. There was none to represent them. Even the 12th plan did not make a mention about the elderly. She wanted the government to be proactive and pay special attention to the senior citizens who have contributed 60 years to the economy.

Justice Subhashan Reddy said providing the senior citizens a dignified life was no mercy or charity, but a human right guaranteed by the United Nations. "A life without dignity is no life at all," he remarked.

Justice Reddy said the Protection of Parents and Senior Citizens Act was enacted in 2007, but till date it is not implemented. He deplored the unreasonable and inordinate delay of a welfare resolution.

He asked the Dignity Foundation to file a writ of mandamus for implementation of the Act.

Shalini Mishra, managing director, Rajiv Swagruha Corporation, spoke about the exclusive housing created by the government for the elderly. Prashanti Enclave was ready at Bandlaguda in L.B. Nagar while two more such ventures were planned at Tirupati and Visakhapatnam. She wanted the financial institutions to extend loan facility to the senior citizens as the latter had problem raising money for housing. She felt the government should intervene in this matter.

Later four eminent senior citizens were honoured. They included centenarian Gelli Narayana Chetty; Dr. B.K. Sahay, Diabetologist; R.N. Mittal, president, senior citizens association; Prof. Mukunda Rao, former UN advisor, and Dr. K. R. Gangadharan of Heritage Hospital.