

## **Regarding need for a public-funded comprehensive and integrated Geriatric Care System in the country-laid**

**SHRI BHARTRUHARI MAHTAB (CUTTACK):** While India is often described as a young nation, recent data from the Reserve Bank of India shows a sharply diverging reality across States. Kerala and Tamil Nadu are projected to become ageing States by 2036, with elderly populations exceeding 20 per cent, while States such as Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Jharkhand will continue to see growth in their working-age populations beyond 2031. States like Karnataka and Maharashtra lie in between, facing both growth and ageing pressures. The RBI has advised ageing States to rationalise subsidies to manage pension costs and youthful States to invest in human capital. However, this advice overlooks key political and social realities. Southern States face reduced Central tax devolution and possible loss of parliamentary representation, despite having successfully controlled population growth. At the same time, youthful States have not increased spending on education or healthcare, raising concerns about employability in an era of automation and artificial intelligence. Ageing in India disproportionately affects women, many of whom lack pensions and financial security. With migration and nuclear families weakening traditional support systems, fiscal measures alone are insufficient. Fiscal consolidation alone cannot address this. India urgently needs a public-funded geriatric care system, expanded social pensions, and investment in the care economy. Without this, graceful ageing will remain a privilege of the wealthy, while millions of elderly citizens face dependency and neglect. The Government must act before the demographic dividend turns into a demographic burden. I urge upon the Government to treat elderly care as essential social infrastructure and act urgently.