

Report of the International Conference on “Ensuring Social Security and Well-Being for an Ageing Population: Challenges, Innovations and Policy Pathways”

Shyam Lal College, University of Delhi, through its Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC), successfully organized a thought-provoking *International Conference on “Ensuring Social Security and Well-Being for an Ageing Population: Challenges, Innovations and Policy Pathways”* on April 8, 2025. The event was organized in collaboration with the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR), New Delhi, and witnessed an intellectually stimulating confluence of scholars, policy-makers, researchers, and practitioners from India and abroad.

The day commenced with a lamp lighting ceremony, symbolizing the dispelling of darkness and the pursuit of knowledge. The ceremony was graced by esteemed guests of honour, including eminent scholars and senior bureaucrats. This was followed by the soulful rendition of Saraswati Vandana and the University of Delhi Kulgeet, invoking blessings for an enlightening academic engagement. The inaugural session featured keynote addresses by distinguished speakers who brought diverse perspectives on the issue of social security—particularly focusing on ageing populations and socio-economic vulnerabilities in the contemporary global and Indian context.

Prof. Madan Lal, Professor, Department of Commerce, Delhi School of Economics, delivered a powerful address emphasizing the sustainability of the social security system in the backdrop of accelerating climate change, environmental degradation, and demographic transitions. He cautioned against the long-term implications of ecological imbalances, such as increased morbidity among the elderly, migration-induced social fragmentation, and fiscal pressures on pension and healthcare systems. He called for proactive measures to ensure the health, dignity, and economic security of the elderly, particularly in vulnerable regions. Stressing the ideals of *Viksit Bharat @2047*, Prof. Lal encouraged participants to apply critical thinking and individual responsibility in achieving inclusive and resilient social protection systems.

Prof. V.K. Shrotriya, Head & Dean, Faculty of Commerce & Business, University of Delhi, offered a comparative overview of social security policies at the international, national, and state levels. Drawing from case studies and global policy models, he elaborated on emerging frameworks that have successfully integrated universal pension schemes, healthcare access, and targeted subsidies. He praised the initiative of organizing an international platform for such a critical discourse and strongly recommended that the conference outcomes be consolidated into a policy document for submission to the Government of India. He highlighted the importance of evidence-based policy advocacy and encouraged scholars to bridge the gap between academic research and public policymaking.

Dr. Omkar Sharma, Former Chief Commissioner, Ministry of Labour & Welfare, Government of India, provided an insightful talk laid the foundation for understanding the conceptual evolution of social security. He traced the historical development of welfare mechanisms in India and underscored the transformative potential of pensions and insurance schemes as tools for poverty alleviation and empowerment. He discussed the wide array of initiatives undertaken by the Ministry of Labour and Welfare—both for the organized sector through schemes like EPFO and ESIC, and for the unorganized sector via programs such as PMSBY, PM-SYM, and the e-SHRAM portal. Dr. Sharma highlighted the importance of awareness and outreach,

asserting that the success of any social welfare scheme hinges on effective communication and ease of access, especially for marginalized and rural populations.

Prof. Munim Barai, a distinguished academician from the Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University, Japan, graced the international conference by participating in the online mode. Despite the geographical distance, his virtual presence added immense value to the discussions. In his address, Prof. Barai shared thought-provoking insights on the increasing importance of social security for the ageing population, a concern that has gained global significance amid shifting demographic patterns. Drawing from both international experiences and Japan's own well-established social security framework, he emphasized the urgent need for countries like India to prepare for the rapidly growing elderly population by building inclusive, resilient, and sustainable welfare systems. He highlighted the importance of proactive policy planning, intergenerational solidarity, and the development of integrated care systems that cater to the financial, health, and emotional needs of the elderly. His address resonated strongly with the central theme of the conference and provided a valuable global perspective, enriching the overall deliberations and reinforcing the importance of international collaboration in addressing social security challenges.

Following the inaugural session, multiple paper presentation sessions were conducted throughout the day, offering a robust platform for scholarly engagement on a diverse range of pertinent themes related to social security. The conference witnessed active participation from 25 presenters, comprising esteemed professors and research scholars representing academic institutions from across India. These sessions included discussions on *Social Security for the Elderly: Issues of Accessibility and Adequacy*, *Innovations in Pension Systems: Global Experiences and Indian Lessons*, *Gender Dimensions of Social Protection*, *Social Insurance for the Informal Sector Workers*, *Digital Inclusion and Technological Innovations in Social Security Delivery*, and *Sustainable Financing Models for Welfare Programs*. Scholars from diverse disciplines such as economics, public policy, sociology, law, and management actively participated, presenting original research and offering valuable policy insights. The interdisciplinary nature of the conference enriched the deliberations and encouraged a holistic understanding of the emerging trends, challenges, and innovations in social security systems.

The conference concluded with a valedictory session during which the key takeaways from the day-long deliberations were thoughtfully summarized. Participants collectively emphasized the urgent need to strengthen grassroots-level awareness campaigns to ensure that social security benefits reach the most vulnerable populations. There was a consensus on the importance of integrating social security initiatives with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to foster inclusive and sustainable growth. The adoption of a lifecycle approach to social welfare was highlighted as essential for addressing the evolving needs of individuals across different stages of life. Additionally, leveraging digital platforms was seen as a crucial step toward enhancing the efficiency, accessibility, and transparency of welfare delivery systems. The formal vote of thanks was extended to all dignitaries, participants, paper presenters, and organizing team members, acknowledging their valuable contributions to the success of the event.