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Networking is dire need for old-age homes, says study

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THE percentage of senior citizens is rising not only in India but worldwide, the percentage of old people staying alone is also on the rise, while most of old-age homes and day-care centres are located in city, maximum number of non-residential organisations for senior citizens are in the suburbs, observes Honorary Project Director of Tata Institute of Social Sciences S Siva Raju, in his research on senior citizens.

A workshop for senior citizens, organised by the Family Welfare Association, Indian Merchants' Chamber (Ladies' Wing) and the Lions Club, discussed the findings of Raju's research, which was conducted over a period of eight-nine months. The workshop also dealt at length with the possibility of networking among the various organisations.

A need for networking was felt especially after the study showed that most senior citizens' organi-

sations work in isolation. They are listed in directories but not categorised, without any analysis of their strengths or weaknesses, Raju says in the study.

Out of 70 such organisations, 73 per cent of the old-ages homes (11) are located in the city, while

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senior citizens' organisations (45) are usually concentrated in the suburbs. The organisations voiced many of their problems, with the lack of funds and space topping the list of their grievances. Other problems included registration, compulsion of conducting regular activities after registration and in-

adequate transport facilities.

Since the problems were common and objectives the same, the idea of networking was floated by Dr Geeta Shah, who explained the concept in the second session of the workshop. She explained that networking was more than just coming together. It should enable society and the organisations to identify and understand the real problem and not just address the problems-that-appear-to-be, said Shah.

"Although there is no structure decided as yet, it is first necessary to come together. A network will be a structure that facilitates networking," she says, admitting that none of them are very clear on an exact plan-of-action, except about the need for it.

About a hundred senior citizens, who were in attendance, commended Raju's work and agreed on the need for networking. A couple of them thought that the younger generation had to be informed about this subject.