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Supreme Court Allows Passive Euthanasia

- After both the primary and secondary medical boards, which were constituted to examine the health condition of Harish Rana, recommended withdrawing life-support systems, there is no need for the court to intervene further.
- However, since this is the first such instance, the life-support systems attached to the patient must be withdrawn with dignity.
- In cases where primary and secondary medical boards recommend withdrawing such life-support systems to perform euthanasia, the High Courts must instruct all judicial magistrates to obtain information from hospitals, following the guidelines set forth in the Common Cause judgment.
- The Central Government must ensure that the Chief Medical Officer of each district maintains a list of registered doctors to form primary and secondary medical boards to provide recommendations in euthanasia cases.
- We recommend that the Central Government enact a comprehensive law regarding euthanasia.

Two Types of Euthanasia

- **Passive Euthanasia:** This involves allowing a patient who is suffering for a long period from an incurable disease to die naturally by removing the life-support medical equipment or stopping medical treatment.
- **Active Euthanasia:** This involves administering a lethal injection to end the life of a patient to permanently relieve them from their suffering. This is the other form of euthanasia.
- This practice (Active Euthanasia) is considered illegal in India.

Let us prioritize the welfare of the elderly!

- **The Rising Number of Elderly People: An Overview!** According to the report by the Technical Group on Population Projections, the number of senior citizens over the age of 60 in India, which stood at 100 million (10 crores) in 2011, is projected to double to 230 million (23 crores) by 2036. Consequently, after a decade, 15% of India's population or one in every seven people will be over the age of 60.

- Furthermore, a long-term study on aging conducted by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare suggests that the number of elderly people in India will rise to 310 million (31 crores) by 2050.
- This significant increase underscores the urgent need for social security, livelihood rights, medical services, and welfare programs tailored for the elderly.
- **Demographic Shift:** While the country's total fertility rate is declining, the number of elderly people is rising, which is a significant trend.
- **Regional Disparities:** This rise is not uniform across the country. For example, in Kerala, the elderly population is expected to rise from 13% in 2011 to 23% in 2036, making it the state with the highest concentration of senior citizens.
- Conversely, the elderly population remains lower in most North Indian states, with the exception of Himachal Pradesh and Punjab.
- **Social Challenges:** Although Indian society is traditionally known for respecting the elderly, they continue to be targets of neglect, disrespect, and criminal activities.
- With the rise of nuclear families, many elderly individuals are forced to live alone.
- **Gender and Dependency:** Among the elderly, the sex ratio is 1,065 women for every 1,000 men. Of these, 54% are widows.
- Since women have historically been dependent on men, the situation of elderly women living alone is particularly concerning.
- Currently, for every 100 working individuals in India, there are 62 dependents
- **Government Initiatives and Responsibilities:**
 - The Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act, 2007, mandates that state governments establish old-age homes in every district.
 - However, this has not been implemented effectively in most states.
 - **Tamil Nadu's Initiatives:** Tamil Nadu has implemented schemes such as old-age pensions, the 'Makkalai Thedi Maruthuvam' (healthcare at the doorstep), the Chief Minister's 'Thayumanavar' scheme (providing ration at the doorstep), and the 'Poonjolai' project (providing shelter for abandoned elderly).
 - The government must ensure that these benefits reach all eligible beneficiaries without any hindrance.
 - Protecting the social security of the elderly is not just a duty of the state, but a responsibility of the entire society.