

## **New Department of Disability Affairs Created under the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment**

(6<sup>th</sup> June, 2012)

The Central Government has recently created a new Department of Disability Affairs which was earlier a part of the Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment. On the initiative of the Union Minister of Social Justice & Empowerment Shri Mukul Wasnik, the proposal was moved for the creation of new Disability Department, considering the need of the large population of Persons with Disabilities which, as per 2001 census is 2.1 crore. Now the Government has created two Departments under the Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment vide notification dated 12th May 2012, namely:-

(i) Department of Social Justice and Empowerment (Samajik Nyaya aur Adhikarita Vibhag)

(ii) Department of Disability Affairs.

The new disability department will have a separate Secretary, 3 Joint Secretary level officers and other officers. The entire strength would be about 150. Earlier, the disability department was just one bureau under the Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment and had only one Joint Secretary and a staff strength of around 40 which was very inadequate considering the large population of PwDs and their problems. The process of creating new posts has already been started.

The Minister for Social Justice & Empowerment Shri Mukul Wasnik said that our Government is committed to the cause of PwDs. With the creation of this new Department, we will be able to focus more on the policy issues and problems of the PwDs. There would be a separate budget for this department which would help in strengthening the existing schemes and formulating the new ones, and also for technological innovations, which is very much required in this sector. It is pertinent to mention here that Hon'ble President of India in her address to Parliament on 12th March 2012 had mentioned about the creation of this new department.

He also stressed that it would now be more easy to coordinate with various stakeholders, NGOs, State Governments, other related Central ministries and international organizations like United Nations, as India is a signatory to UNCRPD.

The subject of "Disability" figures in the State List in the Seventh Schedule of the Constitution. It also figures in the illustrative list of items for devolution to Panchayati Raj and Municipal bodies (in accordance with relevant State laws) as given in the Eleventh and Twelfth Schedules of the Constitution. Notwithstanding this, the Govt. of India has always been proactive in the disability sector. Not merely is it running seven National Institutes (NIs) dealing with various types of disabilities and seven Composite Regional Centres (CRCs), which provide rehabilitation services to PwDs and run courses for rehabilitation professionals, but also funds a large number of NGOs for similar services, and also a National Handicapped Finance & Dev. Corporation (NHFDC) which provides loans at concessional rates of interest to PwDs for self employment.