

**Press Information Bureau
Government of India
Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment**

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National Awards for the Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities-2012

The President, Shri Pranab Mukherjee said the Government is in the process of replacing the Persons with Disability Act with a new legislation and urged the Government to expedite the process and introduce it in the Parliament as soon as possible. He was presenting the National Awards for the Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities-2012 at a function organized by the Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment here today. The President also said that there is a urgent need to provide education to children with disability, create Barrier free access and fill up backlog on vacancies for the disabled and also urged the private sector to participate in this process.

Extending a warm welcome to the President, the Union Minister of Social Justice & Empowerment Kumari Selja said that we recognize that persons with disabilities are a valuable human resource and must be given opportunities to contribute equally with others in national building. The Government is committed to continue its endeavour to empower the Persons with Disabilities with the cooperation of every citizen of the country. With the commencement of the XIIth Plan, we have also commenced the process of planning a major expansion of programmes and schemes in the disability sector for bringing Persons with Disabilities on centre stage in the developmental process.

The Minister said that she was happy to share that during last two years, a sum of Rs. 85 crore was released to various State Governments and other bodies for making their premises/buildings accessible to persons with disabilities.

The Minister further added that for the first time, a sum of Rs.5 crore was sanctioned to the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) for making five World Heritage Sites and 25 other ticketed Monuments maintained by it, accessible. These world heritage monuments are the Taj Mahal, Agra Fort, Fatehpur Sikri, Sun Temple Konark, and Champaner-Pavagadh. We propose to cover all World Heritage sites and other ticketed monuments of ASI, as rapidly as possible. Further, a sum of about Rs.12 crore was also sanctioned to Jawaharlal Nehru University & Delhi University to make their buildings, hostels, guest houses and libraries accessible.

The Minister informed that the draft new legislation named “Right to Persons with Disabilities Bill, 2012” has been finalized by the Ministry and has been circulated to the States Governments and UTs, for their comments. It will be our endeavour to introduce the Bill in the Parliament at the earliest.

Highlighting the work done in various schemes the Minister said that under ADIP Scheme, disabled persons are provided aids and appliances to promote their physical, social and psychological rehabilitation. The income ceilings and cost of aids/appliances, which were fixed in 2005, are being revised.

The Minister also said that Artificial Limbs Manufacturing Corporation of India, popularly known as ALIMCO, has been relentlessly serving for the past 40 years Persons with Disabilities (PwDs), under ADIP and ADIP-SSA schemes, by manufacturing and supplying ISI marked aids and appliances. In the last 40 years ALIMCO has served 38 lakh Persons with Disabilities. Currently, it is serving on an average 1.5 lakh Persons with Disabilities, per annum.

With a view to promote self employment of persons with disabilities and help in their economic rehabilitation, the National Handicapped Finance and Development Corporation provides loan at concessional rate of interest through its partners in the State. NHFDC benefited over 10,625 persons with disabilities during the year 2011-12. The Minister mentioned that the Corporation has developed a special scheme wherein a person with disability can take concessional loan for purchase of assistive devices to enhance his performance on the job, to which in turn may lead to their improved employability. Assistive devices like Screen Reader, Retrofitted mobility aids, Artificial limbs etc. are included in the assistive devices scheme. Recently, the corporation has also developed two online applications. One online application is for scholarships for students with disabilities while the other online application is for education loan.

The Minister further informed that the National Trust for the Welfare of Persons with Autism, Cerebral Palsy, Mental Retardation and Multiple Disabilities was set up to address the main concern of parents of children with these disabilities – “What will happen to my child when I am no more?” The National Trust, besides working for this mandate, has been organizing, since 2009, an annual pan- India awareness campaign, called “Badhte Kadam”. Under this, more than 500 melas and camps were held across the country spreading awareness and educating people about UNCRPD, Right to Education, and Right to Information and other issues concerning disabilities.

Appreciating the work of the Navshikhar Channel – the first ever channel dedicated for disability, a joint venture of the Rehabilitation Council of India (RCI), Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO), and Media Lab Asia (MLA) which telecasts

programmes, documentaries and films on different topics in the field of disability rehabilitation, to over 500 centres located all over the country the Minister said that the Council is using modern communication technology to share information on rehabilitation by conducting tele-conferences on various topics from the RCI Studio utilizing services of experts and professionals. In order to improve the coverage in North-Eastern Region, RCI has decided to set up 40 new centres there, for which installation work has started.

The Minister further informed that from this year, for the first time, a new scheme named Rajiv Gandhi National Fellowship Scheme for students with disabilities has been launched to allow them to pursue M.Phil/Ph.D courses.

In his Welcome address, the Minister of State in the Ministry, Shri D. Napoleon said that a new Department on “Disability Affairs” was created to increase the focus on the needs of the persons with disability. According to Census 2001 there were 2.19 crore persons with disabilities in our country. With the shift from medical rehabilitation to social rehabilitation with a rights based approach, there is an increasing recognition of their abilities and with increasing emphasis on mainstreaming them in society including several initiatives taken by the Government, we are hopeful of moving towards a more inclusive society. Rehabilitation and empowerment - the mandate of the Department of Disability Affairs, is a good investment because it builds human capacity. It is this human capability that we have gathered today to celebrate.

Giving information about the Awards, he said that for the year 2012, we received 654 applications within the stipulated time-limit of 31st August, 2012 as compared to 599 applications last year. 48 awards are being conferred of which 11 are to women. Puducherry Corporation for Development of Women & Differently Abled Persons Ltd. was awarded for best state channelising agency of National Handicapped Finance and Development Corporation, Govt. of India. The Corporation has made innovative changes in its implementation strategy during year 2011-12. Out of 255 projects received from persons with disabilities, 254 projects were sanctioned by the Corporation. As a result, it was successful in the utilization of 90% funds received from NHFDC with recovery of 69.4%, benefitting 235 persons with disability. The Corporation has established itself as a fine model of efficiency and innovation.

Present on the occasion were Shri Anil Goswami, Secretary, Ministry of SJE, Smt. Stuti Kacker, Secretary, Department of Disability Affairs
