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President presents “National Awards for Empowerment of Persons With Disabilities -2016 to Awardees

President of India Shri Pranab Mukherjee presented the National Awards for Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (Divyangjan), 2016 to awardees at a function organized by Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment here today on the occasion of International Day of Persons with Disabilities (3rd December). Minister of Social Justice and Empowerment Shri Thaawarchand Gehlot, Ministers of State of Social Justice and Empowerment Shri Krishan Pal Gurjar, Shri Ramdas Athawale also graced the occasion.

In his address the President expressed his pleasure to be present in the event and congratulated the government for work done towards the empowerment for Persons with Disabilities which will lead them towards a dignified life and will ensure their equal rights. He expressed his happiness for the implementation of various welfare schemes of the Department. He said that The Government has identified 50 cities under Accessible India Campaign to make them accessible for PwDs. 1098 buildings have been identified in these cities. In the recent past the Government has laid greater thrust on distribution of contemporary aids and assistive devices to the persons with disabilities to enhance their mobility and accessibility. In the last two and half years, 5.8 lakh persons with disabilities benefitted with equipment's worth Rs. 350 crores by the Department. He also congratulated the government for organizing IT competition for youth with disabilities in collaboration of NIT Kurukshetra. Concluding his address the President said that we must all strive together to achieve an inclusive world and fulfil the dreams of our great poet Rabindra Nath Tagore who said “The problem is not how to wipe out the differences but how to unite with the differences intact.”

In his address, Shri Thaawarchand Gehlot said that a new act in place of the existing PwD Act, 1995 has been introduced in the Parliament which will envisage more rights and entitlements to all categories of persons with disabilities and would also provide for strong implementation mechanisms. He added that the Department is working with transparency so that the benefits of the schemes may be availed by the actual beneficiaries. He expressed his gratitude for the presence of the Hon'ble President in the function. He stated that presence of the President and the Prime Minister in the programs related to Persons with Disabilities support and inspire us to work with more dedication. He also told about the 3 world records created by the Department in Navsari ADIP camp in the presence of Hon'ble Prime Minister on 17th September 2016. He further said that in Manipur the Department has broken it's own record and created a new record for fitting of Hearing Aids to 3911 persons in Imphal, Manipur on 5th November 2016. He invoked persons with disabilities for keeping their moral high and further added that with a great will power a person can touch any height. He pointed out that Divyangjan are integral part of our human resources and therefore we all need to work towards their empowerment. Congratulating the winners of the National Award, 2016 he told those who couldn't win this year may continue their efforts for getting the award in future.

Minister of State of Social Justice and Empowerment Shri Krishan Pal Gurjar said that according to census 2011, there are 2.68 crore Divyangjan in our country who exhibit great diversity in terms of quantum of Disability as well as type of Disabilities. He told about the achievements under various schemes being successfully implemented by the Department for empowerment of Divyangjan with specifically mentioning about the skill development programs, ADIP scheme and Accessible India Campaign.

In his welcome address Secretary, DEPwD Shri N. S. Kang told that the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities has been working tirelessly for the empowerment of Divyangjan under the leadership of Hon'ble Ministers of Social Justice and Empowerment.

On International Day of Persons with Disabilities i.e. 3rd December the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (Divyangjan), Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment presents National Awards on Individuals, Institutions, Organisations, State/District etc for their outstanding achievements and work done towards empowerment of Persons with Disabilities. The National Award is presented in 14 broad categories –

- I. Best Employees/Self Employed with disabilities;
- II. (a) Best Employers & (b) Best Placement Officer or Agency;
- III. (a) Best Individual and (b) Best Institution working for the Cause of Persons with Disabilities;
- IV. Role Model;
- V. Best Applied Research or Innovation or Product Development aimed at improving the life of persons with Disabilities;
- VI. Outstanding Work in the Creation of Barrier-free Environment for the Persons with Disabilities;
- VII. Best District in Providing Rehabilitation Services;
- VIII. Best State Channelizing Agency of National Handicapped Federation Development Corporation;
- IX. Outstanding Creative Adult Persons with Disabilities;
- X. Best Creative Child with Disabilities;
- XI. Best Braille Press;
- XII. Best "Accessible" Website;
- XIII. Best State in promoting empowerment of persons with disabilities; and
- XIV. Best sports person with disability.

This year a total number of 908 applications were received within the due date under the fourteen different categories of awards. The applications were examined/shortlisted by various Screening Committees constituted for the purpose. The recommendations made by the Screening Committees were placed before the National Selection Committee. A total of 78 individual/institutions were selected and conferred the awards.
