

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT
DEPARTMENT OF EMPOWERMENT OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

RAJYA SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION No. 288
TO BE ANSWERED ON 27.11.2024

ACCESS TO ESSENTIAL SERVICES TO SENIOR CITIZEN & DIVYANGJANS

288. Shri Sanjay Seth:

Will the Minister of Social Justice and Empowerment be pleased to state:

- (a) whether Government has taken steps to ensure that senior citizens and Divyangjans have access to essential services, financial support and protective measures, if so, the details thereof;
- (b) the extent to which Government addresses the unique challenges and needs of the aging population and Divyangjans;
- (c) whether Government is making education and employment more accessible for people with disabilities;
- (d) if so, the details of schemes for making education and employment more accessible for people with disabilities; and
- (e) the steps taken by Government to raise awareness about disability rights?

ANSWER
MINISTER OF STATE FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT
(SHRI B L VERMA)

(a) & (b): Department of Social Justice and Empowerment is implementing Atal Vayo Abhyuday Yojana for welfare of Senior Citizens with the following components:

- i. Integrated Programme for Senior Citizens under which Grant in aid is provided to Non-Governmental/ Voluntary Organisations for running and maintenance of senior citizen homes (old age homes), continuous care homes, etc. Facilities like shelter, nutrition, medicare and entertainments are provided free of cost to indigent senior citizens.
- ii. State Action Plan for Senior Citizens under which Grant in aid is provided to States/ UTs for activities like awareness generation, sensitization, cataract surgeries and State specific activities.
- iii. RashtriyaVayoshri Yojana under which senior citizens, belonging to BPL category or the senior citizen with the monthly income not more than Rs. 15000/- and suffering from age related disabilities/ infirmities are provided with such physical aids and assisted living devices which can restore near normalcy in their bodily functions.

- iv. Elderline- National Helpline for Senior Citizens under which registration of grievances, redressal of Grievances and Monitoring of the performance of States /UTs are done through the website of Elderline for Senior citizens (elderline.dosje.gov.in).
- v. Senior-care Ageing Growth Engine under which innovative start- ups are identified and encouraged for developing products, processes and services for the welfare of the elderly.

Further, for empowerment of Divyangjans, the Government enacted RPwD Act, 2016 which came into force on 19.04.2017. Section 45 (2) of the RPwD Act mandates the appropriate Government and the local authorities to formulate an action plan based on prioritisation, for providing accessibility in all their buildings and spaces providing essential services such as all primary health centres, civil hospitals, schools, railway stations and bus stops. Section 24 of the said Act mandates the appropriate Government, within the limit of economic capacity, to provide disability pension subject to income ceiling. Section 6 and 7 of the said Act provides for measures to protect persons with disabilities from cruelty, inhuman treatment, abuse, violence and inhuman treatment. Furthermore, though relief to the disabled is a State subject by virtue of entry 9 of the State List of the Constitution of India, the Central Government supplements the efforts of the State Governments through various schemes and programmes. Some of the major schemes are as follows:

- i. 'Assistance to Persons with Disabilities for Purchase/Fitting of Aids and Appliances (ADIP)' under which funds are released to various implementing agencies to assist the eligible PwDs in procuring durable, sophisticated and scientifically manufactured, modern, standard aids and appliances that can promote their physical, social and psychological rehabilitation by reducing the effects of disabilities and enhancing their economic potential throughout the country.
- ii. Scheme for Implementation of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 (SIPDA) an umbrella scheme, under which assistance is provided to State Governments and to autonomous organizations/Institutions under Central or State Governments, for various activities relating to implementation of the RPwD Act, 2016, particularly for creation of barrier free environment, accessible india campaign and skill development of PwDs.
- iii. Deendayal Divyangjan Rehabilitation Scheme (DDRS) under which financial assistance is provided to the voluntary Organizations for projects relating to rehabilitation of PwDs aimed at enabling persons with disabilities to reach and maintain their optimal, physical, sensory, intellectual, psychiatric or social functional levels.
- iv. Scholarship Scheme under which Government provides scholarships to students with disabilities.

(c) & (d): To make education more accessible, the Accessibility Guidelines and Standards for Higher Education Institutions and Universities and Accessibility Code for Educational Institutions formulated by the Department of Higher Education and Accessibility Code for Educational Institutions by Dept. of School Education and Literacy, Ministry of Education respectively have been notified under the RPwD Rules, 2017.

Further, Department of School Education & Literacy has launched an overarching programme for the school education sector- Samagra Shiksha Scheme. Under Samagra Siksha, there is a dedicated component for Inclusive Education for Children with Special Needs (IE for CwSN), to ensure full equity and inclusion such that all children with special needs are able to fully participate in schools. The scheme aims to look at education for CwSN in a continuum from pre-school to class XII. The scheme covers all CwSN with one or more disabilities as mentioned in the Schedule of disabilities of the Right of the Person with Disabilities (RPwD) Act, 2016. The Samagra Shiksha Scheme is being implemented through State Governments/ UT administrations and the Central Government provides necessary financial support for the same.

Through the inclusive education for CwSN component, various provisions are made available for CwSN such as identification and assessment camps (at block level), student specific interventions @ Rs. 3500/- per CwSN per annum for support, such as provision of aids, appliances, assistive devices, teaching-learning material, Braille books, large print with severe & multiple disabilities who are unable to attend school. The focus of Samagra Siksha is on providing inclusive education to CwSN, wherein children regardless of their abilities/disabilities participate and learn together in the same class, thus creating an equitable enabling educational environment for all students.

Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities is implementing a Umbrella Scheme titled 'Scholarships for Students with Disabilities (Divyangjan)' which comprises six components viz;

- Pre-matric (Classes IX & X),
- Post-matric (Classes XI to Post graduate Degree and Diploma),
- Top Class Education (Graduate and Post graduate Degree/Diploma in notified institutes of excellence in education),
- National Overseas Scholarship (Masters Degree/ Ph.D in Foreign Universities),
- National Fellowship for PWDs (M Phil and Ph.D in Indian Universities); and
- Free Coaching (for competitive exams for group A,B and C posts and entrance examinations for admission to technical and professional courses).

Further, Section 16(ii) of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 mandates the appropriate Government and local authorities to make building, campus and various facilities accessible for the purpose of providing inclusive education to children with disabilities. Section 17(i) of the said Act provides for making suitable modification in the curriculum and examination system, by way of provisioning extra time for completion of examination paper and exemption from second and third language courses to meet the needs of students with disabilities. In view of this, CBSE being sensitive to the needs of students with disabilities provides several exemptions/concessions to CwSN including deaf and dumb as defined in RPwD Act, 2016 such as

issuing authority of medical certificate, facility of scribe and compensatory time, appointment of scribe and related instructions, fee and special exemptions for class X like exemption from third language, flexibility in choosing subjects, alternate questions/separate questions and special exemptions for class XII like flexibility in choosing subjects, separate question paper and questions in lieu of practical component.

Furthermore, Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPwD) implements 'National Action Plan (NAP) for Skill Development of Persons with Disabilities (PwDs)' which was launched in March, 2015. NAP is implemented under the umbrella scheme—"Scheme for Implementation of Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act 2016 (SIPDA)". Under NAP, funds are released as per Common Norms Guidelines issued and subsequent amendments from time to time by the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship for imparting skill training to persons with disabilities in the age group of 15 to 59 years. This Department recently launched PM-DAKSH-DEPwD Portal. The link of the portal is available on <https://pmdaksh.depwd.gov.in/login>. Under this portal, there are two modules:-

- i. Divyangjan Kaushal Vikas:- Skill training is conducted for PwDs through the portal across the country.
- ii. Divyangjan Rozgar Setu:- The platform aims to act as a bridge between PwDs and employers having jobs for PwDs. The platform provides geo-tagged based information on employment/earning opportunities within private companies as well as PwDs across India.

The Government of India, Ministry of Labour & Employment, Directorate General of Employment has established 24 National Career Service Centres for Differently Abled (earlier known as Vocational Rehabilitation Centres for Handicapped). The main objective of National Career Service Centres for Differently Abled is to evaluate the residual capacities and provide the rehabilitation services to persons with disabilities irrespective of their educational backgrounds and as per benchmark disabilities. The Centres provide Vocational Guidance, Career Counselling, Non-formal Vocational Training, extend Referral Services, conduct Outreach Activities and assist PwDs in the process of Vocational Rehabilitation.

In pursuance of RPwD Act, 2016, Department of Personnel & Training (DoPT) has issued detailed instructions regarding reservation for Persons with Benchmark Disability in direct recruitment and promotions in posts and services vide OM dated 15.1.2018 and 17.5.2022, respectively. Further, the benefit of reservation in promotions to Persons with benchmark Disability has been extended from 30.06.2016 onwards vide OM dated 28.12.2023. It is also stated that as per the instructions issued by DoPT, each Ministry/Department is required to designate an officer, at least of the rank of Deputy Secretary, as Liaison Officer for Persons with Benchmark Disability to ensure implementation of these instructions. Further, in order to enable such candidates to effectively discharge their duties, detailed guidelines have been issued advising the Ministries/Departments to extend additional facilities/amenities to them such as post

recruitment and pre-promotion training, assistive devices, preference in transfer/posting, special casual leave, etc. instructions regarding exemption from the routine exercise of transfer/rotational transfer has also been extended to those employees, who are caregiver of Persons with Disability dependents. The above instructions have been uploaded on the website of DoPT. Further, these instructions are also brought to the notice of the concerned Ministries/Departments during interaction with them”

(e) The Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (Divyangjan) is implementing "Awareness Generation & Publicity Scheme" as one of the component under SIPDA Scheme across the country. The main objective of the scheme is creation of general awareness about the schemes and programmes of the Government for the welfare of Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) and to train and sensitize key functionaries of the Central/State Government/Local Bodies and other service providers on a regular basis on disability related matters through State/District/Block level workshops with the aim to raise awareness among employees and peer groups about capabilities of PwDs. The grant-in-aid is released to the Government Organizations/NGOs/RCI (Nodal Agency) for awareness and sensitization towards PwDs.
