

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF SOCIAL JUSTICE & EMPOWERMENT
DEPARTMENT OF EMPOWERMENT OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES**

LOK SABHA

**STARRED QUESTION NO. *115
TO BE ANSWERED ON 09.02.2021**

Policy for Specially Abled during Covid-19 Lockdown

***115. SHRI TALARI RANGAIAH:**

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

- (a) the efforts made by the Government to solve the issues of persons with disabilities who faced serious difficulties in employment opportunities, inadequate access to healthcare services, lack of accessibility in the quarantine centres, etc. during Covid-19 lockdown;
- (b) whether the Government has framed any policy mainly for the specially-abled individuals taking their special needs into consideration during this corona virus pandemic; and
- (c) if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor?

ANSWER

MINISTER OF SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT

(DR. THAAWAR CHAND GEHLOT)

(a) to (c) A statement is laid on the Table of the House.

Statement referred to in reply to part (a) to (c) of the Lok Sabha Starred Question No. 115 raised by Shri Talari Rangaiah, regarding 'Policy for Specially Abled during Covid-19 Lockdown' for answer on 09.02.2021.

(a) The Central Government has enacted the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 which came into force on 19.04.2017. Section 8 of the said Act guarantees equal protection and safety of persons with disabilities in situations of risk, armed conflict, humanitarian emergencies and natural disasters. The Act *inter-alia* provides for not less than 4% reservation for persons with benchmark disabilities (i.e. disability of 40% or more) in Government employment, accessibility in built-up infrastructure, transportation and ICT ecosystem, priority in treatment and access to healthcare services for persons with disabilities. These measures were also applicable during the COVID-19 lockdown. Further, in order to implement the provision of reservation in Government employment envisaged under the RPwD Act, 2016, the Ministry notified the list of 3566 posts suitable for various categories of persons with benchmark disabilities on 04.01.2021.

Ministry of Health and Family Welfare issued a guidance note on 14.04.2020 to all States/UTs for addressing health concerns of all citizens including persons with disabilities and enabling them to avail uninterrupted emergency health care services. On 24.04.2020, all the States/UTs were requested by the Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment to ensure basic accessibility features in the centres for COVID-19 testing & quarantine facilities as well as for treatment at hospitals & health centres.

The Ministry of Rural Development released Rs. 80 crore to the States/UTs under Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojna (PMGKY) for payment of ex-gratia of Rs. 1000/- in two installments (Rs. 500 each) to 8 lakh existing beneficiaries of Indira Gandhi National Disability Pension Scheme (IGNDPS).

The Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) issued Circulars, from time to time, exempting employees with disabilities from attending office.

Further, during COVID-19 pandemic, the Employees' State Insurance Corporation (ESIC) enhanced unemployment benefit from 25% to 50% of average daily earning and relaxed the eligibility conditions for insured persons including persons with disabilities under Atal Beemit Vyakti Kalyan Yojana for the period 24.03.2020 to 31.12.2020.

(b) & (c) On 26.03.2020, the Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment issued '**Comprehensive Disability Inclusive Guidelines for protection and safety of persons with disabilities (Divyangjan) during COVID 19**' to all States/UTs. These guidelines provide measures to be adopted by various States/District authorities to give focused attention to protection and safety of persons with disabilities during COVID 19. These measures, *inter-alia*, include access to essential food, water, and medicines for PwDs; priority in treatment specially in respect of children and women with disabilities, on-line counseling mechanism, 24X7 Helpline Number at State Level exclusively for Divyangjan with facilities of sign language interpretation and video calling, availability of information relating to services and precautions during COVID 19 in accessible format; and issuance of passes to caregivers of persons with disabilities during lockdown on priority. These guidelines mandate the State Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities and the District officer dealing with empowerment of Persons with Disabilities to act as the State Nodal authority and the District Nodal authority respectively, to resolve disability specific issues of Persons with Disabilities. This Ministry also set up a dedicated 24x7 toll free Mental Health Rehabilitation helpline service '**KIRAN**' (18005990019) on 7th September, 2020 to address mental health concerns of persons with disabilities during COVID-19.
