

**Government of India**  
**Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (Divyangjan)**  
**Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment**  
**Lok Sabha**

**Unstarred Question No. 1265**  
**To be answered on 27.07.2021**

**COVID-19 Pandemic and Right of Divyangjans**

1265. SHRI KOMATI REDDY VENKAT REDDY:

SHRI MANNE SRINIVAS REDDY:

SHRI KOTHA PRABHAKAR REDDY:

Will the Minister of SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT सामाजिक न्याय और अधिकारिता मंत्री be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government/States are working towards supporting inclusive and equal access to opportunities which are important to advance disability rights in India in spite of the challenges of the ongoing COVID-19 Pandemic till date in Ist and IInd phase;

(b) if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor; and

(c) the steps taken/being taken by the Government in this regard?

**ANSWER**

**MINISTER OF STATE FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT**

**(SUSHRI PRATIMA BHOUMIK)**

(a) Yes, Sir.

(b) & (c) 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 are also applicable during the COVID-19 pandemic as well. 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.

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 counselling 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 7<sup>th</sup> September, 2020 to address mental health concerns of persons with disabilities during COVID-19.

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

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).

Further, relief to Persons with Disabilities is a State Subject by virtue of Entry 9 of the State list of the Constitution of India. The RPwD Act, 2016 mandates the State Govt./UTs to implement various schemes & programmes to promote and protect the rights of persons with disabilities during all situations.

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