

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

RAJYA SABHA

**UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 1898
TO BE ANSWERED ON 10.03.2021**

Welfare of PwDs during COVID-19

1898. DR. VIKAS MAHATME:

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

- (a) the steps taken by Government to ensure work from home for the Persons with Disabilities (PwD) communities;
- (b) whether Government has taken any steps since the onset of COVID-19 to enhance quality learning/skill development for this group; and
- (c) the steps, if any, taken by Government to ensure proper medical facility to such individuals?

ANSWER

MINISTER OF STATE FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT

(SHRI KRISHANPAL GURJAR)

- (a) The Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) issued various guidelines on preventive measures to be taken in Central Government establishments to contain the spread of Novel Corona virus (COVID-19), out of which, DoPT's OM Nos. 11013/9/2014-Estt.A-III dated 27.03.2020, 01.04.2020, 19.05.2020 and 07.10.2020 specifically pertain to Persons with Disabilities (PwDs). Broadly, these OMs exempt the PwDs from roster duty on account of the Covid-19 pandemic. It has also been mentioned in the O.M. dated 07.10.2020 that PwD employees shall continue to Work from Home.
- (b) The Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPwD) implements an umbrella scheme, namely Scheme for Implementation of Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act (SIPDA) which has a component for Skill Development of Persons with Disabilities (PwDs). Under this component, the Department launched the National Action Plan (NAP) for Skill Development of Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) in March, 2015 through which skilling of PwDs is done through a network of empanelled training partners (ETPs) comprising Government organizations (National Institutes/National Handicapped Finance and Development Corporation/Composite Regional Centre/Other Government Organisations) and Non-Govt Organizations (NGOs). Owing to the onset of COVID-19 pandemic, skill training activities were halted to ensure the safety of PwDs. However, after lifting of restrictions, skill training has been resumed. Further, Skill Council of Persons with Disabilities (SCPwD) has taken the following measures to improve skill training of PwDs:

1. All the Guidelines received from Central Government Authorities and National Skill Bodies have been communicated to the training partners for necessary compliance with added instructions to comply with local guidelines with respect to Skill training.
 2. Comprehensive Guidelines in line with the above have been created from time to time by SCPwD and shared with the affiliated training partners.
 3. A Learning Management System (LMS) has been developed to facilitate online training for the Trainers and Assessors.
 4. The Digital Content created for trainings has been enhanced.
 5. An online application for inspection of Skill development centres has been developed under SIPDA Scheme of the Union Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment.
- (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 the 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 priority in treatment and access to healthcare services for persons with disabilities. These measures were also applicable during the COVID-19 lockdown.

On 26.03.2020, the Union 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 which, inter-alia, include access to essential food, water, and medicines for PwDs and priority in treatment, specially in respect of children and women with disabilities.

Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare issued a guidance note on 14.04.2020 to all States/UTs for addressing the 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, hospitals & health care centres.

Union Health and Family Welfare Minister also wrote on 16.04.2020 to all the Chief Ministers of the States and Administrators of UTs for maintaining adequate blood supply in hospitals through blood donation camps to meet the requirement of Persons with blood disorders and other similarly placed citizens.
