

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
DEPARTMENT OF SCHOOL EDUCATION & LITERACY

RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO.2578
ANSWERED ON 18.12.2024

Education for Children with Special Needs

2578 Dr. Dharmasthala Veerendra Heggade:

Will the Minister of *Education* be pleased to state:

- (a) whether Government is considering any new programme to improve accessibility and inclusivity in education for Children with Special Needs;
- (b) if so, the details thereof and the reasons for their implementation;
- (c) the necessary action taken or likely to be taken by Government to ensure the effective execution of these programmes for the educational development of Children with Special Needs;
- (d) whether Government provides exemptions/concessions to Children with Special Needs and if so, the details thereof; and
- (e) whether Government has introduced any App for early screening and identification of Children with Special Needs in regular schools and if so, the details thereof?

ANSWER

MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
(SHRI JAYANT CHAUDHARY)

(a) to (e) The Department of School Education & Literacy, Ministry of Education has launched Samagra Shiksha Scheme, an overarching programme for the school education sector being implemented from 2018. There is a dedicated component of Inclusive Education under Samagra Shiksha for the education of Children with Special Needs (CwSN). It covers all CwSN with one or more disabilities as mentioned in the schedule of disabilities of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPwD) Act, 2016. Through this component, CwSN are provided support via specific student-oriented interventions such as identification and assessment camps, provision of aids, appliances and assistive devices, transportation, scribe and escort allowance support, Braille books and large print books, stipend for girls with special needs and teaching-learning materials etc. in order to appropriately address their unique educational requirements in general schools.

Further, individualized support is also provided through therapeutic interventions at the block level.

Samagra Shiksha also has provisions for creation of differently-abled friendly infrastructure such as ramps, ramps with handrails and differently-abled friendly toilets for barrier free access in schools. Further, Government has notified the Accessibility Code for Educational Institutions on January 10th, 2024 and the same has been notified in the Rules of RPwD Act 2016 on 20th June, 2024. The Code examines the physical barriers and information & communication barriers of access to school facilities for CwSN. It provides child friendly standards with cost effective solutions for existing buildings, along with elements to make new buildings compliant with national accessibility standards.

Besides, teaching learning materials are easily available in accessible digital form for instance talking books in DAISY/ e-Pub for Learners with Blindness and Low Vision. Also, a dedicated channel for the hearing impaired has been launched under PM e-Vidya initiative on 6th December, 2024. The PM e-Vidya 24*7 DTH Channel No.31 telecasts learning content in Indian Sign Language (ISL) for the benefit of the hearing impaired.

National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) conducts a *live interaction series, titled, “Teaching Learning Interventions for Inclusive Classrooms”*. Each episode is of half hour duration, focusing on promoting inclusive pedagogy practices, by considering one class, one subject and one-chapter from textbooks, with mandatory ISL interpreter.

NCERT textbooks have been converted into ISL related to curricular content for classes I to VII, glossary words in psychology, history, geography, urdu, economics have been produced and are being continually disseminated through DIKSHA portal and PM eVidya DTH TV Channels, on regular basis to ensure coherent access of these e-Contents. A 10,500 words ISL dictionary uploaded on DIKSHA in collaboration with ISLRTC.

The Government has amended the Schedule to Right to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009 and notified the Pupil Teacher Ratio (PTR) for Special Education Teachers in general schools with 10:1 PTR at primary level and 15:1 PTR at upper primary level.

In addition to above, Government also provides several exemptions/concessions to CwSN such as facility of Scribe and compensatory time, appointment of Scribe and related

instructions, fee and special exemptions like exemption from third language, flexibility in choosing subjects, alternate questions /Separate Question etc.

To promote and support inclusive education for all, National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) has been working with the philosophy of reaching the unreached and pursuing various proactive measures. Learning materials such as Talking Books for learners with blindness and low vision, a subject-specific terminological dictionary in ISL, and learning materials in video format in ISL for deaf and hard of hearing learners. These are available on YouTube channel of NIOS and Gyanamrit.

NIOS is the first board in the country to offer ISL as a first language subject to deaf learners. The use of sign language as a subject (first language) will enable easy knowledge acquisition and comprehension. Provision of 'On-Demand Examinations' that give the learners a scope to appear in particular subjects' examinations as per their convenience. NIOS provides 'Examination at Home' that institutes exceptional case to case provision of conducting examinations at home for severely disabled learners. Such flexibility brings in reasonable exemptions during examinations that provide general and specific provisions for learners with a disability.

Further, to improve the identification of CwSN, the Government has introduced the Prashast App for early screening and identification of CwSN in regular schools. Teacher capacity building programs are being undertaken under NISHTHA in hybrid mode to train general teachers to address the learning needs of CwSN.

With a view to monitor CwSN and facilitate early screening and intervention, the Government through NCERT has developed 'PRASHAST' (Pre-Assessment Holistic Screening Tool); a mobile app to digitally screen students for possible disabilities at school level. It is available in 23 languages (English and 22 languages included in the VIII Schedule of our constitution) for easy access by teachers, special educators and school heads. Till date about 10 lakh plus users have registered on the App. The Checklist under the App helps in the early screening of children with disabilities, who are then taken for assessment and certification of the disability, which enables the schools to provide individualized education plan/ therapy/ learning assistance through special educators depending on the type and level of disability.
