

## Governor, Social Welfare Minister review problems relating to specially abled persons

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Excelsior Correspondent

SRINAGAR, Sept 26: Consequent to discussions on several earlier occasions with NGOs and social activists who are operating in the disability arena, Governor N.N. Vohra, Sajad Gani Lone, Minister for Social Welfare, ARI & Trainings and Science & Technology and B.B. Vyas, Chief Secretary, held an extensive meeting at the Raj Bhavan here to discuss important outstanding issues and demands relating to specially abled persons in the State. The meeting was attended by Sajad Ahmad Khan, Commissioner, Social Welfare Department; Mohammad Iqbal Lone, Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities; Shamima Noor, Principal, Deaf and Dumb School; Javed Ahmad Tak, Chairman, Humanity Welfare Organization Helpline, Anantnag; Abdul Rashid Bhat, President, J&K Handicapped Association and Arajmand Makhdoomi, Founder President, Chotay Taray Foundation, Srinagar.

During the meeting, detailed discussions were held regarding issues relating to the entire range of problems being faced by Persons with Disabilities (PwDs). After discussions it was decided that Commissioner Social Welfare Department shall immediately move the School Education Department for allotment of a suitable school building (vacated due to the recent mergers/clubbing of several Government schools) for establishing Schools for PwDs at Jammu and Srinagar with adequate hostel and all other required facilities. An Ambulance shall be provided by Social Welfare Department; to start with, offices at the regional level, with adequate facilities for PwDs, shall be set up; the need for establishing offices at District level shall be considered later on the basis of experience gained. Minister for Social Welfare agreed that Legislation on the lines of Central Disability Act, 2016 will be finalised to issue as an Ordinance on urgent basis. Taking a serious note of the difficulties being faced by PwDs for lack of ramps in Government buildings, it was decided that Public Works Department will issue immediate instructions to all concerned departments to ensure that clearance for construction of any new Government building shall not be issued unless the building design has provision for ramps etc for disabled persons. Chief Secretary informed that the Social Welfare Department (SWD) has received funds amounting to Rs 42.74 lakh for making 147 already identified buildings disability friendly, DPRs for modification of 67 more buildings have been approved while 7 buildings have already been made PwDs friendly. Governor observed that this important project should be implemented in a time bound manner and Minister SWD agreed to monitor progress. Chief Secretary assured that in the next State Level Bankers' Meeting one/two representatives of PwDs will also be invited to discuss the possibility of making all Bank ATMs disability friendly. Minister SWD agreed that the School Education Department shall be moved to make all out efforts to ensure that all infrastructures in Government schools is PwDs friendly. Minister SWD directed

Commissioner SWD to take urgent action for a Brail Press being established; to begin with it could be part of the Government Printing Press, Kashmir, and Ranbir Government Press, Jammu. Chief Secretary assured that regarding provision of Scribes/Amanuensis to students with severe disabilities during various Board or competitive examinations, the norms being followed by CBSE and UPSC shall be got adopted. Minister SWD observed that, in consultation with Finance Department, PwDs shall be given all required facilities and Self Help Groups shall be got set up for starting their own ventures and lead respectable lives. Minister SWD agreed that SWD shall urgently explore providing the requisite number of motorized tricycle/electronic wheel chairs to meet the needs PwDs, during the current Financial Year.

Meanwhile, Governor flagged off the Cleaning and De-weeding operations launched under "Swachatta hi Sewa" Abhiyan from the Oberoi Ghat at Dal Lake, Srinagar. Addressing the labourers and volunteers on the occasion, Governor observed that the Dal Lake, which is an invaluable scenic beauty must be preserved and protected at all costs. Under no circumstances must this enchanting water body be polluted or lose its visual attraction because of the profuse weed growth which has come up in large parts of the lake. Governor observed that because of the reduction in the pace of de-weeding work in the past two years, the water surface has been rapidly encompassed by Lotus and other growth resulting in more than half of the water surface not being visible at all to the viewer.