

Benefits elude disabled people in JK

Sakina cites financial constraints

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Srinagar, May 14: Notwithstanding its claims of working for the betterment of the disabled people, the state government has been unable to implement the related acts and court orders citing financial and other constraints.

The government failed to conduct the census of disabled people in the state even as the high court had passed orders in this regard in 2006. It has also been unable to implement the recommendations of JK persons with disabilities Act and Mental Health Act, enacted in 1998 and 1999 respectively.

Meanwhile, Minister of Social Welfare, Sakina Itoo said the government could not carry out the census due to financial strains.

“The project to carry out the census of disabled people has been submitted to the government. Once the project gets nod, the department will start the survey,” Itoo told Rising Kashmir.

However, the minister said for the implementation of recommendations, Government of India has to provide the financial assistance.

Itoo said the census of disabled people is important to find out their population so as to provide the benefits and assistance due to them. She added that the deserving candidates are already availing benefits of state sponsored schemes.

Javed Ahmad Tak, who heads a Srinagar based NGO Helpline, has accused the government of indifferent attitude towards the plight of disabled people.

“The JK person’s disability act guarantees protection of rights to people with disabilities. But here they are deprived of their rights,” he said.

Unlike in other parts of the world, Tak said, people suffering with physical disabilities in the state are confined to their homes as there are no special schools where they can hone their skills in different trades. "There are more than one lakh disabled people, mostly children, but instead of giving them education in special schools, they have been confined to the four walls of their houses giving them the feeling of alienation and isolation," Tak said.

As per the Mental Health Act, he said, presence of psychiatrist is mandatory in every district hospital. "The act stresses on organizing counseling camps for the mentally ill persons. But here instead of counseling people they are imprisoned in asylums, which is strictly prohibited by the act," Tak said.

In 2006, the high court in response to a Public Interest Litigation had directed the Social Welfare Department to conduct the census of disabled people in the state and also to implement the acts. However, Tak said the government neither implemented the acts nor carried out any survey.

“The population of disabled people has doubled in the last 20 years of turmoil. But the callous attitude of government towards them prevails,” he said.