

Activists flay exemption to disability quota rule

Social Justice Ministry issues notice

DAMINI NATH
NEW DELHI

The Centre has exempted posts under the Indian Police Service (IPS) from the mandated 4% reservation for persons with disabilities (PwD) in government jobs, a move that rights groups say goes against the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016.

On Wednesday, the Social Justice Ministry issued a notification saying that Section 34 of the RPD Act, which provides for 4% reservation in jobs for PwD in government establishments, would not apply to all categories of posts of IPS, the Indian Railway Protection Force Service and the police forces of Delhi, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Lakshadweep and Daman and Diu and Dadra and Nagar Haveli.

Combat roles

At the same time, the Ministry issued another notification on Wednesday making a distinction between combat and non-combat roles in the security forces. The Ministry exempted all combat posts in the Border Security Force, the Central Reserve Police Force, the Central Industrial Security Force, the Indo-Tibetan Border Police, the Sashastra Seema Bal and the Assam Rifles from the non-discrimination and reservation provisions of the RPD Act.

V. Muralidharan, general

secretary of the National Platform for the Rights of the Disabled, called for a withdrawal of the notification regarding the police forces. "Exemptions should be granted only in cases of combat roles in keeping with the intent and spirit of the proviso under Section 34 of the RPD Act. It is regrettable that a department that is supposed to safeguard the rights of the disabled and empower them is doing just the opposite," he said, referring to the Department of Empowerment of PwD under the Social Justice Ministry.

He added that the proviso of the Act did not intend to give blanket exemptions from hiring PwD, but to make sure that combat roles are not assigned to them. He said the decision was even more shocking given the fact that the Delhi Police had in October 2019 issued an advertisement for "head constable (ministerial)", with reservations for PwD.

In March this year, the Goa Police invited applications for various posts, including 34 posts of "lower division clerk", with four posts reserved for PwDs.

A rights activist and doctor, Satendra Singh, of the Doctors with Disabilities group, said there were many roles that PwD could fill within police forces and exempting all categories of roles was wrong.