



Shri Thaawarchand Gehlot inaugurates 'National Conference on Down Syndrome'

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Shri Thaawarchand Gehlot, Minister for Social Justice and Empowerment inaugurated a "National Conference on Down Syndrome" in the presence of Ministers of State for SJ&E Shri Krishan Pal Gurjar and Shri Vijay Sampla here today. Shri N.S. Kang, Secretary, DEPwD, M/o SJ&E, Dr. K. K. Pandey, Chairperson, National Trust, Shri Mukesh Jain, JS&CEO, National Trust, Senior Central and State Governments officials, Representatives from Civil societies and parents of Persons with Down Syndrome were present on the occasion. The Conference was organized by The National Trust for the welfare of persons with Autism, Cerebral Palsy, Mental Retardation and Multiple Disabilities under M/o SJ&E in collaboration with Muskaan, a registered organisation of the National Trust.

Down Syndrome is a chromosomal condition associated with intellectual and learning disabilities. Delayed development and behavioural problems are often reported in children with Down Syndrome. Persons with Down Syndrome have 47 chromosomes as compared to 46 in majority of people. This one Extra chromosome causes its own impact and slows down learning process. It impacts neurological functioning causing impairment of intellectual functions e.g. analytical thinking, complex abstractions and judgement etc. Good schooling, loving family, learning and work opportunities make them grow up to be responsible, loving and cheerful persons. Their emotions and needs are like any other person of the same age. Accepting and respecting family/community is a big support to their growth and development.

Shri Thaawarchand Gehlot called upon the people to provide all types of support and help to Persons with Down Syndrome. He said that persons with Down Syndrome are working in various areas and there is a need to recognise their talent and create environment conducive for Persons with Down Syndrome. People with Down Syndrome can and do lead full and rewarding lives and contribute as valued and equal members of their communities. He opined that anyone who has taken birth, is an integral part of our human resources and people's participation is very necessary for successful implementation of the government's schemes. He invited the valuable suggestions and inputs from the people in this regard.

Shri Krishan Pal Gurjar in his address expressed his concern that every year 20 to 22 thousand children take birth with Down Syndrome in our country and the need of the hour is to bring them in the mainstream.

In his address, Shri Vijay Sampla highlighted the need for the Empowerment of Persons with this disability and appealed to all concerned departments, Health Professionals, Member of Civil Societies and other Stake Holders to extend their support to these persons.

Shri N. S. Kang highlighted the various initiatives being taken by his Department for the welfare of Divyangjans in our country.

Dr. K. K. Pandey informed about various initiatives being taken by the National Trust and said that for Empowerment & mainstreaming of Persons with Disabilities covered under National Trust Act, the National Trust is implementing 10 schemes which cater to the entire life span of Persons with Disabilities.

Shri Mukesh Jain in his introductory address said that Down Syndrome is a genetic disorder caused by the presence of all or part of a third copy of chromosome 21 and is associated with physical growth and delays, characteristic facial features and mild to moderate intellectual disability. He mentioned that the vision of the National Trust towards persons with Down Syndrome is that they should be included in the family, school, employment and all Socio cultural activities of the society. We should move towards self determination and inclusion in its real sense.

The highlight of the conference was the presentation of Shri Vinyas, Self Advocate with Down Syndrome and Employee of Lemon Tree Hotel, Delhi about his journey of life.

The one day conference was attended by a panel of experts and professionals in the field including Dr. Surekha Ramachandran, Founder & Chairperson, Down Syndrome Federation of India, Chennai, Dr. Shanti Auluck, Chairperson & Founder Member, Muskaan, Delhi, Dr I. C. Verma, Sir Ganga Ram Hospital, Delhi etc. A series of panel discussion and lectures on various issues concerning Persons with Down Syndrome were held. Speaking on the occasion, Dr. Surekha Ramachandran described in detail the positive approaches on the Down Syndrome to enable these persons to enshrine their talent. Dr I. C. Verma, Sir Ganga Ram Hospital, Delhi deliberated on the latest research conducted in the field. Dr. Shanti Auluck, Chairperson & Founder Member, Muskaan, Delhi highlighted the issues for Empowering these persons and making them inclusive.

The inaugural session was followed by panel discussion on key issues concerning Persons with Down Syndrome like Positive Approach to Down Syndrome, Early Intervention & Schooling, Possibilities of Growth and Development & Health Issues. Key experts/ professionals in the field namely Dr. Neerja Sharma, Former Associate Professor, Deptt. of Human Development and Childhood Studies, Lady Irwin College, Delhi University, Mrs. Neera Chawla, Muskaan, New Delhi, Ms. Aradhana Lal, Lemon Tree Hotels, Delhi, Mrs. Sugnadh Sukrutaraj, Amba for Life, Bangalore, Mrs. Iona Kundu, MENTAID, Kolkata, Ms Niyati, Self advocate with Down Syndrome, Dr. Madhulika Kabra, Professor, Division of Genetics, Department of Pediatrics, AIIMS, Delhi, Dr.

Anita Saxena, Cardiologist, AIIMS, Delhi, Dr. Radhika Tandon, Professor of Ophthalmology, AIIMS, Delhi, Dr. Vandana Jain, AIIMS, Delhi, Mrs. Poonam Natarajan, Former Chairperson, National Trust, Ms. Jo Chopra, Karuna Vihar, Dehradun, Dr. Nina Piyush Vaidya, Pediatrician, Navsari, Gujarat, Ms. Madhumati Bose, Delhi, Mr. Ranjan Sharma, Parent from Noida, UP, Ms. Vilina, a Self Advocate with Down Syndrome from Noida, UP, Shri Shrirang Bijur, President, PARIVAAR NCPO were present on the occasion.

The daylong conference was attended by more than 300 persons including Persons with Down Syndrome, Parents of Persons with Down Syndrome, Members of Civil Societies, Officials of Central and State Governments, Foreign Delegates etc.



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