

Soon, a centre to develop Indian sign language: PM Modi

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NEW DELHI: A centre would soon be established to develop Indian sign language, and the government is "fully committed" to achieving empowerment and inclusion of disabled people, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has said.

"My government is fully committed to the UN Convention of Rights for Persons with Disabilities, for achieving empowerment and inclusion of persons with disabilities," Modi said in his message ahead of the 9th World Assembly of the Disabled People's International (DPI) to be held on April 11-13 in New Delhi.

"The cost of exclusion of people with disability from the workforce is 3-7 percent of the GDP, as per World Bank estimates. Initiatives such as 'Accessibility India' campaign aim to make the built environment inclusive for persons with disabilities.

"We are also making Indian Railways accessible and starting a centre to develop Indian sign language," he said.

Thaawar Chand Gehlot, minister for social justice and empowerment, will address the plenary session of the event that is being supported by the UN and G3ICT.

G3ict or Global Initiative for Inclusive Information and Communication Technologies is an advocacy initiative launched in December 2006 by the UN Global Alliance for ICT and Development, in cooperation with the Secretariat for the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities at UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

In March 2016, the government's "Inclusiveness and Accessibility Index" - that measured actions and attitudes of organisations towards disabled employees - called for enabling access to them in buildings and workplaces, public transportation etc.

Javed Abidi, the global chair of DPI which has members from over 150 countries, said "rebuilding and retro-fitting to accommodate people with disability must be discouraged".

"Accessibility has to be built into both public and private sector procurement. Otherwise the disabled people cannot even get education, let alone employment," he said.

Over 70 DPI representatives from all over the world would speak at the event - including Yuri Afanasiev, UN resident coordinator and UNDP resident representative in India, Yes Bank managing director and CEO Rana Kapoor, and American India Foundation country director Nishant Pandey.

The theme of the three-day event is "Building Human Capital: Realizing SDGs for Persons with Disabilities".

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were adopted by the UN in September 2015. The 17 goals and 169 targets aim to eradicate extreme poverty, among others. There are 11 mentions of disability in the entire document but none in the most crucial goals.

The discussion will focus on a disability inclusive blueprint for Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development.