

After outcry, DDA backtracks

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Rishi Raj Bhati

NEW DELHI: Delhi Development Authority on Friday offered to reinstate Rishi Raj Bhati as director (public relations) after the land-owning agency's decision to repatriate him to his parent department due to a disability created an outcry.

A two-page letter issued by DDA commissioner (personnel) stated that neither Bhati nor his parent department (Delhi Transco) had mentioned his physical status. "When you reported in DDA for joining to the post of director (PR), only then it came to our notice that you are differently abled. During our interactions on that day, you were explained that DDA is a field organisation and the post of director (PR) in DDA, by nature, involves filed work... (sic)," the letter stated.

Bhati said the language of the letter was "objectionable". "Why should I or my parent organisation inform them about my physical status when it is not asked for in the advertisement issued by them? The language of the letter is objectionable, as they are doubting my capability to perform as director. I was confident that I'll be able to perform (my duties), that is why I had applied," said Bhati. "I'll take this to the logical end," he added.

Bhati found support from disability rights activists, who said the incident was a "test case" for the government's commitment to empower disabled people. "What is unfortunate is that the incident has taken place just within days of the enactment of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016," said Javed Abidi, convenor of Disabled Rights Group.

The group plans a protest outside DDA office on Monday. "Action must be taken against DDA V-C Uday Pratap Singh. We feel he is the one who is unfit for the job and unworthy of the high office that he is holding," said Abidi.

When contacted, a DDA official said: "DDA has no objection if he (Bhati) wants to join here as director, PR. The letter was issued to him with his consent, but if he is denying it, then we would like to clarify that it was not our intention to hurt his sentiments. We had informed him that the nature of job involves a lot of field work."

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