Lakhs waiting endessly for govt disability card

Only 19L Of 61 Lakh Have Received It

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The Unique Disability Identity Cards (UDID) for persons with disabilities, announced in 2015, are proving to be a long wait often stretching for years for hundreds of applicants. Against over 61 lakh applications, only about 19 lakh cards have been generated according to the UDID website. With the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act 2016 expanding the types of disabilities from 7 to 21, state UDID departments are struggling with the logistics of identifying and quantifying disabilities for issuance of the cards.

According to the 2011 census, which happened before the expansion in the definition of disability, there were 2.7 crore disabled. Even without the new law, organisations of the disabled had argued that there was gross undercounting. With the new definition, the number could be higher.

Though announced in 2015, the UDID scheme was launched in phases and finally covered all states just last year. At the current rate of expansion, it could take more than a decade for all persons with disabilities to get the UDID, pointed out disability activists while the government claimed that once the infrastructure was put in place it could be achieved in a few years.

“The pace of the UDID project depends on the interest and drive of the states. The central government only develops software, trains officials in using the software and provides financial assistance. In many states, the health department is not cooperating saying that they are already overloaded with work. The software will help reduce their workload. MP, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra, Orissa, Telangana, UP and Gujarat are doing very well,” said KVS Rao, Director in the Department of the Empowerment of Persons With Disability under the social justice and empowerment ministry.

Currently, whether for UPSC selection or for students seeking admission in medical colleges, the UDID is not being considered. “What is the use of having a so-called universal ID when we are being forced to undergo a medical assessment again?” asked an MBBS aspirant. Rao pointed out that UDID only gave the percentage and type of disability and certified the eligibility of a person for benefits meant for disabled persons. “Each job has different functional requirements. Hence, even with a UDID, a person has to undergo functional assessment to be certified as being competent for a particular job,” he added.

“With only a few designated assessment centres across the country, mostly government hospitals which are overburdened, applicants have to wait long hours to get assessed for the UDID. Why can’t things be more streamlined?” asked Dr Satendra Singh, a disability rights activist who still has not received his UDID card two years after applying.

The idea of a UDID card that replaces all other documents disabled persons have to carry has been welcomed by the disabled but getting the certificates revalidated or undergoing disability assessment, only to have to wait for years for the card has disappointed many.