

Set up jobs panel for blind people, high court tells state government

Ahmedabad: Even as Prime Minister Narendra Modi bats for the rights of disabled people and has termed them 'Divyang', the state government has come in for severe criticism from the Gujarat high court for neglecting blind people.

The high court on Friday pulled up the state government for inaction in appointing blind people to different posts and directed it to set up an expert committee within four weeks to identify jobs in the government establishment suitable for the visually challenged.

Blind candidates who were not considered for the posts of vidhya sahayak (assistant teachers) in schools had challenged a 2013 notification by the Gujarat government prohibiting appointment of 100% visually challenged candidates as teachers. This notification was challenged in 2013 also but the high court had then upheld the validity of the policy. Hence, this time too the judge declined to disturb the 2013 notification.

Acknowledging the ability of blind people, Justice JB Pardiwala criticized the policy of placing restrictions on their recruitment in government jobs, particularly posts of schoolteacher.

Justice Pardiwala observed that it is "sad" that the state government had not constituted an expert committee for 18 long years despite the Centre's direction regarding setting up of such a panel. Hence a committee should be formed to identify posts and seek the panel's opinion, particularly for the posts of vidhya sahayak. The government can then take a decision on basis of the committee's recommendation, Judge Pardiwala said.

The high court criticised the state government for bringing the policy of not employing people with 100% blindness without obtaining an opinion from any expert committee and for jumping to the conclusion that they cannot control students.

"The government should not have rushed to this conclusion without giving them an opportunity or observing their work as vidhya sahayaks. If the expert committee takes this view, then it is altogether a different matter, subject to further adjudication if necessary by a court of law," the court said and added, "If this exercise had been undertaken way back in the year 1999, today the position would have been clearer."