

FOR DISABLED VOTERS

EC all set to introduce 'accessibility observers'

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PUNE: The election commission of India has for the first time appointed 'accessibility observers' to check and ensure that people with disability are able to cast votes. The move is aimed at ensuring wider participation by people with disabilities as there have been instances in the past where such people could not vote.

Speaking at national institute of bank management (NIBM) here on Monday, election commissioner Ashok Lavasa said the observers will ensure that necessary infrastructure is available at each booth where people with disabilities come and vote.

Chhattisgarh will be the first state in the country to hold disabled-friendly elections this year, Lavasa said.

As a part of making the polling booth more accessible to disabled people, centres will have ramp, where wheelchair bound voter can cast his vote.

Lavasa said election commis-



Ashok Lavasa (left) and Bharat Vatwani at the foundation day of NIBM on Monday.

SHANKAR NARAYAN/HT PHOTO

sion of India (ECI) had also launched the distribution of electoral photo identity cards (EPIC) with braille features for the visually challenged voters.

Earlier in July, the chief election commissioner OP Rawat had announced that the commission has decided to establish auxiliary polling stations for the people with disabilities during elections.

According to Rawat, disability coordinators would be appointed at the levels of assem-

bly constituencies, districts and states and a mobile app would be developed in-house for such people with disabilities to facilitate them participate fully in election processes.

Rawat had said that disabled people will be permitted to avail public transport along with their attendants on the day of polling.

The election commission of India would make available all its election related awareness materials in accessible formats for the disabled people.

80% hospitals in India don't have psychiatrists, says Dr Vatwani

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PUNE: Dr Bharat Vatwani, winner of Ramon Magsaysay award for his work in the field of uniting mentally ill destitute with their families, said around 80 per cent of government hospitals in the country still do not have psychiatrists.

RATIO COMES DOWN

"In 2001, the ratio of number of psychiatrists per 10,000 mentally ill patients was 0.4 per cent which in 2011 went down to 0.3 per cent. One of the reason India does not have enough psychiatrists is that many of them go abroad," said Vatwani.

Dr Bharat Vatwani, who founded Shraddha Foundation and has united more than 7,000 mentally ill roadside destitutes with their families. He said that mental illness in curable and there is a need to create greater awareness about the problem.

Dr Vatwani, a psychiatrist himself, started a centre at Karjat in 2005 where his Shraddha

DR BHARAT VATWANI, WHO FOUNDED SHRADDHA FOUNDATION, HAS UNITED MORE THAN 7,000 MENTALLY ILL ROADSIDE DESTITUATES WITH THEIR FAMILIES

Foundation treated patients with mental illness. Once cured, these patients are then reunited with their families in various parts of India.

INITIAL DAYS

Sharing his experience during his address on 49th foundation day at National Institute of Bank Management (NIBM), Dr Vatwani said he had to initially face struggle in treating patients in Mumbai as people living in the vicinity found it inconvenient. "People opposing our Mumbai centre went to court, which ultimately gave verdict in our favour."

Banking sector needs to focus on ethics: Lavasa

PUNE: Ashok Lavasa, election commissioner of India on Monday stressed upon the need for ethics in the banking system, which is in focus amid scams and growing non-performing assets (NPA) in the country.

Speaking at the 49th foundation day of National Institute of Banking Management (NIBM), Lavasa said the sector should look at sustainable and ethical approach in banking.

"Today the banking sector in India has its share of problems. There is a need for institutes like NIBM to introduce courses on ethical banking. I would say we are not talking enough about ethics in the way we work," said Lavasa. Referring to the growing NPAs that banks are dealing with, Lavasa said while NPAs will continue to happen, there is a need to go into causes of why it is happening. "While going into the causes, the diagnosis might point to the fact that there was compromise. Not all NPAs can be due to bad intentions. Even an aggressive promoter and liberal banker can be a cause," said Lavasa.

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