

“This is not an exhibition, it is a celebration of dignity, self-reliance and empowerment” Dr. Virendra Kumar inaugurates 29th Divya Kala Mela in Chandigarh

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“This is not merely an exhibition; it is a celebration of dignity, self-reliance and empowerment.” With these powerful words, Dr. Virendra Kumar, Hon’ble Union Minister of Social Justice and Empowerment, inaugurated the 29th edition of Divya Kala Mela at the Exhibition Ground, Chandigarh, today. He described the Mela as a transformative movement that has emerged as a new ray of hope in the lives of Divyangjan across the country, reflecting the Government’s unwavering commitment to inclusive growth and equal opportunity.



Highlighting the journey of empowerment since 2014, the Minister said that the shift from insensitive terminology to the respectful term “Divyang” under the leadership of Shri Narendra Modi Hon’ble Prime Minister marked not just a change in vocabulary, but a change in vision. The enactment of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016, expansion of disability categories, and the implementation of the Sugamya Bharat Abhiyan have together laid the foundation for accessibility, dignity and participation. He emphasized that true respect goes beyond words — it must translate into economic strength, social inclusion and self-reliance. The Divya Kala Mela, he noted, embodies this philosophy by directly linking the talent of Divyang artisans and entrepreneurs to markets across India.



Shri Satnam Singh Sandhu, Hon'ble Member of Parliament (Rajya Sabha), in his address, remarked that according respect to Divyangjan in line with India's cultural values is a historic step. However, he underlined that empowerment must accompany respect. "Without livelihood and self-reliance, dignity remains incomplete," he said, appreciating the Ministry for creating platforms like Divya Kala Mela that enable Divyang youth, especially those unable to travel far, to showcase and market their products closer to home.

Shri Saurabh Joshi, Hon'ble Mayor of Chandigarh, described the occasion as a celebration of talent, confidence and human potential. He said that hosting Divya Kala Mela, Divya Kala Shakti and the Rozgar Mela in Chandigarh reflects the city's commitment to inclusion, reinforcing the belief that disability is not a limitation but a distinct ability that enriches society.

In his welcome address, Shri Rajiv Sharma, Joint Secretary, Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPwD), highlighted the tangible economic impact of the initiative. Over the past three years, Divya Kala Melas organized across various cities have recorded business transactions worth ₹2366.43 lakh, clearly demonstrating growing market acceptance and the rising entrepreneurial capacity of Divyang artisans. He affirmed that these Melas are not mere exhibitions but strong instruments of economic inclusion and self-reliance.

The 29th Divya Kala Mela is being organized at the Exhibition Ground, Chandigarh, in the gracious presence of distinguished dignitaries including Smt Anuradha S. Chagti, Secretary, Social Welfare & Women and Child Welfare Department, Chandigarh; Shri Vineet Rana, Chief General Manager, NDFDC; Shri M. K. Sahoo, Assistant General Manager, NDFDC; and other senior officials. So far, Divya Kala Melas have been organized at 28 locations across the country with the participation of around 2,362 Divyang entrepreneurs, collectively generating income of over ₹23 crore — a remarkable milestone in inclusive entrepreneurship.

In addition to providing marketing platforms, the Government has sanctioned loans exceeding ₹20 crore through these initiatives to further strengthen Divyang entrepreneurship. Parallel Rozgar Melas have witnessed participation of 3,131 candidates, out of which 1,007 were shortlisted and more than 313 have already received job offers, reflecting the employment-generating dimension of the initiative.

The Chandigarh Mela features around 75 stalls, including those by Divyang entrepreneurs, Government of India institutions and NGOs. A dedicated Rozgar Mela for Divyangjan is scheduled on 19 February 2026 to connect them with reputed organizations and companies. Visitors can also register for assistive devices at the ALIMCO stall, while several institutions are showcasing innovations and new initiatives aimed at empowerment. Inclusive sports activities such as Boccia and Blind Cricket, along with daily cultural performances by Divyang artists, are adding vibrancy to the event. On 21 February 2026, a special cultural presentation titled “Divya Kala Shakti” will celebrate the extraordinary artistic abilities of Divyang performers.

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