

# A Government Truly For Its People

- Dhiraj Srivastava



Jaipur: As the commissioner of the Rajasthan Foundation, I recently commemorated the International Migrants Day, observed every year on December 18, by giving an understanding of the ways that the state government has been ensuring the safety and security of Rajasthanis across the world.

The most recent instance of this was the evacuation of the Rajasthani students from Ukraine during the ongoing conflict with Russia. Like a responsible government, as soon as the news of the Ukraine-Russia broke out, the state worked on a plan to evacuate the Rajasthani students from the foreign countries swiftly and safely.

Being the commissioner of Rajasthan Foundation, I was assigned as the nodal officer to make sure that the entire mechanism which had been put in place for this evacuation was seamless and effective. Under the vision of our CM Shri Ashok Gehlot, Rajasthan was the first state to actually execute a plan which included setting up of a single window clearance system and appointment of a nodal authority to make sure that the students were safely brought back to India.

Although the circumstances were challenging, I and my team worked round the clock to execute this plan. We had to coordinate working with different time

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zones but despite this, all of us were focused with the sole purpose of quick evacuation.



The state government also issued a helpline number for the residents stuck in Ukraine besides providing the link on the official portal. At times we would get calls from students who were stuck there at 3 am or 4 am and it was ensured that all calls were answered as well as the students reassured about our assistance.

There was also a need to coordinate with the central government and nearly 1000 Rajasthanis, majority of whom were medical students. Initially I along with another official were supposed to go to Poland to coordinate the safe evacuation though that could not materialize due to various reasons. However, that did not deter our team.

The network of Non-Resident Rajasthanis (NRRs) was a major pillar for the evacuation and entrepreneurs like Mr. Amit Lath along with Mr. Ashok Sevak Ramani made arrangements to bring these students safely to Poland and helping them once they reached. All efforts were made to provide relief to the people stuck in Ukraine through the network of NRRs in Poland. The NRR Mitras across the globe form an integral part of our eco-system and provide essential help to the Rajasthanis migrating abroad. Even during the Covid times, this network was extremely helpful and arranged for around 3000 oxygen cylinders.

The government's welfare did not end at just the safe evacuation but has continued till now. The Rajasthan government has decided to reimburse airfares of students from the state who returned from Ukraine before the Centre issued an advisory asking them to leave the country ahead of the Russian invasion. CM Shri Ashok Gehlot has been immensely empathetic and after I received calls from students who had arrived before the advisory was issued regarding the reimbursement of air fare, the matter was immediately taken up. I personally spoke to our chief minister and he also understood the situation.

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While the students were evacuated free of cost, few of them returned to India between February 1 and 14, 2022 before the advisory was issued. The state government will reimburse the airfare for these students as well.

This was a crisis situation and required quick action but even prior to this, the Rajasthan government has been continuously taking initiatives to provide educational and employment opportunities to its residents in other countries as well.

The state government believes in encouraging the youth to follow their dreams and for this Rajiv Gandhi Scholarship for Academic Excellence (RGS) scheme was introduced. Under this scholarship our government finances 200 meritorious students to study abroad in prestigious universities including Harvard, Yale, Oxford, Carnegie Mellon and many more. I am glad to see that so many of our students have availed this scholarship and are working for a professionally sound future. For us, facilitating education is the main purpose of the scholarship and the amount being spent on each student has never been a deterrent. In a few cases the scholarship has been more than Rs 3 crore also. Our government bears the expenditure of each student including fare, tuition fees etc. with an aim to ensure that our youth is given a chance to grow and prosper.

The Rajasthan Government also organises a pre-departure orientation training program under the aegis of Rajasthan Skill and Livelihood Development Corporation (RSLDC) which is the designated PDOT partner with the Ministry of External Affairs. The purpose of this is to provide soft skills training to the migrants. Moreover, the government also facilitates authentication of documents for education and employment abroad.

The government has always been compassionate about not just the residents but NRRs as well by building a strong network which unflinchingly comes to fore in all kinds of situations. The International Migrants Day is a reminder of the challenges faced by those who chose to leave their native countries and our endeavor is to minimize the same.

