Welfare, Development and Empowerment of Women

IR is the largest employer in the country with 13,33,966 employees of which 89,335 are women employees as on March 31, 2014. Due emphasis is laid on staff welfare by the Railways. Although, majority of the Railways’ staff welfare schemes and activities benefit both male and female employees, various initiatives are aimed at women employees and also women members of the employees’ families. Various privileges available to other women government servants are also available to women railway employees which include provision for grant of maternity leave, child care leave and special leave for promoting family welfare. Women with disabilities are eligible for grant of special allowance for child care.

A large number of staff welfare activities are financed through Staff Benefit Fund maintained on each Zonal Railway, with a specific outlay towards women empowerment activities. A separate amount has also been earmarked in the Staff Benefit Fund for grant of scholarships for higher education of girl child of railway employees.

To improve working environment for the women employees, committees have been formed at various levels to address complaints relating to sexual harassment. A number of crèches have been opened at workplaces/offices for the young children of employees and rest rooms provided for women employees.

Handicraft Centres and Mahila Samities operate under the Staff Benefit Fund Scheme in order to help women members of employees’ families in augmenting the family income by learning vocational skills like stitching, weaving, beauty culture, computer operations and making some stationery items required by the Railways.

Another unique feature of women empowerment is the ‘Women Welfare Organizations’ on the Railways comprising wives of railway officers, which are proactive in empowerment of women employees and women folk of the employees’ families. Their activities include running of nursery schools, crèches, schools for mentally challenged children, financial assistance in deserving cases and handicraft centres for women members of employees’ families.

In the field of sports, several railway sportswomen have excelled at national and international level during the year.