Grassroots workers, social innovators awarded

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The first-ever Rashtriya Swayamsiddh Samman, a unique initiative launched by the Jindal Steel & Power Ltd (JSPL) Foundation last year to identify, reward and recognize grassroots leaders and social innovators in India, gave away awards to nine individuals and 10 organisations from across various sectors at a ceremony held at the Kamani Auditorium here today.

The awards were given away by the chief guest, Mr Rajiv Pratap Rudy, Union minister of state for skill development and entrepreneurship & parliamentary affairs. Ms Savitri Jindal, Chairperson Emeritus, JSPL, Mr Naveen Jindal, Chairman, JSPL and Ms Shallu Jindal, President, JSPL Foundation, were also present.

The winners received a cash prize of Rs 1 lakh and a certificate of appreciation to support their ongoing work and enhance the impact on the ground.

Congratulating the winners, Ms Shallu Jindal said: "People at the grassroots level are rarely recognised for their work. This is the vacuum that we strive to fill by initiating a legacy from this year by the name of Rashtriya Swayamsiddh Samman to recognise and nurture talent from the grassroot level from across the country. It was heartening to see that Rashtriya Swayamsiddh Samman elicited 358 entries in its first year, an indication of the rich talent in our country."

"Our objective is to bring out stories that have yet been untold. Stories of courage, determination and a will to bring about a change in the society. It is an effort to salute such people and provide them with a national platform, so that others too can take inspiration from them. By making the Swayamsiddh Samman national, JSPL Foundation thus strives to form a human chain," Ms Jindal added.

The awards were conferred in 10 categories viz. Women Empowerment, Entrepreneurship (start-ups), Education, Agriculture, Rural Development, Public Service / Social Service, Livelihood / Vocational Skills, Health, Innovation / Technology and Environment.

Some of the winners include Bhapkar Guruji, the Mountain Man from Maharashtra, who has built a 40 kms path cutting across seven hills; the Glacier Man of Ladakh (Chewang Norphel) who has built artificial glaciers and solved the problem of water in the dry mountainous area; the Gujarat farmer (Patel Genabhai Darghabhai) who brought Pomegranate farming to Banaskantha and the Indore couple (Gyanendra Monica Purohit) who successfully convinced the government to open a model deaf and dumb friendly police station, a first in India and Renu D Singh who has launched first ever 'Moblie Legal Clinic' that is run by the rape survivors who work as paralegal volunteers in Uttarakhand among others.

Renu Singh, overwhelmed with the award, said: "We started the first ever 'Mobile Legal Clinic' that aims to create legal awareness among people who are affected by 'Gender based violence'. It is run by the rape survivors who work as paralegal volunteers across 13 districts of Uttarakhand."

"I really appreciate JSPL's initiative. I hope other corporate houses will also take inspiration from them. I thank them on behalf of my team," Renu added.

United Nations Global Compact Network India (UNGCN), the Indian arm of United Nations Global Compact (UNGC), was the Knowledge Partner for the awards and was responsible for earmarking the parameters and finalising the awardees.