**Voice of the Blind**

**Fortnight e-bulletin**

**(Collection of news and informations of and for the blind)**

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59th issue

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**News from for and Near**

**1. Around 2,000 Uttar Pradesh teachers get jobs with fake disability certificates**

Around 2,000 assistant teachers working in government primary schools across Uttar Pradesh are suspected of using fake disability certificates for getting jobs.

The education department has initiated an enquiry into the suspicions as the teachers may have submitted fake certificates during the hiring process.

The information was recently discovered by the State Council for Education Research and Training

**A total of 1,932 teachers have been asked by the SCERT committee to appear before it with documents for verification.**

The applicants are accused of using fake handicap certificates to join the basic education department as assistant teachers resulting in the unemployment of people who are actually disabled and deserve the jobs.

SCERT is verifying the original documents of the teachers and also doing physical test to verify their eligibility.

# 2. Lack of facilities affects disabled people in J&K

**As per data Jammu and Kashmir has the highest number of disabled persons as compared to other Indian states.**

The population of Jammu and Kashmir is 1.25 crore and 361153 of them aredisabled people making around 3% of the total population.

The disabled have various disabilities such as locomotive problems, mental illness, retardation, multiple disabilities, problems related to vision, hearing and speech.

Despite their large numbers the facilities provided for disabled in the state are almost null.

They have no access to public places, institutions and buildings due to lack of accessible infrastructure non inclusive mindset of the people.

**Even the most basic buildings such as banks, ATMs and hospitals, are not disabled friendly.**

This makes the life of disabled people even more challenging as the administration has turned a blind eye and deaf ear to their needs.

The Social Welfare Department has been found to have a non-concerned attitude towards the people with disabilities of the state.

There is need to make the buildings accessible, launch welfare schemes for disabled and implement the reservation that is allowed under the RPWD act 2016.

There is also a shortage of special schools for children with special needs in the state.

# 3. Disabled children showed their knowledge in QUIZABLED 2017

QUIZABLED 2017 – Knowledge for All is a special quiz event that was oragnised for students with disabilities from both regular & special schools in Bengaluru.

Seva-in-Action – SiA is behind the planning and organizing of the quiz.

The event took place on Saturday, 16 December and 200 children from over 20 schools in the city took part in it.

The quiz program saw active participation from disabled children from the urban and rural parts of Bengaluru.

The event was inaugurated by cricketer Javagal Srinath and Kannada film actor Mohan.

## Four disability category for children

The quiz was divided into four groups for children with different disabilities such as intellectual disability, visual impairment, hearing impairment and cerebral palsy.

The aim of the quiz event was to encourage disabled children to be part of team activities and improve their confidence levels.

The quiz was based on general knowledge topics like Entertainment, Sports, History, Geography, Science and different themes like food, Fruits/Vegetables, cartoons.

# 4. Chinese company shows a big heart, will develop messaging tool for deaf customers

A Chinese food delivery company plans to develop functions of messaging and answering machines in their app to help couriers who are profoundly deaf.

Under this, users will receive popups suggesting that they communicate with the delivery driver through text messaging if the courier cannot hear or speak. Couriers can also use the tool to send phrases frequently used by pressing the one-touch trigger button.

## New tool aims to do away with hassles faced by deaf & speech impaired workers

When the messages are not received promptly, the cloud terminal will call the users automatically with a notice for picking up.

The new functions are being developed after two workers complained that companies are not meeting the needs of the deaf and speech impaired. Many Chinese Internet users were moved by the story.

# 5. A bionic ear that could help the deaf communicate even better

This is news that has the potential to change the lives of thousands of people.

## Research underway at The Bionics Institute in Melbourne

Researchers in Australia are developing a way to adapt the cochlear implant in the ear to stimulate the auditory nerve using light instead of electrical impulses.

This is great news as hearing aids and implants are limited because users are not able to pick out complex sounds or hear clearly among background noise.

The new technology can help target sounds specifically in different frequency regions along the auditory nerve. Experts hope that this could solve the current limitations with cochlear implants.

### How do cochlear implants work?

Cochlear implants were developed 40 years ago and have two parts, a speech processor and a surgically implanted receiver and a set of electrodes. The microphone picks up sound waves which it sends to the processor where the converted sounds are transmitted to the brain. The results vary sharply depending on the health of the inner ear and the individual brain.

The new research enables the nerve to respond to light instead of electrical signals using gene therapy.

# 6. Include mental health in school syllabus, Jharkhand doctors appeal to government

Two mental health experts in Jharkhand have petitioned the state chief minister Raghubar Das to include mental health in the school syllabus.

## 1 person commits suicide every 40 seconds in the world

They said that including common mental disorders, stress management and the poor effects of addiction in the science textbooks of higher classes would createawareness among school students.

### Suicide is the second leading cause of death in the 15-29 age group, globally

Many schools are now appointing counsellors to address the mental well-being of children. The experts are asking that teachers should be trained on mental health to enable them to detect early signs of mental illness in children and take steps.

The petition also asks that children be educated on the effective use of Internet and technology to help them use it responsibly.

If their plea is taken up, Jharkhand will be the first to introduce topics like depression, anxiety, schizophrenia, bipolar disorders, sleep disorders, and stress management.

A similar appeal has been made by these experts to the Madhya Pradesh government.

# 7. Researcher from Iran develops a smart device for the blind

Asra Paknahad, a researcher from Iran and her team has developed bracelet that connects to Android mobile phones through Bluetooth.

The Braille bracelet, which is a keyboard helps the visually impaired send messages and accept and reject calls on the phone.

The device is accessible for the blind and the keyboard is made as per the world Braille reading standards.

## Device can Alert & Vibrate

Paknahad said that the device has the ability to alert and vibrate to communicate with smart gadgets, connect to headsets, access the contact list and others.

The research team has plans to design a smart stick for the blind to help them move around freely.

# 8. Research shows that part of the brain can be stimulated to improve behaviour in kids with autism

Scientists in the United States say there is a part of the brain that can be stimulated to correct social impairments in children with autism.

## Brain zapping may improve aspects of social behaviour in kids with autism

This is the first time that evidence has been given that a specific part of thecerebellum, located near the brain stem, is key for autistic behaviours. Until now, it was only thought to have a role in coordinating movement.

It also establishes a more accessible target for brain stimulation. While this approach will not cure the underlying genetic cause of autism in a person, it can improve social issues in children with autism and improve quality of life.

### Technique will not take away genetic causes of autism but will improve quality of life

The technique has been conducted on mice and will be checked to see if its safe to conduct on kids. Doctors have applied techniques intervening in the cerebellum for disorders like schizophrenia, but it has not been studied in children with autism.

Most of the focus of autism research has been on the cortex, a region of the brain associated with reasoning.

# 9. Study on career of Deaf and Mute people is an eye opener

Dr J S Saini is a professor and head of centre for physically challenged person at the National Institute of Technical Teachers Training and Research.

He did a research on the deaf and speech-impaired employees of banks to find out the main hurdles that are caused by disability in professional life of disabled people.

Dr. Saini has submitted his findings to the National Institute for Speech and Hearing – NISH. The aim of the study was to get information about deaf and mute employees and the factors that affect their growth.

## **Study revealed lack of quality education for the disabled people**

As part of the study a questionnaire consisting of 16 questions were filled by 56 bank employees of 16 organisations across the country.

It was found that lack of quality education hampers the career of disabled people.

Most professional training programs are not accessible and this makes it difficult for the people with disabilities to learn new skills.

## Disabled employees face isolation at workplace

The study highlighted issues such as isolation of disabled workers in office, lack of accessible training programs and lesser career growth opportunities as compared to other people.

It is hoped that the study and its recommendations will be to create a better education and job opportunities for the deaf and speech-impaired people.

# 10. Deaf bank employees cite lack of education, poor training as major barriers

A first of its kind nationwide study among deaf and speech-impaired bank employees has underlined some of the problems they run into in their careers. The biggest is the lack of quality education facility. This means better schooling facilities and college education that will enable them to live independently.

## First nationwide study done among deaf, speech impaired bank workers

The study, done experts from the National Institute of Technical Teachers Training and Research, suggests that separate training programmes for the deaf should be designed and these should be conducted by teachers using sign language.

The findings of the study have been submitted to the National Institute for Speech and Hearing so it can hopefully lead to an improvement in the opportunities for the deaf and speech-impaired.

The study involved answering a questionnaire of 16 questions and these were answered by 56 bank employees of 16 organisations across India. Most of them were from Maharashtra and Karnataka, while the rest were from Punjab, Gujarat, Orissa, Tamil Nadu, Rajasthan, Chennai, West Bengal and Chhattisgarh. Two of them were managers, 14 deputy managers, 24 clerks, 3 peons and 13 were single window operators.

# 11. Stricter punishment for those who misuse disabled train coaches

The Government Railway Police – GRP has decided to take stricter action against people who misuse the disabled coaches in Mumbai trains and travel in them without being disabled.

**The GRP will now book such offenders under the Right of Persons with Disabilities Act – RPWD.**

The act calls for a maximum punishment ofRupees One lakh as fine and two years’ imprisonment or both. The normal fine is 500 rupees.

There have been repeated instances of able bodied people using the train coaches reserved for the disabled people.

This leads to the crowding of the disabled coaches and people with disabilities fail to board the train coaches some times.

The authorities hope that a stricter punishment will discourage commuters from getting into coaches reserved for the people with disabilities.

# 12. Kerala company set up to support artisans with disabilities

Handicrops Divyanga Impex, a company based in Palakkad in Kerala, is supporting disabled artisans in India.

Out of the eight directors of the company, five are wheelchair-bound. The company is run by the disabled with the help of public to encourage self-employment.

The company will provide assistance to people with disabilities and their families in skill development programmes, financial and material resources.

Handicrops already has more than a hundred disabled members who mostly work from home and make paper pens, LED bulbs, paper bags, umbrellas, handmade soaps, jewellery, and other handicrafts.

The company plans to create devices such as electric wheelchairs and make more people a part of the group.

As per the officials, anyone who cares for the welfare of the disabled can take shares in the company, with the minimum investment being Rs. 10,000, while the limit is Rs. 5 lakh.

The company plans to develop its own brands. Right now, it aims to focus on creating paper pens and umbrellas and has received orders for 50,000 pens.

# 13. Over 400 people took part in India Deaf Expo 2017 in Kolkata

More than 400 people took part in the India Deaf Expo 2017 held at EZCC Kolkata recently.The festival included exhibition stalls, games, awareness programmes and a fashion show.

90% of the guests who came from other countries like Korea, Tunisia, Bangladesh, Switzerland, France and America, were deaf.

The event aimed to encourage exchange of ideas and empower the disabled audience to follow their interests.

Deaf biker Shinan P.S. from Kerala attended the event with a hope to create a biking team with deaf adventure lovers.

Pune-based Zamir Dale, the founder chairman of Society for Empowerment of the Deafblind, shared his inspiring life story of how he overcome his hearing and visual disabilities without losing hope.

Organised by the Deaf Leaders Foundation, the event was held before a film festival where 45 short films from around the world were screened. Many films were made by the disabled for the disabled and also included films from romance, comedy, action and other categories.

# 14. Inclusive education project launched in Puducherry

A first of its kind initiative has been launched in Puducherry by the Sri Aurobindo Society – SAS for the children with learning disabilities.

The project is called Rupantar and aims to create inclusion in the field of education for children that have learning problems.

As part of the Rupantar project, a three-day workshop for teachers was recently held in Puducherry.

## **Training of teachers vital for Inclusive Education**

70 teachers were trained to handle the requirements of children with special needs from classes 1 to 8. SAS is hoping to train all the teachers in Puducherry under the project. Through the training, teachers in all schools will be able to identify children with learning disabilities and help them according to their needs. The training of teachers in all schools is vital for making the education system inclusive for everyone. Rupantar was first launched in Uttar Pradesh and is currently working in 9 states across the country.

# 15. Disabled turn up in thousands for Tata Steel run in Kolkata

Nearly 15,000 people including a double world record-holder in long-distance running was seen in the Tata Steel Kolkata 25K run. Of special interest were participants in the Champions with Disability section, which saw a huge surge in participation from last year - almost 40%.

Just how popular the race is was evident in that it was telecast live on STAR Sports and Hotstar. The cold weather helped gather more crowds.

The winner was Kenenisa Bekele from Ethiopia, who holds the world record in the men's 5,000m and 10,000m.

The 6km Ananda Run for senior citizens and the disabled was well attended as well. In the **Champions with Disability (2km) category, there were almost 100 participants**. Among them was 18-year-old Medha Saha, who lost her left leg in a bus accident last year.

The bonding among the 15 participants with prosthetic legs and blade runners was evident right through. Among them was Afzal Khan, Kolkata's first blade runner.

# 16. Disabled person refused separate parking facility at Chennai station, alleges he was humiliated

In an incident that highlights the insensitive treatment given to the disabled, a 42-year-old man with cerebral palsy has alleged that he was humiliated by railway officials at the Central station when he tried to submit a request for parking space for the disabled.

An inquiry has been launched with the station director after he filed a complaint. Rajiv Rajan, an activist who has cerebral palsy and faces mobility issues, could not park his vehicle at the Central station premises. So he put in a request asking for a spot for the disabled.

Rajan says that the station manager refused to listen and shouted at him to leave the premises. He says that he was forced to go to another room and lodge a complaint and was treated abusively.

The Central station director Sathyanarayanan was summoned and an inquiry has been ordered. Rajan has dropped his complaint.

Activists say that this is another instance of how poorly the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act is implemented. Its been a year since it was passed but many provisions are yet to come into effect.

Railway officials deny humiliating Rajan. They insist that they are setting aside parking space for the disabled near the Moore Market complex.

# 17. Alert from a blind woman ensured more lives were not lost in Mumbai shop fire

Thanks to an alert issued by a blind woman, more lives were not lost in the major fire that broke out in a snacks shop in Mumbai. The mother of 27-year-old Tushar Pawar alerted him after she heard a loud noise early in the morning on Monday.

The residents of the building rushed out thinking robbers had broken in when they realized that the snacks shop on the ground floor had caught fire. 12 people, most of them workers sleeping in the shop, died in the fire.

Pawar and his mother raised an alarm and alerted about seven other people who rushed out and were saved. The 12 people who died were migrant labourers. Among them was a disabled man, who rushed back into the burning shop to save his brother, who was also working there. Both were killed.

The business was being run illegally

Authorities now say that the Bhanu Farsan shop business did not get the required permissions from the municipal corporation. There were no safety measures or fire exits at the place.

**18. Disabled man rushed back in to meet certain death**

MUMBAI: One of the 12 workers who died in the [Saki Naka](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/topic/Saki-Naka) fire was a disabled man, who was being carried out of the burning farsan unit by one of the survivors. Inexplicably, he got off his rescuer's shoulders and rushed back in.

Seven of the deceased had joined the unit last week. Those who survived have lost crucial documents, including passports and educational certificates.

One of the survivors, Saurabh [Singh](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/topic/Singh) (20), who hails from Bihar, joined the farsan unit a month and a half ago, intending to stay on till March 2018, after which he was to join the merchant navy. "I started working at the unit after I missed joining a merchant navy ship on November 5. I reached Mumbai on November 7. I have lost my passport, continuous discharge certificate ([CDC](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/topic/CDC)) and all education certificates to the fire. I have to apply for them all over again. The saddest part is, we lost our coworkers, with who we were here just yesterday (Sunday)," Singh told TOI.  
Some of the survivors said they tried to douse the flames, but the blaze spread quickly, making escape riskier by the second. "I was sleeping on the mezzanine floor, when smoke spread in the entire unit. I took Jitendra, who was differently abled, on my shoulders and brought him till the door. But then he rushed back inside. I did not understand the reason. He was found dead later. There were 20 of us in the unit when the fire broke out around 4.15am," said Hanuman Sain (20), who joined the unit two years ago.

**19. People with disabilities to conquer Kaslubai**

Aurangabad: In a bid to defy the stereotypes associated with people with disabilities and to showcase their talents, Aurangabad based association Urja Durg Sanwardhan Pratishthan has organised a New Year's Eve trek to Mount Kaslubai in the Western Ghats. Kaslubai is the highest peak in the state at a height of 5,400 feet.  
The association president of the association, Shivaji Gade who suffers from limb disability is a fort enthusiast and has been leading treks to various forts in Maharashtra to promote heritage and to provide an opportunity to the disabled people to witness and appreciate their rich history.  
  
"We have been conducting this event for the last six years and there has not been any accidents," says Gade who always checks ground situations before the trip to ensure that the trek is conducted smoothly.  
  
People with disabilities and others interested can also join the trek, organisers said.Those interested can register for the trek by December 25.

People with disabilities will gather and spend the night at the foot of the mountains on December 30. The participants will set out on their journey on December 31 morning. Organisers said that so far there have been twenty registrations for the trip out of which three are women.

The trekkers have been asked to bring necessary food, medicine, clothes and water along with them. Those requiring special assistance should inform beforehand.

The expedition would also see trekkers undertake a Swachhta Abhiyaan at the peak of the mountain.

"We collect water bottles, wrappers and bring it down to the foot of the mountain to dispose them off," Gade said.

# 20. China Southern Airlines starts website for the blind

The China Southern Airlines has launched a website for the blind. Now users who want to fly the airline can visit iaw.csair.com and click on a bar at the top to open the function.

The site's colours can be simplified, text can be increased and the mouse cursor can be modified. One function also enables the text to be read aloud.

The change will benefit people who have vision problems as well as reading disorders.

China has nearly 13 million people who are blind. About two thirds say online information is very valuable to them, but most websites in China are unfriendly for blind.

# 21. Champions with Disabilities at the Tata Mumbai Marathon

The Tata Mumbai Marathon (previously known as Standard Chartered Mumbai Marathon) is an annual international marathon held in Mumbai, India, on the third Sunday of January every year.

It is the largest marathon in Asia as well as the largest mass participation sporting event on the continent. It is the richest race in India with a prize pool of $405,000.

The timely innovations and enhancements that the event has undergone over the years, have contributed tremendously to the upswing of the worldwide status of the Tata Mumbai Marathon.

The Tata Mumbai Marathon has six different race categories: Marathon (42.194 Kms), Half Marathon (21.097 Kms), Dream Run (6 Kms), Senior Citizens Race (4.3 Kms), and Champions with Disability category (2.4 Kms) and a newly add Timed 10K run.

Participation in the Champions with Disability category is open for individuals with following disabilities: physical/locomotor disability, intellectual impairment, visual impairment, hearing impairment and orthopedic or neurological disorder

# 22. Air India does it again! Refuses passenger on wheelchair to board flight

Air India finds itself in the thick of controversy once again. This time a disabled passenger has alleged that he was not allowed to board a flight because of his battery-operated wheelchair.

Kaushik Majumder, who is a researcher at the Indian Statistical Institute, has alleged that he was harassed by Air India staff andnot allowed to board his flight from Bengaluru to Kolkata on 17 December.

Majumder says that before entering the flight, he was asked by the staff to shift to a non-electrical wheelchair.

Majumder, who has 85% orthopaedic disability, says he agreed to do so and disconnected the battery of his wheelchair. But he was asked by the staff to remove all the wires too. He refused to do this as the mechanism of the wheelchair is complicated and no one would be able to fix it.

Air India has denied the charges. It says the passenger was told at the time of check-in itself that the battery-operated wheelchair would not be allowed on the flight.

Read on NewzHook – How [air travel r](https://newzhook.com/story/14939)remains a challenge for the disabled

# 23. Andhra Pradesh develops Telugu app to detect learning disabilities

The government of Andhra Pradesh Government in partnership with the UNESCO Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Education for Peace and Sustainable Development will establish a center of excellence for children with learning disabilities. This will also be a gaming for e-learning hub.

**This will be the first such center in India as well as the Asia-Pacific region**.

A Telugu app to screen students for learning disabilities has also been developed by the state government that has been tested and the government plans to work with a number of schools to screen students at a very early age to see if they are dyslexic or have any other difficulty. This app will be launched in January 2018.

To begin with the government will work with 200 schools. Teachers will be trained first and the center will also have a team of child psychologists.

The gaming hub for e-learning will be a center of excellence as well. The government will work with institutes like the IITs and the IIMs.

# 24. Mumbai's 1st inclusive meet up sees a huge gathering of people with disabilities

The happy spaces, chart busting music and dancing feet were all testament to the success of Mumbai's first inclusive nightlife event for the disabled held on Sunday. Organised by Inclov Social Spaces at Kitty Su, the evening saw a host of TV celebrities and India's first disabled DJ, Varun Khullar.

## Mumbai's first ever inclusive nightlife meet up by Inclov is sold out!

This is the first time Inclov was hosting the event in Mumbai and the turnout was incredible, not surprising given the city's vibrant social scene. In fact the numbers were so huge that registrations were closed down earlier.

"Its a good problem", says Shankar Srinivasan, co-founder of Inclov, the matchmaking website that helps connect the disabled and also organises the Social Spaces event."

Popular TV stars Raghu Ram and Rajiv Ram were at the event, adding a lively touch to the happenings.**Everything about the venue was accessible, from the entry and exit, to washrooms and the dance floor. There was a sign language interpreter for the deaf as well.**

### Social Spaces events organised in other Indian cities as well

Inclov has been organising Social Spaces meet ups across the country since June 2016. Such events in Chennai and Bengaluru have attracted crowds of 70-90. In Mumbai, the number was above 150.

There are around 125 million people with disabilities in India. They have limited access to social life and are forced to live a life of solitude. Inclov makes it possible for people to find love and happiness in their life. Among the crowds at the Mumbai event, was a couple who met through Inclov and got married recently.

"There are more couples coming together", says Srinivasan. "and that is overwhelming for us. As a team we have tried to digest the fact that this is valuable to people, especially because they never thought they would have a life partner."

**25. Odisha Braille press fails students**

Due to lack of manpower, the only Braille press of Odisha, situated in Berhampur, has not been able to print textbooks for Class VIII students since 2016. As a result, visually impaired students in various schools are suffering. Principal of the ‘Red Cross School for the Blind’ in Berhampur, Nabin Chandra Satpathy said their students had to toil more because Braille books were not available.

Textbooks for Class VIII had been changed from 2016-17. “We could manage to get the English textbooks typed in Braille by a social organisation in Bhubaneswar. But for other textbooks that are in Odia, students were asked to write them down in Braille. Teachers had to put in extra effort to make students understand the changes in course,” said Mr. Satpathy.

The situation is the same in more than 60 such schools in Odisha.

**26. TRAI begins discussions on making ICT accessible for disabled**

New Delhi, Dec 20 () Telecom regulator TRAI today began a dialogue on making ICT accessible for the disabled, saying more policy interventions are needed in this area where benefits of technology have not been fully realised.

The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI), releasing its latest consultation paper on Information and Communication Technology (ICT), has also sought industry views on whether handset makers should be mandated to manufacture at least one model for the disabled with assistive technology features such as hearing, visual aids and emergency buttons.

The consultation paper has also sought the industry's comments on disabilities that need to be included in the enabling framework, and reasons for benefits not reaching the persons with disabilities (PwDs), and corrective measures that need to be undertaken.

It has also asked if information on billing and pricing needs to be provided in a form that is accessible by PwDs.

TRAI expressed concern that persons with disabilities were "often not able to access these ICT services on account of lack of necessary accessibility features or unaffordable prices of the equipment or due to unavailability of required services".

This is despite the fact that telecom and broadcasting services have become ubiquitous over the past two decades.

"Since access to telecom and broadcasting services has become an essential component of economic growth and upliftment of people, it is important that the necessary steps are taken to ensure that the PwDs are able to access these services and barriers that hinder this access are identified and removed," TRAI said.

Typically, release of a consultation paper marks the beginning of crafting of a framework or set of recommendations by the regulator. The regulator then holds an open house with stakeholders, discussing all aspects of an issue threadbare, before finalising its views.

TRAI noted that the government, industry and the civil society had joined hands to ensure protection of right of persons with disabilities and that technological advancements too had brought to fore a variety of aids, assistive devices and services.

"...corresponding changes in services or content is yet to come in the country implying thereby that the benefits of ICT development have not yet reached the PwDs," TRAI said.

TRAI was of the view that the additional policy interventions need to be "explored and implemented to address the unique challenges" faced by the PwD community.

The consultation paper aims to identify key areas that require policy intervention and understand barriers being faced by the persons with disabilities in accessing telecom and broadcasting services. This will help in working out affirmative actions at the policy level, TRAI added.

The regulator has sought comments on the issue by January 22, 2018 and the deadline for counter comments is February 5, 2018. MBI ABM

**27. Mentally disabled man allegedly beaten to death for theft of wheat**

AGRA: A 40-year-old mentally[disabled Dalit](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/topic/disabled-Dalit), Chandrapal[Jatav](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/topic/Jatav), was allegedly beaten to death by his neighbours over allegations of theft of "wheat" at[Rajawal](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/topic/Rajawal) village in UP's Aligarh district on Tuesday early morning.  
Police said the incident occurred on Tuesday morning around 4am when he made an attempt to take away some wheat from Gajendra's house. He has allegedly come to the house a day earlier also, but had left after [Gajendra](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/topic/Gajendra) scolded him.  
  
Tuesday early morning, Jatav came again and was caught and beaten up badly. The suspects also locked him inside a room.

After a few hours, when the family members came and opened the door, he was found dead. The body has been sent for post mortem.

Aligarh SSP [Rajesh Pandey](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/topic/Rajesh-Pandey) said, a case has been registered under sections 302 (murder), 147 (riot) of the IPC and SC/ST Act against five people including Gajendra and others including Mukesh, Netpal, Ajay and Suresh. They all belong to Jat community. All are absconding and investigations are on

Talking to media, [Chandrapal](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/topic/Chandrapal)'s brother [Vishambhar](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/topic/Vishambhar) said that he had never stolen anything from anyone's house. He said the allegations of theft against the deceased are wrong

According to villagers, since Jatav was mentally challenged, they usually used to ignore his acts.

**28. Facebook improves how blind ‘see’ images posted online**

MENLO PARK, Calif. — When Matt King first got on Facebook eight years ago, the blind engineer had to weigh whether it was worth spending an entire Saturday morning checking whether a friend of his was actually in his friend list. Such were the tools at the time for the visually impaired – almost nonexistent.

Today, thanks to text-to-audio software, it just takes a few seconds for him to accomplish the same task. And because of a new and improved face recognition service the social network is rolling out, he can now learn which friends are in photos, even those who haven’t been tagged by another user.

The facial recognition technology, which uses artificially intelligent algorithms, doesn’t appear to have changed much since Facebook began using it in 2010 to suggest the identities of people in photos. But after incorporating feedback from billions of user interactions, Facebook felt confident enough to push its use into new territory.

“What we’re doing with AI is making it possible for anybody to enjoy the experience,” said the 52-year-old King, who lost his sight in college because of a degenerative eye disease and now works at Facebook as an accessibility specialist. For the sighted, the new facial recognition settings will also help crack down on imposters. Starting Tuesday, Facebook will notify you if someone has uploaded your face as their profile picture. And just in time for alcohol-laden holiday parties, you can also be notified if someone in your friend network has posted a compromising picture of you without explicitly tagging you.

That check is not perfect. If you don’t want a drunken karaoke picture of yourself online, for example, you can’t veto the resulting photos posted by your friends, although you can ask them to take it down. Serious violations or disputes can be flagged to Facebook staff, which they will review according to their community standards.

Facebook lets the person posting a photo have the final say this way in order to deal with situations like public speaking events, where the speaker shouldn’t have control over what’s shared.

For Janni Lehrer-Stein, a volunteer who advises Facebook, the new facial recognition capability will help her enjoy more of her daughter’s recent graduation photos. Lehrer-Stein had lost her sight by the time she was 46, and has long used audio-to-text software on Facebook. Knowing who is in each photo makes a big difference, says the sixty-something mother of three.

The technology gives her enough information to “engage” in special family moments captured in photos, she said, “even though I can’t see them.”

# 29. International Day of Sign Languages Declared by the United Nations Organisation

The United Nations has announced that from 2018, 23 September will be observed as **The International Day of Sign Languages** every year. This is a significant achievement for the people of deaf community across the world.

The declaration was made yesterday during the 72nd United Nations General Assembly session.

The first International Day of Sign Languages will be celebrated on 23 September 2018 as part of the International Week of the Deaf.

The World Federation of the Deaf – WFD is behind the International Day of Sign Languages being declared by UN.

WFD has been working across various countries of the world to gather support regarding this matter.

23 September also commemorates the date that the WFD was established in 1951.

The World Federation of the Deaf was set up with the aim to promote the rights of deaf people and ensure the preservation of sign languages and deaf culture.

# 30. New Year Eve's trek only for the disabled! Read more to find out

To challenge all the stereotypes associated with people with disabilities and to show their talents, Urja Durg Sanwardhan Pratishthan, an organisation in Aurangabad, has organised a New Year's Eve trek toMount Kaslubai in the Western Ghats.

The president of the, Shivaji Gade, suffers from a limb disability and has been organising treks to various forts in Maharashtra to promote heritage and provide the disabled an opportunity to witness and appreciate their rich history.

Such events have been conducted for over six years and there have been no accidents. The ground situation is always checked before the trip to make sure no accidents can take place.

**People with disabilities and others interested can also join the trek. Register by 25 December**

Those interested will gather and spend the night at the foot of the mountains on 30 December. The journey will begin on the morning of 31 December. Trekkers have to bring necessary food, medicine, clothes and water along with them. Those needing special assistance should inform beforehand.

# 31. Disabled Pakistani child who accidentally crossed into India found not guilty

2017 ends on a feel good note for India-Pakistan relations.

A 12-year-old disabled boy from Pakistan crossed over into India without any travel documents in May this year, and was detained by Indian authorities. Hasnain, who is from Lahore, has finally been released after he was found not guilty by the Juvenile Justice Board at Ferozepur in Punjab.

He will soon be sent home. Currently, the child is staying at the Faridkot children home.

The Pakistan High Commission in New Delhi had written to the Ministry of External Affairs, MEA, to ensure he was released early and sent home.

Hasnain became a subject of focus after a Pakistani journalist Mehr Tarar tweeted to External Affairs minister Sushma Swaraj asking her to step in and help the child.

The Border Security Force had detained Hasnain when he crossed over to India on 1 May. He could not speak or hear, and it was from a currency note in his pocket that they found out he was from Pakistan. He was sent to a children’s observation home.

**32. Sports Minister sanctioned 83.7 lakh for para sports**

Sports Minister, Rajyavardhan Rathore has said that the Union Sports Ministry has spent an amount of Rs 83.7 lakh towards sports persons with disabilities.

The amount was released by the ministry in the 2017-18 financial year under the Khelo India Scheme.

## Funds used for Para sports development

As per the minister, the funds were used for conducting various para sports activities like training of coaches and holding games at the district, state and national level.

Rajyavardhan Rathore also announced that stadiums will be made disabled friendly according to the provisions of the Scheme for Implementation of Persons with Disabilities Act - SIPDA.

SIPDA funding will also be utilized for selection of athletes, setting up or supporting Specialized Sports Training Centres for people with disabilities who are interested in sports.

The government is also spending funds on preparing teams for Paralympic Games.

The Sports Authority of India is also involved in the development of para sports in the country.

# 33. 25 blind students in Delhi homeless after hostel is demolished by authorities

Twenty five blind students, living in a hostel in New Delhi's Virendra Nagar are out in the cold after their hostel was demolished.

The hostel for blind students was built on land owned by the Delhi Development Authority in 2000. It used to be a slum and after the slum dwellers shifted out, the school was opened with the help of donations. The school owners says that he was never told in the last 17 years that the school & hostel construction was illegal and could be demolished.

They say that when the authorities came to bring the building down, they pleaded with them not to do so but their belongings were thrown out and the building destroyed.

The students are mostly school-goers, while others are doing their university education. They have not attended their institutions since 15 December as they are struggling to find a solution to their housing problem. They are currently living in a tent on a garbage ground.

The students had come from different parts of the country and all of them planned to stay on even after finding jobs. Everything from the clothes to the food is paid for by donations but now that they are homeless, not many people are coming forward to help.

# 34. ONGC held its first ever para games event for disabled employees

The Oil and Natural Gas Corporation –ONGC has become one of the first corporates to promote the participation of disabled employees in various sports.

ONGC Para Games were organized by the organization from 19 December to 21 December.

120 employees, including 100 men and 20 women with disabilities from 16 work centers from across the country took part in the various sporting events.

A total of 46 events were held in badminton, table tennis, wheelchair and athletics, including 100 mtr, 200 mtr, 400 mtr, 2 Km Walk, Long jump and Discus throw.

Shashi Shanker, Chairman and Managing Director, said,

" ONGC is committed to ensure social inclusiveness and providing equal opportunities in employment for the specially abled, in line with the Government of India's mandate, for which various measures are being put in place."

There are 282 people with disabilities that are currently working at ONGC and more will be joining soon.

This was the first ONGC Para Games and the main focus was on athletics, badminton and table tennis.

# 35. App that enables blind to freely move around airports to be launched across United States

Its a new app and it is changing the way blind and low vision travellers are able to move around airports. Currently it is being used in an airport in Kentucky, U.S., and could be coming to other airports in the country next.

The app uses Bluetooth technology, and the free “Indoor Explorer” function of the existing Nearby Explorer app transforms a smartphone into an audio guide that can tell users exactly where they are in the airport and guide them. It can take them step by step to gates, ticket counters, baggage claims or the nearest Starbucks.

The app also gives interactive data about the environment inside the airport building.

## New feature developed by the American Printing House for the Blind

The app has been in testing at the Louisville International Airport since October 2017. By replicating it elsewhere, developers hope to see it being used in other airports.

It’s been nearly three decades since the Americans With Disabilities Act became law, and airports have made accommodations for people with disabilities, but many forms of assistance for the blind and visually impaired are often available at a very basic level.

### App is a game changer as it allows the blind independence & dignity

. In December 2017, Amtrak, the countrywide rail network, announced the launch of a new app calledFindYourWay to move around New York City’s Penn Station. Its a free app and it gives travellers information on gates, trains and boarding times while also helping them navigate to exits, ATMs and restaurants. Amtrak also plans to develop similar apps for other stations.

# 36. Chennai bypoll fails disabled voters even after detailed access audit by groups

People with disabilities faced a hard tome casting their votes at a crucial bypoll to the R K Nagar constituency. This is even after a detailed disability access audit a few days before the poll.

## Critical facilities for disabled voters absent

The problems were many, ranging from inaccessible ramps, lack of Tamil Braille sheets and absence of handrails.

Disability rights activists said that proper and appropriate training was not given to volunteers on accessible infrastructure. The ramps were steep in many booths and even those that were modified did not reach the required standards.

### Disability access audit done by 4 groups just weeks before election

There were other issues as well. The ramps were inaccessible due to surfaces being uneven, and the lack of kerb ramps were limitations as well.

Blind voters faced the most difficulty even after submitting a 11-point guideline to the Election Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner. They had asked for special lighting but this was nor provided and the quality of Braille sheets was very poor.

For one, Braille was not available in Tamil and even what was provided was of such poor quality that blind voters were unable to detect the candidates' numbers. The EVMs were not numbered and symbols were not properly named either.

The good news was that wheelchairs were available in all polling booths and signage of priority queue and yellow posters were stuck in all the booths.

The accessibility audit was conducted in December by four disability rights organisations - Disability Rights Alliance India (DRAI), December 3 movement, Maathi Yosi and Udavikkaram, along with volunteers from Bhumi.

# 37. Blind captain hopes to kayak solo across the Bosphorus

Ahmet Ustunel is preparing to cross the Bosphorus Strait in a kayak. Ustunel is completely blind and he is hoping that the technology he is developing to help him make this trip will make a difference to others who are blind. e.

## Lack of vision no barrier to achieving a childhood dream

Ustunel is totally blind but he is determined to cross the Bosphorus Strait from Europe to Asia using just a kayak and a prototype course keeper and GPS system, known as Mr Beep.

A teacher from Turkey, Ustunel moved to the United States in 2006, where he taught blind and vision impaired kids in San Francisco. But he never forgot his lifelong dream.

Ustunel spent his childhood by the sea and had a fishing boat he loved. His father would help him steer it with verbal instructions and he hoped to row a boat himself. Building a boat costs money so he turned his attention to kayaks.

A kayak is a canoe made of a light frame with a watertight covering having a small opening in the top to sit in.

Mr. Beep, a course keeper initially designed to help blind rowers, has changed things for Ustunel. He got together with a designer and a group of engineers to see what changes he could make.

Ustunel uses his smartphone alongside the prototype, but he will add GPS and navigation features to Mr. Beep early next year. He also hopes to develop Mr. Beep into a complete navigation system that will provide other blind and visually impaired people with more freedom than ever before.

**38. Bengaluru: Government buildings continue to be inaccessible to disabled**

Many medical institutions and government buildings across the state continue to be inaccessible for the disabled and they have not fully utilize the government funds meant to improve accessibility.

A major chunk of funds allocated to these institutions to provide infrastructure for differently abled under the SIPDA scheme (Scheme for Implementation of Persons with Disabilities Act, 1995) continues to remain unutilized.

“It is really difficult for us to access different departments on the campus. We have to depend on our friends most of the time to go anywhere,” said Rashmi, a specially abled student.

Around Rs 9.32 crore was granted to various institutions and buildings, including 19 government buildings in Hassan, Mysuru medical institute, Mandya medical science institute, Raichur medical science institute and other buildings, but till now only Rs 4.92 crore has been utilized till now.

Dr Siddaraju, Director of Department of Empowerment of Differently Abled & Senior Citizen said, “We will be writing a letter to the minister and district in-charge minister from the home ministry to finish or payback unused amount.”  
This has adversely affected Accessible India Campaign that was launched by Prime Minister in 2015.

Accessible India Campaign is a program that comes with an index to measure the design of disabled-friendly buildings and human resource policies. The programme aims to serve the differently-able community in the country.  
“We cannot start any work under Accessible India Campaign until the allocated funds are completely utilized,” added Dr Siddaraju.

Even a Supreme Court bench, comprising Justices A.K. Sikri and Ashok Bhushan, had on December 15 said the government buildings and educational institutes must be compatible with the needs of differentlyabled people with number around 26.8 million, which constitutes 2.21% of India’s total population.

“Planning, procurement, and tender is the problem. They did not initiate the process in advance and the reflection is what you're seeing now,” said V. Ravichandar, an urban expert.

More than 40 government buildings and hospitals in Bengaluru were notified to provide disabled-friendly feature with an estimated cost of `2218.78 lakh last year under Accessible India Campaign. Due to this delay in the process, these buildings are not getting the financial aid.

# 39. Makeathon winners will develop accessibility solutions for persons with disabilities

The Enable Makeathon –EM has selected six finalists who will now compete with each other. The International Committee of the Red Cross – ICRC has announced this New Delhi.

The winner team of the Makeathon will get the opportunity to develop accessibility solutions for persons with disabilities.

The aim of the makethon is to encourage young creators to come up with affordable solutions to help the people with disabilities in the challenges they face.

The teams will focus on the needs of people with disabilities who live in the remote parts and have less access to technology.

## Teams are innovating accessibility solutions

The teams are currently busy in coming up with unique ideas as per the Enable Makeathon challenges in various fields.

Some of the innovations made so far include making tourism more accessible, a low-cost version of an encyclopedia for deaf people, an application that supports pregnancy checkup for the visually impaired.

The finale of the competition will be held on 6 Feb.

The winning team will get the chance for a yar long training program to improve their skills.

**40. Early intervention centres to prevent disability in kids**

CHENNAI: From a minor sniffle to a serious heart condition, from learning difficulties to issues with mobility, parents will not have to navigate through a warren of rooms and departments in government [hospitals](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/topic/hospitals) to seek medical help for their children anymore.  
The state health department has opened early intervention centres exclusively for children in three key hospitals in the city - the Institute of Child Health, Egmore, Government Stanley Medical College and Hospital, and Government Kilpauk Medical College and Hospital - that house various specialties under one roof. Hitherto, families of sick children, who visit state-run hospitals, had to shuttle between departments and, most times, even institutions for medical help.  
  
To ensure early intervention, the directorate of public health recently mobilised 15 medical teams to fan out and undertake screening of children in government and government-aided schools in Chennai. The city has a total of 687 such institutions with 2.83 lakh students.  
  
The children will be screened for ailments under four categories - defects, developmental delay, deficiency and disease. They will then be referred to these centres, where a 14-member team will diagnose them. The programme will also be extended to anganwadi centres.  
  
Director of public health K Kolandaswamy said 31 such centres had been set up in a phased manner in the state since 2015 as part of [Rashtriya Bal Swasthya Karkyakram](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/topic/Rashtriya-Bal-Swasthya-Karkyakram) - a project implemented under the [National Rural Health Mission](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/topic/National-Rural-Health-Mission).  
  
"Chennai wasn't on the project's map initially, considering it already has four government medical college hospitals, besides ICH," he said. However, officials decided to extend it to the capital to ease the burden on other overcrowded government hospitals. For example, the 834-bed ICH in Egmore, the only government-run children's hospital in the state, sees close to 2,000 outpatients, many of them are referred from other districts.

Although Chennai has a prominent place in the medical tourism map, the health of children here remains a cause of concern. A recent report on the nutrition profiles of 640 districts in India, compiled by the International Food Policy Research Institute, revealed that 44.5% of all children below the age of five years in Chennai are anaemic, while 30.9% are stunted.

The new centres will diagnose, treat and manage cases like congenital heart ailments, neural tube defects (anomalies in the brain and spine), autism and learning disabilities, and minor infections in the 0-18 years' age group. Besides paediatricians and medical officers, the centres will also have a dentist, psychologist, speech therapist, audiologist and an occupational therapist.

Although the three centers started operating a week ago, hospitals are still in the process of recruiting staff. In Stanley hospital, a 5,000sqft space has been allotted for constructing a three-storey building. "Right now, we have made space for the centre in our existing facility. Once the new building comes up, it will serve as a nodal centre," said the college dean, Dr S Ponnambalam.

Private practitioners have welcomed the move as they frequently come across families struggling to meet medical expenses of children diagnosed too late. "Some of these conditions could have been ameliorated with drugs if detected early, while the effects of some could have been minimised with physiotherapy. It's a great step that the state is using its vast network to screen children," said specialist in foetal medicine, Dr S Suresh of MediScan.

**41. Blind boy makes father proud, gets black belt in Karate**

Shamreaz Hussain is a 14 year old blind boy who has recently received the prestigious black belt in karate.

Shamreaz Hussain lives in the UK and has been learning Karate for the past six years.

His father has said that the moment when Shamreaz received his belt was the proudest moment for him and he cried with joy.

His son had expressed the desire to take karate lessons after he was physically bullied by his school mates.

He wanted to be able to defend himself and learn the art of karate.

His father then started the search for an instructor who could teach karate to his visually-impaired son and finally found one.

# 42. Survey highlights how disabled unfriendly IT companies in Hyderabad are

Hyderabad scored many brownie points when it announced that it was setting up a separate IT park for the disabled. However, a study done soon after that announcement has highlighted just how disabled unfriendly IT companies are in the city.

## Study by South Asia Centre for Disability Inclusive Development & Research

The research study is called 'Factors influencing employment & employability for persons with disability: Insights from a City in South India’. A questionnaire was given to 147 disabled employees and 53 employers of six IT companies in Hyderabad.

Most of the people responded saying that physical, structural, communication and information barriers for the disabled existed in their workplaces. 95.2% employees and 84.9% employers felt that there were barriers to access within the building like internal ramps and lifts with Braille symbols.

### Barriers felt in access & attitudes among workers

Around 84% of disabled employees and employers felt that there was a lack of accessible communication networks and devices in workplaces like provision of text phones, type talk, hearing induction loop facilities and screen readers. There was also a need felt for greater sensitisation among employees towards their disabled colleagues. Around 88% of disabled employees said lack of positive attitude, harassment and discrimination in workplace was a major barrier

But when it comes to recruitment, almost 73% of disabled employees said they did not face any discrimination in the hiring process and 90% reported that their potential employers had made reasonable adjustments to make their job interviews easier. 100% employers in the survey said disabled employees are very motivated individuals.

# 43. Hi-tech homes for the disabled to be built in Hyderabad

Hyderabad is soon to have hi-tech care residential homes for people with disabilities.

This plan will be the part of the State government’s project regarding the construction of a IT Park for the disablednear Rajiv Gandhi International Airport, Shamshabad.

## Facilities for disabled to be provided in the residences

The residences will have facilities like reading rooms for visually-impaired, ramps for the physically-challenged and user-friendly toilets for people with disabilities.

People with vision issues will get software-assisted reading devices.

The IT park is expected to come up in a huge area of 10 acres of government land.

The construction of the disabled focused project will be done through a public-private partnership between the Telangana State and Vindhya E-Infomedia Private Limited.

## Skills will be taught to people with disabilities

The park is expected to employ 2,000 persons with disabilities in the next five years.

The IT park will not only impart job training, other useful skills will also be taught to the disabled such as shopping, cooking, money management, weight management and a healthy lifestyle.

# 44. Karnataka fails to utilise funds allocated to make government buildings, colleges accessible

Leading medical institutions and government buildings across Karnataka remain inaccessible to the disabled as the state has not fully used the government funds meant to improve accessibility.

In fact a major chunk of funds allocated to these institutions to provide infrastructure for the disabled under SIPDA -Scheme for Implementation of Persons with Disabilities Act, 1995 - remains untouched.

Disabled students say that they find it hard to access different departments on the campuses and have to depend on friends to go anywhere.

## Less than 50% of funds allocated to make buildings accessible have been used

Around Rs 10 crore was granted to various institutions and buildings, including 19 government buildings in Hassan, Mysuru, Mandya and Raichur, but less than Rs 5 crore has been used.

This has put a brake on Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Accessible India campaign that was launched in 2015.

The Accessible India Campaign comes with an index to measure the design of disabled-friendly buildings and human resource policies. In December 2017, the Supreme Court has said that government buildings and educational institutes must be compatible with the needs of the disabled.

More than 40 government buildings and hospitals in Bengaluru were notified to provide disabled-friendly features but they are yet to receive financial aid.

**45. People with disabilities, senior citizens don’t favour metro**

The Namma Metro has been operational for over six years, and has earned lakhs of regular commuters. However, despite being dubbed a disabled-friendly transport option, woes of commuters who are physically challenged are far from over. They struggle not just to find a seat, but even to get inside the train that are crowded, especially during peak hours.

Bangalore Metro Rail Corporation Ltd. (BMRCL) recently announced that the three-coach trains would be converted into six-coach trains from the last week of January, but the conversion of its entire fleet of 50 trains into six-coach ones would be completed only by June 2019.

This has brought little cheer to people.

“It is usually so crowded that there is no space even to stand. There is so much pushing and pulling while getting down at the stations that I have to stand in a corner to avoid being pushed out of the metro,” said S. Shreedhar, who relies on crutches for mobility.

Mr. Shreedhar said he uses metro only when there is no other transport option available for him. It is travelling during the peak hours that is most taxing for people with disabilities.

Renuka Devi, who uses a wheelchair, said, “I prefer to travel by my personal vehicle than use the metro now because of the crowded coaches. I don’t think there is any space to accommodate my wheelchair in the metro during rush hours.”

It is not just persons with disabilities. Even senior citizens complain about the crowded trains. “I sometimes find it hard to breathe inside the crowded compartments. Though people are considerate and usually give me a place to sit, it is still inconvenient,” said Jayprakash Raaj, 63.

But BMRCL spokesperson U.A. Vasanth Rao said it was not a problem. “The stations are crowded but the trains can still accommodate all these people. Earlier, when 2.5 lakh people were travelling, we used to hear the same complaint that the metro is crowded. Today, nearly four lakh people are travelling and we still hear the same. Small incidents happen but people are now cooperating with us and the metro staff, so things are surely changing,” he said.

I don’t feel threatened per se while travelling in the metro, but it would definitely be a welcome change to have an all-woman coach where I can stand without any difficulty. Getting in and out of these crowded coaches will also become smoother.

Meghna Mitra,a daily commuter

Metro is usually so crowded that there is no standing space at all. There is so much pushing and pulling while getting down that I have to stand in one corner to avoid being pushed out of the coach.

S. Shreedhar,a person with special needs who relies on crutches for mobility

**46. Amputee mountaineer Arunima Sinha alleges she was humiliated at Madhya Pradesh temple**

Former national level football player Arunima Sinha, who is also the first amputee to scale Mount Everest, has alleged that she felt humiliated during a visit to the Mahakal Temple at Ujjain in Madhya Pradesh.

## Sinha's leg was amputated after she was attacked on a moving train in 2011

Sina has said that her disability was mocked at and that she felt 'greater pain' while visiting the Mahakal Temple than scaling the Everest.

She took to Twitter to talk about her experience and also tagged the Prime Minister's Office and the Madhya Chief Minister's Office in her tweet.

Temple sources said Sinha was stopped twice by security personnel while trying to enter the innermost chamber of the temple and that she broke down while arguing with them.

Mahakal Temple's administrator has said that he came to know about the incident from media reports as Arunima did not file a complaint with the police or the temple administration.

There is a ramp for the disabled at the temple and an inquiry is being held into why she was stopped. CCTV footage will also help establish who was responsible for treating her badly.

Arunima Sinha was pushed out of a running train in April, 2011, while resisting a robbery attempt. One of her legs had to be amputated below the knee after the incident.

**47. Disabled artist in Hrishikesh supports her family through her paintings**

Anjana Malik was born without arms and has only one fully functional leg. Through her incredible paintings, she warns money to support her parents, paralysed brother, sister-in-law and their two children.

### Anjana was taught how to paint by a foreign tourist

This 38-year-old from Hrishikesh started off by writing 'Ram' or 'Om' on paper and selling it to tourists on the road leading to a local temples. One day, an international tourist taught her how to draw and paint and now for the last two years, she sits outside the Kothari Mutt and draws.Tourists buy these paintings for amounts ranging from Rs 100 upwards.

She gets her painting material through donations. Because she sits in the open she has many challenges. Her paintings get damaged by dust, rain, passersby and dogs.

### Online fund campaign to help Anjana & her family lead a better life

But she is determined to keep painting and through her brilliant colours she is showing how disability will never come in the way of her determination to feed her family. Anjana's story has motivated students - Kartikeya Sundaram from the G D Goenka School in Sohna, and Rohit Sharma of Delhi Public School, to create an online funding campaign on Facebook. The money will go towards helping Anjana and her family lead a more secure life.

**48. Tamil Nadu government to distribute communication devices for kids with special needs**

The Tamil Nadu department looking into the welfare of the disabled will soon begin giving out 400 high-end communication devices to children with autism, Cerebral Palsy (CP) and Down syndrome.

## Communication devices developed by IIT Madras

These are augmentative and alternative communication tools that will allow children with speech and language disabilities to communicate using pictures and artificial speech in both Tamil and English.

The developed devices will be used at early intervention centres, mobile therapy units and training centres. Of the 400 devices, 50 will come with a switch access to aid those who cannot use touch screen. All the devices will have picture and alphabet modes to make them more user-friendly.

Nearly one in every 50 children in Tamil Nadu is believed to be on the autism spectrum and nearly 35,000 individuals across the state suffer from CP, which is a permanent congenital condition in which a portion of the brain's frontal lobe is damaged thereby affecting coordinated movement of hand or feet.

CP affects muscles that produce speech or vision and are denied access to traditional communication methods.

**49. Kids with disabilities, serious illnesses become superheroes in this adorable photoshoot**

Children suffering from serious illnesses and disabilities were changed into their inner superheroes thanks to the photographer Josh Rossi. Rossi took pictures of these kids, aged between two to nine years, that transformed them into the characters from the Justice League thanks to costumes and special effects.

## Children dress up as superhero characters they shared similarities with

Wonder Woman, The Flash and Superman are among the characters portrayed by the children suffering from different forms of cancer, half a heart, a double amputation and severe autism.

The United States-based photographer said that when they came for the shot, they were sick and down but once they put their costumes on, they started to have fun. He got the idea for the superhero shoot after dressing up his four-year-old daughter as Wonder Woman for her birthday.

### Kids suffer from different types of cancers, disabilities & heart diseases

The photos went viral and Josh began receiving requests from all around the US for such photo shoots. He and his wife decided to use his skills for kids suffering from medical conditions as they are the real superheroes.

Like five-year-old Kayden, who became a double amputee when he was a year old as he had omphalocele, which caused his internal organs to grow outside of his body. To save his life, his mother chose to have his legs amputated. He played Cyborg because Cyborg was a healthy boy until he had a horrible accident.

Nine-year-old Teegan, born with half a heart due to a condition called hypoplastic left heart syndrome, had three open heart surgeries and a heart transplant which has now turned him into Superman.

Seven-year-old Zaiden suffers from severe ADHD and cannot stand still so was perfect as The Flash. o Rossi said battles it like a superhero.

All six of the superheroes flew to New York for Comic Con where they had a special meet and greet with the characters who they look up to and portrayed

**50. Tamil Nadu government opens intervention centres to prevent disability in kids**

Be it a cold or a major heart condition, or a learning disability to mobility challenges, parents in Tamil Nadu can now seek medical help for their children from three dedicated early intervention centres exclusively for children in three key hospitals in Chennai.

These are the **Institute of Child Health, Egmore, Government Stanley Medical College and Hospital, and Government Kilpauk Medical College and Hospital**. They have various specialties under one roof. So far, families of sick children, who visit state-run hospitals, had to shuttle between departments and institutions for medical help.

## Program to be extended to anganwadi centres

To ensure early intervention, the Directorate of Public Health has also launched 15 medical teams to spread out and screen children in government and government-aided schools in Chennai. The city has 687 such institutions with nearly three lakh students.

The children will be screened under four categories - defects, developmental delays, deficiency and disease. They will then be referred to these centres, where a 14-member team will diagnose them. The programme will also be extended to anganwadi centres.

The new centres will diagnose, treat and manage cases like congenital heart ailments, autism and learning disabilities, and minor infections in the 0-18 years' age group.

# 51. Anger over Minority Affairs Ministry for discriminating against the disabled

## The ministry’s guidelines state that “persons whose legs are amputated, who are crippled, handicapped, lunatic or otherwise physically/ mentally incapacitated” cannot apply for Haj.

Criticising the Guidelines for Haj (2018-22), issued by the Ministry of Minority Affairs, disability rights activists have said that it not only discriminates against persons with disabilities by making them ineligible for Haj, but also refers to them as “crippled” and “lunatic.” The ministry’s guidelines state that “persons whose legs are amputated, who are crippled, handicapped, lunatic or otherwise physically/ mentally incapacitated” cannot apply for Haj.

In a letter to Minority Affairs Minister Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi, disability rights activists have said the guidelines not only “blatantly discriminate against persons with disabilities” but are also “in violation of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act (RPWDA), 2016, which has equality and non-discrimination as its guiding principle.”

They have also pointed out that Saudi Arabia does not ban those with disabilities from undertaking the Haj and has, over the years, made the pilgrimage more accessible. Pointing out that the more politically correct term “persons with disabilities” has replaced words like “handicapped” and “physically/ mentally incapacitated”, Muralidharan, secretary of the National Platform for the Rights of the Disabled (NPRD), said terms such as “lunatic” and “crippled” are “abusive in nature.”

“We have sent letters to Naqvi asking him to drop these discriminatory provisions, and have also discussed the matter with some Members of Parliament in the hope that they will raise it on the floor of the House during the ongoing winter session,” he said. Ministry officials did not respond to questions on the guidelines and whether they would be reviewed.

The 2018-22 guidelines were issued following an October 2017 report submitted by a ministry-appointed committee to review the Haj Policy 2013-17. While the report suggested a few changes to the guidelines, it retained the clauses and the language of the clauses that barred persons with disabilities from applying for Haj.

[Uttar Pradesh: Haj applications fall short of quota for the first time](http://indianexpress.com/article/india/uttar-pradesh-haj-applications-fall-short-of-quota-for-the-first-time-4971396/)

The matter came into focus when Faisal Nawaz, a 34-year-old social worker from Delhi, sought to apply for the Haj this month. Nawaz is often dependent on a wheelchair and oxygen cylinder due to scoliosis (an abnormal curvature of the spine that also causes contracture of the rib cage area) and polio. “Last year, while applying for Haj for my father, a senior citizen, he wanted me to accompany him. That’s when I realised that the rules prohibit persons with disabilities from applying to the Haj committee of India, which covers 40 to 50 per cent of the expenses. I was hopeful this year, since a separate committee was set up to review the overall guidelines,” he said.

Faisal, who was hospitalised until recently due to a recurrent chest infection, missed the application deadline of December 22 by the time he recovered. He, however, found out that the revised guidelines had left the “derogatory” clauses untouched. Dr Satendra Singh, who recently became the first Indian to win the prestigious Henry Viscardi Achievement Award for his work as a disability rights activist, said, “The language used and the eligibility criteria are in violation of the RPWD Act 2016, Mental Healthcare Act, and fundamental rights guaranteed under the Constitution. It also denies persons with disabilities their right to pray.”

Singh as well as the NPRD were among those at the forefront of protests when the union government replaced the word “viklang jan” (persons with disabilities) with “divyang jan” (persons with extraordinary abilities) for the department that comes under the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment. The decision was taken in June 2016, six months after Prime Minister [Narendra Modi](http://indianexpress.com/about/narendra-modi)’s Mann Ki Baat address where he called for the use of the word “divyang”, saying persons with disabilities have “extra power” and “divyata” (divinity). Disability rights groups rejected the term as “condescending” and “patronising”, but the government retained the nomenclature.

**52. Bionic eye allows Russian woman to see after 13 years**

An eye surgery that is no less than a medical miracle has enabled a totally blind Russian woman to see her husband for the first time in 13 years.

The woman Antonina Zakharchenko lost her sight completely in 2004 at the age of 37 after being born with Visual impairment.

A rare surgery has now restored her vision almost 50%. Surgeons implanted an electronic chip in her eyes at a cost of $140,000.

The bionic eye combines electronics and biology, and was only the second such operation performed in Russia.

The bionic eye that the woman now has, consists of an electronic implant, glasses with a camera, and a separate part where the image received from the camera is processed.

The camera catches the image and sends it to a chip implanted in the patient’s eye, which is then converted into an image signal that can be understood by the brain.

As per reports, this method is available in 10 different versions and one of them was used in case of Antonina.

**53. Computer training camp for visually impaired launched in Trichy**

Trichy: Jegajothi Readers Club, in association with [Humanitty](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/topic/Humanitty)club of [National Institute of Technology-Trichy](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/topic/National-Institute-of-Technology-Trichy) (NIT), launched a five-day training programme on computer expertise for the visually challenged here on Tuesday  
Aimed at bridging the gap between the visually impaired by means of computer, the five day programme is expected to impart technical hnads-on knowledge to the camp attendees. On the first day, sixty students were given orientation classes on softwares, in a bid to enable them to use computers for acquiring knowledge.

J Abdul Jaffer, coordinator of Jegajothi Voluntary Readers Council for Visually Impaired, said that while employability of normal person was uncertain today, it became all the more difficulty for the visually challenged to earn a living. "It is in this context that the club has organized the programme which would help them gain jobs in future," he said.

"Through the non-visual desktop access ([NVDA](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/topic/NVDA)), an open source software, the club will teach the participants how to download e-books from internet to enrich their knowledge," he said.  
About four freelance resource persons from Chennai and other parts have been roped in to give a hands-on guidance to the visually impaired. The participating are from in and around Trichy and adjoining districts including Perambalur, Ariyalur, Thanjavur.  
At the end of the training session on December 30, about 20 students are likely to receive Flextalk players from the central government.

**54. 14-year-old mentally disabled girl kept chained by parents for 3 years**

RUDRAPUR: [Indrajeet Singh](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/topic/Indrajeet-Singh)was on his third cup of tea on Wednesday afternoon when his eyes met with a bizarre sight of a young girl shackled in chains walking past his shop in Rudrapur.  
"The girl was taking slow, deliberate steps. I was shocked to see that she was dragging her feet because they were tied together with an iron chain," said Singh, a former councillor in the municipal corporation from Indira Colony who runs a mobile phone shop. "I called out to her and gave her food and tea. I also informed police who took her away," he said.  
  
After investigation, police found that the girl, [Chandni](https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/chandni-textiles-engineering-industries-ltd/stocks/companyid-8651.cms), was mentally disabled and the daughter of Narayan Das, a resident of [Subhash Colony](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/topic/Subhash-Colony). The 14-year-old had been kept chained for years by her parents who were too poor to afford treatment.  
  
This is not the first instance of a disabled person shackled in chains in the hill state, where 59,081 people are drawing a disability pension. In October, TOI had reported the case of 22-year-old Pankaj [Rana](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/topic/Rana) in [Rudraprayag](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/topic/Rudraprayag) who had been kept chained ever since he was born. Rana was suffering from quadriparesis, a disease which renders limbs immobile as well as aphasia which affects the comprehension of speech. Rana's mother, a widow, could not take her son to the hospital for treatment as she didn't have enough money.

Talking to TOI on Wednesday, circle officer (CO) city, [Swatantra Kumar Singh](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/topic/Swatantra-Kumar-Singh), said that the father of the girl was a daily wager. "The girl is mentally unstable but it is beyond the family's means to get her proper medical treatment. They said that she was tied in chains for the past three years to keep her from running away," Singh said.  
Narayan Das, the father, told TOI that Chandni behaved like any other child during her growing up years. "But in the past few years, she started behaving abnormally and we realized that she was of unsound mind. After she attacked our neighbours, we decided to keep her tied in chains."  
Das said that they took her to a government hospital where doctors suggested that she should be treated in a private hospital with advanced facilities. "We do not have money to get her treated at a private hospital. We also don't want to admit her to any government-run mental asylum as we don't know how the staff may behave with her," Das said.  
The circle officer said that the child welfare committee (CWC) and the local administration has been informed of the incident. After the news of the girl roaming the streets spread, some offers of help poured in.  
The circle officer said that police and a social organisation, Rudrapur Rising, have offered to help with the girl's treatment.

**55. Art workshops hold out a world of possibilities for children with disabilities in Goa**

Of all the senses in our body, touch is the most intimate and yet perhaps also the one not explored fully when it coms to creating art. This is the space that heritage architect Siddhant Shah explored in curating the ‘Senses’ aspect in the recently concluded Serendipity Art Festival in Goa.

## Children with disabilities learn, create different art forms at workshops

After all, what is a photograph if not a moment frozen in time and condensed on a two dimensional surface? It is an image created through the play of light and shadows. And it is this play of light and shadow that creates a texture, the depth and layers bringing the viewer an experience closest to the original. Shah elevates that texture to tact tiles and offers the blind an experience of the world of visual art.

After they had a taste of this in the display, the visually challenged young enthusiasts were keen to create art of their own. So for the five days of the festival, the children learned how to create and share the joys of art through a series of workshops on Jaali work, block printing and other crafts. Over 300 children from different schools took part in these workshops.

“It was a small workshop with students from the Disha school in Panjim, where they got to explore block printing and understand how the wooden form of the Jaali comes out", explains Shah, who is dedicated to making art and heritage accessible to people with disabilities across India. "The workshop was in resonance with the Jaali exhibition in the gallery at the Serendipity Arts Festival.”

The workshops were an eye opener for the children and their teachers, and even more for the general public, which got to watch them closely at grand setting of the central courtyard of the Aadil Shah Palace. For the visitors watching these art pieces in progress were a revelation of how people with disabilities can break down so many barriers.

Manjulata, a former teacher, was struck by the sight of these children bending over, intensely absorbed in giving shape to their masterpieces. A slight detour from the exhibition opened her eyes to how the world places limits on the possibilities of children with disabilities.

Sandhya Khalokhe, manager at the Disha school, believes such experiences are essential for children, as they help to not just to build their skills, but also plays an important role in making them a part of the mainstream.

"This activity has helped in mainstreaming them, and by that we mean that the general public that is coming and going out of the festival is looking at the talent our children have", said Khalokhe. "The other important thing is the exposure that our children are getting, hat they can come out of the schools on their own and do different things with different people."

Coming out into a space like this was a big step for these children, as Khalokhe pointed out.

Shah hopes to continue his efforts much beyond this festival. He strongly believes that there is great value in developing these skills as they

# 56. 90% blind IAS officer gives 100% to his job

# The person who finalised recruitment rules pending for about 30 years in a civic body, made it possible for hundreds of employees to be promoted and leads work on improving the ranking of South Delhi Municipal Corporation in Swachh Survekshan 2018 is an IIM graduate. He is also 90% blind. [Aman Gupta](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/topic/Aman-Gupta), a 2013 batch IAS officer of the AGMUT ([Arunachal Pradesh-Goa-Mizoram-Union Territories](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/topic/Arunachal-Pradesh-Goa-Mizoram-Union-Territories)) cadre, works with the assistance of a stand-mounted American video magnifier that helps the visually impaired read.

Gupta has juvenile macular degeneration, a medical condition that has no known cure. His vision is now so poor that he finds it difficult to distinguish people by their features. The broad smile on his face hides the pain he has felt since his vision began to degenerate. Gupta used to ride a bike when he was in Class 12. First, his eyes stopped seeing the cursor on the computer; then he couldn't see a cricket ball arcing through the air; and soon after he found it difficult to read the text on the classroom blackboard. In 2002, he learnt at [AIIMS](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/topic/AIIMS) that he had developed juvenile macular degeneration which, over the years, has left him with just about 10% of normal sight.

# In Delhi, where two bureaucrats committed suicide this year over stress and illness and students have killed themselves on getting low marks, Gupta challenging life, rather than the other way round, is exemplary. "I failed to clear UPSC in 2012 for which I prepared with audio books. I devoted more time and got a 57th all-India rank in the general category," Gupta, a BTech, said. He currently holds three important positions — director (personnel), additional director (education) and secretary to the[SDMC](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/topic/SDMC) commissioner. Earlier, he was deputy commissioner (west zone), and before that he was with the Delhi government as the SDM for [Chanakyapuri](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/topic/Chanakyapuri)

A few officials have found it doesn't pay to be too clever where Gupta is concerned. When he headed the west zone as deputy commissioner, some would sometimes stealthily leave the meeting hall while he thought they were seated. When told, he immediately issued showcause notices to the erring officials. When Gupta was new to the SDMC, an officer felt offended when he did not respond to his offer of a handshake. "I could not see that he wanted a handshake. I later told him that I was 90% blind," Gupta said.

# Reading with the assistance of a video magnifier takes around 200% more time. But it isn't often you'll find his desk groaning under unfinished files. Visuals of Gupta, his face often buried in his video magnifier, and sometimes of his hands feeling around the desk in search of a bell to press for a glass of water, or seeking a pen or a mobile phone, testify to his immense willpower and patience. He is one of the top officials in SDMC's education department, responsible for managing 600 schools and 2.5 lakh students. SDMC commissioner [Puneet Kumar Goel](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/topic/Puneet-Kumar-Goel) said Gupta was very meticulous.

# 57. Top Inclusive Schools of India - 2017

Through the month of November, NewzHook's special coverage focused on [children who show us the ability in disability](https://newzhook.com/story/14592) as well as schools that are enabling them to realise the best in themselves and grow up to be participating, independent members of society.

In our Inclusive Schools series, we looked at schools across the country, that are inclusive in every sense of the word. Some like [APL Global School](https://newzhook.com/story/14349) in Chennai were born out of a personal experience with the sense of isolation and marginalisation that parents of kids with special needs feel. [St Mary's](https://newzhook.com/story/14354) , one of New Delhi's oldest inclusive schools, became so in response to the needs of an individual parent.

[Riverside](https://newzhook.com/story/14461) in Ahmedabad reaches out to children, not only of special needs but also poorer backgrounds.[Gamru Village School,](https://newzhook.com/story/14362) in rural Himachal Pradesh goes one step further, funding even the medical needs of the disabled children of labourers.

In being inclusive, these schools ensure that their teachers are up to date with the latest methods of education as the stories of [Orchid School](https://newzhook.com/story/14709) in Pune and [Akshar](https://newzhook.com/story/14538) in Kolkata show.

[The Heritage School](https://newzhook.com/story/14462) in Kolkata also maintains a constant process of sensitisation among its teaching staff and students, while [Vivekalaya](https://newzhook.com/story/14708) in Coimbatore works to merge the worlds of disabled and mainstream kids in every way.

Maintaining such a policy is not easy, as it involves battling attitudes, shortage of funds and lack of adequately skilled staff. Many are doing so with little support from the government, like [Nankana Sahib Public School](https://newzhook.com/story/14365) in Ludhiana.

In continuing with this approach, schools like these are showing both plenty of heart and determination.

# 58. Virat Kohli invited disabled Sri Lankan fan to wedding reception

Many celebrities attended the wedding reception of Virat Kohli and Anushka Sharma on 26 December in Mumbai.

One of the attendees was a special guest named Gayan Senanayake. Senanayake came all the way from Sri Lanka and is a disabled person.

He is known as Sri Lankan cricket's super fan and travels every time Sri Lankan cricket team goes overseas to play.

He had travelled to Mumbai to cheer for the Sri Lankan team in the recently concluded cricket series between the two countries.

Senanayake is also a huge fan of Indian captain Virat Kohli ever since he met him in 2007.

Virat’s invitation to the disabled cricket fan touched many hearts and showed the warmth that Kohli has for his fans.

**59. Bengaluru's Namma Metro not popular with disabled & elderly**

Its been over six years since Bengaluru's Namma Metro was introduced amidst much fanfare as a disabled-friendly transport system. Yet, people who are disabled and the elderly hesitate to use the service as they struggle to find a seat and even just to get inside the train.

The Bangalore Metro Rail Corporation Ltd. has announced that the three-coach trains would be converted into six-coach trains from the last week of January. The conversion of its entire fleet of 50 trains into six-coach ones will take up to June 2019.

People like Sridhar who use crutches say that there is no place to stand and that they are scared of being pushed out of the Metro. He opts for the Metro only when there is no other mode of transport. Travelling during rush hours is most stressful.

Those who use wheelchairs struggle even more as there is no space to accommodate them in the metro during rush hours.

However, the BMRCL insists that these are no problems and that there is enough space for everyone.

**60. After Arunima row, Mahakal temple gets disabled-friendly**

BHOPAL: Under attack for allegedly ill-treating Arunima Sinha, the first amputee to scale Mount Everest, when she visited [Mahakal temple in Ujjain](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/topic/Mahakal-temple-in-Ujjain) on December 25 during the [Bhasma Aarti](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/topic/Bhasma-Aarti), the temple administration has now decided to make special arrangements for specially-abled persons, so that they can offer hassle-free prayers.  
Under the new arrangement, two-three guards at the entrance would track the disabled persons, handhold them and take them into the temple and then see them off at the gate after darshan.

* [**For this mountaineer climbing Everest easier than entering Mahakal temple**](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/lucknow/mountaineer-denied-entry-at-mahakal-over-dress-code/articleshow/62261331.cms)

Talking to TOI about temple administration's new initiative for the specially-abled after the controversy over Arunima Sinha's tweet over treatment meted out to her at the Mahakal temple, temple administrator Avdhesh Sharma said, "We are placing guards at the entrance, who would keep a track of specially-abled people coming into the temple. Their duty would be to handhold any such person, take him inside for darshan of the deity and leave them out after that. They will act as kind of facilitators/guides. They are being sensitised for the job and the new arrangement has already come into practice."

He further said there was a separate counter for disabled persons in the past as well but in the crowd, they either failed to reach there or they didn't know about it. "It was therefore felt that the temple staff should reach out to them rather than waiting for them to come and seek help. The arrangement would be in place right from Bhasma Aarti till the temple gets closed for visitors," he said.

The Mahakal temple administration had come under attack after Arunima Sinha's angry tweet on December 25 in which she said, "I am very sorry to tell you that I felt greater pain in visiting Mahakal temple (at Ujjain) than scaling the Everest. My disability was mocked at there (at Mahakal)." She had also tagged the prime minister's office (PMO) AND chief minister's office in her tweet.

Media reports suggested that Arunima was stopped twice by the security personnel while trying to enter the sanctum sanctorum of the temple and that she broke down while arguing with them.

The temple administration, however, said that she was stopped because of the dress code to enter the sanctum sanctorum during the Bhasma Aarti. Minister of state for cooperative Vishwas Sarang had supported the temple administration saying that traditions of a temple must be respected by all. On the other hand, minister for women and child development Archana Chitnis as whose guest Arunima had gone to Mahakal temple said that she would go to Lucknow, Arunima's hometown, to seek apology if she was not treated properly at the Mahakal temple and would ask her to visit the temple again.

**61. Appointment of disabled candidates: PSC sits on file**

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM: Differently-abled candidates are still being denied posting in Kerala government service, despite making it to the rank list for the post of deputy collector four years ago.  
Earlier, following the intervention of the chief minister, the revenue department has reported two vacancies of deputy collectors for the appointment of physically handicapped (PH) candidates. However, the public service commission ([PSC](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/topic/PSC)) is yet to act on it.  
  
Though 68 candidates have been appointed to the posts of deputy collectors till date in Kerala, not a single PH candidate has been recruited. To ensure justice to the disabled candidates, the state government through social justice department had issued an order (GO No.8/17/ SJD) that at least three PH candidates should be appointed in the order 1-34-67 by the state government. Chief minister Pinarayi Vijayan had firmly directed the revenue department to consider the three PH candidates.

Following this, [Kerala Administrative Tribunal](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/topic/Kerala-Administrative-Tribunal) (KAT), in its order, had directed the department to report three supernumerary vacancies of deputy collectors for the PSC within one month from August 8 this year.  
After receiving the file from the revenue department, finance minister T M [Thomas Isaac](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/topic/Thomas-Isaac) had advised to appoint the candidates to the two existing regular posts available instead of creating the supernumerary posts.  
Based on that, the revenue department had reported two to the PSC on November 24.  
Since then, the file remained at PSC office and the officials are feigning ignorance of the [Supreme Court](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/topic/Supreme-Court) directive in this regard, the CM's intervention and the KAT order. Earlier, PSC secretary [Saju George](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/topic/Saju-George) had indicated about 33 deputy collector posts vacant since 1996. But now he said that he needed to verify the number as the litigant section had intimated him that only 16 posts were there.

# 62. T'gana raises financial aid to differently-abled for marriage

Hyderabad, Dec 29 (PTI) The Telangana government today enhanced the financial aid given to differently-abled persons for marriage from Rs 50,000 to Rs 1,00,000.

"The marriage incentive to the differently-abled persons has been enhanced from Rs 50,000 to Rs 1,00,000. Chief Minister K Chandrashekhar Rao has signed the concerned file regarding the enhancement of marriage incentive to differently-abled (Divyangas) persons today," a release from the Chief MinisterÂ’s office said here. PTI SJR NRB .

# 63. Around 44,000 with disabilities given skill devp training

Official Jaipur, Dec 29 (PTI) Close to 44,000 people with disabilities in the country have been given skill development training, the Centre's Chief Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities Kamlesh Kumar Pandey said.

He said the national average of certificate issuance to persons with disabilities stands at close to 50 per cent and it is 47 per cent in Rajasthan, which needs to increase.

"Skill development training will be given to 5 lakh people with disabilities by 2018 and to 25 lakh by 2022 under Sugamya Bharat Abhiyan. So far, 44,000 people have been given training," Pandey said.

He was in the city to hold meetings with the state government.

Citing the example of Tamil Nadu, he said most of the disabled persons have disability certificate and high rate of certificate issuance is needed to be achieved in other states too.

In northeast states, he said, the percentage of people with disabilities having disability certificate is quite low.

Pandey also reviewed the progress in the implementation of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act in the state.

# 64. Organization for deaf demands 10% jobs in Hyderabad

**Development Society for the Deaf - DSD took out a rally and staged protest in Musheerabad, Hyderabad.**

The protest took place in front of Bus Bhavan on Thursday.

The members of DSD were demanding a four per cent reservation in the RTC for the people with hearing impairments.

The protest was led by Mathineni Veeraiah, Chairman for Congress Specially Challenged wing. He demanded 10 per cent jobs for the hearing impaired at parking lots and commercial complexes in the RTC Bus Stations.

The demand is for better life and opportunities to the people with disabilities under the RPWD act 2016.

The protesters were upset that not enough is being done for the welfare and development of deaf people in the region.

**65. Rajasthan stands second for issuing Unique Disability Identity Cards**

JAIPUR: Rajasthan stood second in the country for generating[Unique Disability Identity Cards](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/topic/Unique-Disability-Identity-Cards) (UDID) which is also called[Swavlambhan Cards](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/topic/Swavlambhan-Cards) for specially abled population in the country.  
The desert state has issued 1.21 lakh UDID issued against a total of 3.74 cards all over the country. The UDID for specially abled persons comes under the ministry of social justice and empowerment. It includes 9,474 UDIDs generated in Jaipur.  
  
Officials said that UDID will ensure direct transfers of scholarship, employment, and marriage allowance in the bank accounts of "Divyangs." The desert state is also among the top states in terms of Aadhaar cards for specially abled which is a challenging task for the officials at they have to record iris and biometric of the persons, especially those suffering from permanent disability-cerebral palsy and genetic disorders.  
  
Census report says that state has a population of 2.65 lakh specially-abled persons. The UDID card is single document of identification, verification of the disabled for availing all the benefits. This card is equivalent to the Aadhaar card. It is meant to store the data of especially abled persons in terms of their disability, health record, financial status and link through welfare schemes.  
  
Leading in the country is Madhya Pradesh with 1,66,783 UDIDs. States like [Andhra Pradesh](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/andhra-pradesh), Bihar, Himachal Pradesh and Jammu and Kashmir has zero generation of UDID cards.

The UDID card passes through several verification steps from online filing of the application form to the physical verification and required approval from the medical board certifying the disability. The data is sent to ministry of social justice which keeps a track of people falling under this category. Once the data is uploaded, the disabilities directorate of all states has the duty to provide all required assistance even they (beneficiaries) didn't ask for it.

Explaining the reasons why Rajasthan has made significant progress in UDID, director of commissionerate specially abled persons, [Anupama Jorwal](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/topic/Anupama-Jorwal) said, "Different channels has been used to popularize the concept of UDID. Secondly, state has made efforts to reach out to beneficiaries rather than waiting for them to making cards. During fairs the directorate is reaching out to civil society, NGOs and beneficiaries to enrol for the UDID. Our target is to reach out to the 100% population under this category to provide them a sense of security," said Jorwal.

Persons with Disabilities Act 2016, has enshrined the responsibility to the Central and state governments to provide services, create facilities and give support to people with disabilities in order to enable them to have equal opportunities. State has delivered in one aspect of the act but it has failed to create the right ecosystem for providing them education.

The census report stating that Rajasthan's 44% Divyang population in the age group of 5-19 years are not attending educational institutes, the officials has stated that they are collaborating with private partners to provide education. Infact, state doesn't have a single institute of higher education for specially disables.

# 66. 3D printed cards as learning tool for visually impaired

An Elementary School teacher has found a method to help educate children with **multiple disabilities.**

The teacher, Maggie LeDoux, was trying to find a method to teach a kindergarten student who had cerebral palsy, was on the Autism Spectrum and was born blind.

She got the idea of using a 3D printer to create tactile cards. These cards can be felt through touch.

The blind student can feel the object on the card and associate that with a spoken word. The method is not very fast as it takes 2 hours to 2 days for a single card to print.

The objects need to be first selected as per the aptitude of the student so the cards can be easily understood and learned.

The teacher has been able to create 10 cards so far and the results are positive.

The child is slowly learning two word sounds and identifying objects.

This method can prove to be a breakthrough in the development of children with multiple disabilities.

**67. Disabled Iranian Devises System to Make Life Easier for Invalids**

A disabled Iranian man has designed a system which brings together businesses that are willing to offer services to the disabled.

Vahid Rajabloo, a disabled Iranian man, has devised a startup system which can make life easier for the disabled. The 30-year-old man has 98-percent disability and does things with only 20 percent of his right hand’s ability.

He was born with the genetic disease SMA, and gradually lost the power of his limbs. However, he has been able to earn a living for 11 years now. He is making ends meet by writing programs and designing webs. In a competition of startups, he finished third by presenting his own startup system.

In a Farsi interview with the Mehr News Agency, Rajabloo has explained how he launched the initiative.

He has studied up to the second grade of high school only and was not able to continue his education because of his physical condition. Then he began working with his computer and learned programming on his own before entering the job market.

Before starting school, his disability was between 30 to 40 percent, which has reached 98 percent now.

“Only 20 percent of my right hand works, and I use it a lot,” he says.

He has been designing web pages for 7 years now. “I work alone. I cannot do team work because I’m not able to commute.”

He says the system he has devised brings together different businesses which are ready to offer services to the disabled.

“For example, I can call the barber and ask him to come to my home.”

According to Rajabloo, he was also invited to an event where companies and businesses are called on to use disabled people as employees.

“They asked me to take part, and I came in third among 22 startups that had participated in the event,” he adds.

Rajabloo also teaches computer programming. “I charge ordinary people, but teach the disabled for free.”

He says he seeks to further promote his startup system to better serve invalids.

# 68. VASAI GRP ARRESTS THREE FOR ‘HARASSING’ DISABLED COMMUTER

They were travelling in coach reserved for disabled, didn’t allow her to alight at Nallasopara.  
  
The Vasai GRP arrested three Virar residents after a polio-affected woman with 70 per cent disability filed a case against them under the Rights of Persons With Disabilities Act, 2016 (RPWD).  
  
Those arrested were accused of blocking the exit of the disabled coach in which the victim, who was travelling to Nallasopara, was travelling late on Friday evening. Since it was late, she filed a complaint on Saturday morning, and the accused were arrested and produced in court by evening.

Only people suffering from disabilities, cancer patients and women in advanced stages of pregnancy are allowed to travel in reserved coaches.  
  
Fatima Rajan D’souza, 40, who works as a manager with a sports club in Sion and lives in Nallasopara (East), told the GRP they harassed her when she was in the train on the way home on Friday evening.  
  
As per routine, D’souza had boarded the 6.36 pm Churchgate-Virar local from Bandra in the disabled reserved coach on December 29. When the local reached Vasai, Chandrakant Solanki, 64, his wife, Sharda, 60, and Nita Solanki, 35 (who was accompanying them, but is not believed to be a relative), boarded the disabled coach and blocked its exit, D’souza said in her complaint. She said she requested them to get down and board another compartment in Nallasopara.  
  
She alleged that at this time, Chandrakant started to argue with her, and the two women with him supported him. “Chandrakant raised his hand and was about to slap me, but I resisted. Meanwhile, the train started to move,” D’souza said, adding that she missed her stop, Nallasopara, and had to get down at Virar station instead.  
  
On seeing a GRP cop, she narrated her ordeal to him. “He advised me to lodge a complaint with the GRP, Vasai. Since it was already late, I registered the complaint the next day, on Saturday,” D’souza said.  
  
“An FIR under the Rights of Persons With Disabilities Act, 2016, has been registered, and the three have been arrested. They are now in court,” said PI Pawar of Vasai GRP.

# 69. Nepal bans blind people and double amputees from climbing Everest

Solo climbers, blind people and double amputees have been banned from climbing Everest under new rules the Nepalese tourism ministry believes will reduce the number of deaths on the mountain.

The changes have provoked criticism from the US ambassador to [Nepal](https://www.theguardian.com/world/nepal) and a former Gurkha soldier planning to scale the peak after losing both legs in Afghanistan.

The new rules have been under discussion for a month and were implemented this week, Nepalese officials told [the Himalayan Times](https://thehimalayantimes.com/nepal/new-rule-bars-double-amputee-climbing-mountains-allows-sherpas-get-ceritificates/).

Individual climbers will need to be accompanied by a mountain guide, and high-altitude workers who accompany expeditions to the summit are eligible to receive summit certificates under the revised regulations.

A suggested upper age limit of 76 for climbers – which Nepalese alpine associations had [lobbied for after the death](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/may/08/nepalis-call-for-everest-age-limit-after-death-of-85-year-old-climber) of an 85-year-old climber in May – has not been implemented, but the government maintained the ban on climbers under 16.

Everest once attracted only elite climbers, but as the relative cost of scaling the peak has fallen the mountain has drawn [record numbers of aspiring mountaineers](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/sep/28/mount-everest-to-be-declared-off-limits-to-inexperienced-climbers), including many from China and India.

Experienced climbers have raised concern that the mountain is [becoming dangerously overcrowded](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/may/24/mount-everest-death-toll-season-four-bodies-found) and that new companies with lower safety standards have rushed to fill demand in the market.

# The Nepalese government tightens the eligibility criteria for permits to scale the 8,848m (29,029ft) peak from the Nepal side before each spring climbing season, but enforcement is patchy and rules are frequently overlooked.

One veteran climber, Alan Arnette, said the ban on amputee and visually impaired climbers was prejudiced, ignorant and irrational. “If this is about protecting people from their own ambitions, then over half of the annual climbers should be banned each year as they lack the experience to safely climb Everest,” he wrote [on his blog](http://www.alanarnette.com/blog/2017/12/06/nepal-to-ban-everest-climbers-with-disabilities/).

“And where does this stop – people with asthma, diabetes, hemophiliacsor cancer? All of these have recently successfully summited Everest with no problems.”

According to the Himalayan Database, 29 people with disabilities have attempted to climb Everest, and 15 have reached the top. Two – Phur Yemba Sherpa in 2014 and Thomas Weber in 2006 – died on the mountain.

Another 288 non-disabled people have died on Everest from 8,306 attempts since 1953. Six people died this year, and 648 reached the summit, the second-highest for a single climbing season. Around 237 climbed from the Tibetan side.

The new rules were criticised by Hari Budha Magar, a Gurkha soldier who lost both legs in an explosion in Afghanistan and is training to become the first above-knee double amputee to climb Everest.

“Nepal should be proud of me, not banning me,” he wrote on Facebook. “I will be climbing Everest whatever the cabinet decides. Nothing Is Impossible.”

The ban was also criticised by the US ambassador to Nepal, Alaina B Teplitz, who tweeted: “Ability not perceived ‘disability’ must guide rules on who can trek Everest.

“Climbers like Hari Budha Magar shouldn’t be banned because of false assumptions about capabilities. Accessible tourism for ALL will make it clear that Nepal welcomes everyone!”

**70. New Year’s Resolutions can be a powerful tool for those with disabilities.**

New Year’s is almost here, a time when many people reflect on their progress during the past year and improvements they would like to make in the future.

Time to make some new resolution is here.**Resolutions can make a positive impact on people with disabilities.** Here are few ideas.

1. Make a resolution to eat healthy and take care of yourself. Try some exercises that are suitable for you and make them a part of your life.
2. Learn a new skill or a new hobby. Start reading on a topic that you would like to know about.
3. Try and be a bit more social. Stay in touch with family, friends and colleagues by email, phone or text. In fact think about joining a club or group of like-minded people.
4. Try and get some time out to visit the nature. Take a camera along and capture some scenes.
5. Try meditation and yoga as a manner to calm yourself and find peace and balance.
6. Do a little research about your area and gather info about accessibility around you. You can share the info with other people.

# 71. Paralysed and bedridden for 10 years, yet this principal manages her school virtually

For the last 10 years, 64-year-old Uma Sharma has been on a hospital bed, as her body, except for the hands and face, has been paralysed.

Yet Sharma, who is a school principal at the National Public School in Uttar Pradesh's Saharanpur, has not missed a single day and runs her school, virtually. From her hospital bed, she uses a tablet through which she monitors classes, staff room and even the playground. She also takes classes, through the Internet.

## Teachers and students say that Sharma is nothing short of an inspiration.

They say that they never feel her physical absence as she is always there when needed. Sharma started the school for underprivileged kids after she lost her husband 27 years ago. Two of her children died soon after her husband's death, but neither those tragedies nor her illness has broken her spirit.

She says that her passion for teaching and desire to educate the children of the area have kept her going. She may be paralysed in body, but clearly her spirit is still fierce and strong.

# 72. Bollywood actor Saqib Saleem to promote blind cricket

Bollywood actor Saqib Saleem, who has played cricket for Delhi and Jammu and Kashmir before joining films, will promote cricket for the blind in India.

Saleem, who will be seen with superstar Salman Khan in Race 3, is the member of the Mumbai Heroes at the Celebrity Cricket League. The CCL is a non-professional men’s cricket league, and Saleem has arranged for free coaching for the blind players as well.

Saleem says that the commitment that the blind cricketers show towards the game makes him want to be a part of the team.

The actor has had a passion for cricket since he was four years old.

Saleem has teamed up with Salman Khan for Race 3 and the film will also star Jacqueline Fernandez, Bobby Deol, Desi Shah and Freddy Daruwala in important roles.

# 73. Rajasthan issues second highest number of ID cards for the disabled in India

JAIPUR: Rajasthan stood second in the country for generating[Unique Disability Identity Cards](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/topic/Unique-Disability-Identity-Cards) (UDID) which is also called[Swavlambhan Cards](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/topic/Swavlambhan-Cards) for specially abled population in the country.  
The desert state has issued 1.21 lakh UDID issued against a total of 3.74 cards all over the country. The UDID for specially abled persons comes under the ministry of social justice and empowerment. It includes 9,474 UDIDs generated in Jaipur.  
  
Officials said that UDID will ensure direct transfers of scholarship, employment, and marriage allowance in the bank accounts of "Divyangs." The desert state is also among the top states in terms of Aadhaar cards for specially abled which is a challenging task for the officials at they have to record iris and biometric of the persons, especially those suffering from permanent disability-cerebral palsy and genetic disorders.  
  
Census report says that state has a population of 2.65 lakh specially-abled persons. The UDID card is single document of identification, verification of the disabled for availing all the benefits. This card is equivalent to the Aadhaar card. It is meant to store the data of especially abled persons in terms of their disability, health record, financial status and link through welfare schemes.  
  
Leading in the country is Madhya Pradesh with 1,66,783 UDIDs. States like [Andhra Pradesh](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/andhra-pradesh), Bihar, Himachal Pradesh and Jammu and Kashmir has zero generation of UDID cards.

The UDID card passes through several verification steps from online filing of the application form to the physical verification and required approval from the medical board certifying the disability. The data is sent to ministry of social justice which keeps a track of people falling under this category. Once the data is uploaded, the disabilities directorate of all states has the duty to provide all required assistance even they (beneficiaries) didn't ask for it.

Explaining the reasons why Rajasthan has made significant progress in UDID, director of commissionerate specially abled persons, [Anupama Jorwal](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/topic/Anupama-Jorwal) said, "Different channels has been used to popularize the concept of UDID. Secondly, state has made efforts to reach out to beneficiaries rather than waiting for them to making cards. During fairs the directorate is reaching out to civil society, NGOs and beneficiaries to enrol for the UDID. Our target is to reach out to the 100% population under this category to provide them a sense of security," said Jorwal.

Persons with Disabilities Act 2016, has enshrined the responsibility to the Central and state governments to provide services, create facilities and give support to people with disabilities in order to enable them to have equal opportunities. State has delivered in one aspect of the act but it has failed to create the right ecosystem for providing them education.

The census report stating that Rajasthan's 44% Divyang population in the age group of 5-19 years are not attending educational institutes, the officials has stated that they are collaborating with private partners to provide education. Infact, state doesn't have a single institute of higher education for specially disables.

# 74. Smartphones for visually impaired soon

**Summary:**Jaipur: Rajasthan will become second state is the country to distribute smartphones to specially abled persons. These smartphones are specially designed for blind and those suffering from low vision. The social justice and welfare department (Rajastan) will bear Rs 10,000 while Rs 2,000 will be paid by the Central government. "It will help user to navigate the phone by listening to the buttons he/she pressing" said Rath. The cost of these phones is Rs 12,000.

Jaipur: Rajasthan will become second state is the country to distribute smartphones to specially abled persons. These smartphones are specially designed for blind and those suffering from low vision. The cost of these phones is Rs 12,000 , As Reported By TOI.   
  
According to the Newspaper,The social justice and welfare department (Rajastan) will bear Rs 10,000 while Rs 2,000 will be paid by the Central government. The move is intended to bring ease in day-to-day life through technological interventions.Himachal Pradesh is the first state to have distributed these phones to 2,000 specially-abled persons. Rajasthan has a total blind population of 35,000 on the basis of certificate issued by the medical board.

# 75. Braving bitter cold, blind students in Bhopal stage public protest for jobs

Blind students in Bhopal in Madhya Pradesh have been staging a protest demanding jobs and other basic facilities for 12 days.

The protests are being held in the open at Neelam Park and these students are determined to continue despite the bitter winter.

On 26 December, they also held a 'Jal Satyagraha' in a pond near the same park. They have taken their demands to the streets to protest against the indifference of the sttae government.

The person leading the blind students' union, Manish, says that despite letters to all concerned authorities telling them about their needs, no action was taken. Their main demands are for education and employment.

They say that there are no universities or schools for the blind and that students who do manage to complete their schooling have nowhere to go. have completed schools have nowhere to go.

They have said that they will continue with the agitation until their demands are met with.

**76. Some new and interesting books on Sugamya Pustakalaya**

We have come to know about uploading of some new and interesting titles on Sugamya Pustakalaya in EPUB text only format which include the following:

1. Fire and Fury by Michael Wolff: Book released in first week of January in 2018. This book is in focus these days as it claims to reveal inside stories of  Donald Trump's presidential elections and his working style in white house. So, here it comes in accessible format for our readers.

Next two books are by one of the most selling author Amish Tripathi. His Shiva trilogy had been a huge success and now he is writing series of books on Lord Ram. Two books in this series are already published. Both of these are now available on Sugamya Pustakalaya for you to read. These are:

Scion of Ikshvaku (Ram Chandra Series Book 1)

Sita - Warrior of Mithila (Book 2 of the Ram Chandra Series)

**77. 3rd Meeting of formal committee of Karnataka Government on State Rules for Implementation of RPD Act.**

The 3rd meeting of formal committee of Karnataka government on RPD act was convened on 16th December 2017 in which the members were informed by the chair of the committee Mrs. Umamahadevan that the work to incorporate all the decisions taken by the committee in its 2nd meeting on 2nd November in draft of rules is in progress.

The Madam chair also invited the members to provide their supplementary inputs for consideration to incorporate in the final draft of the rules.

In her concluding remarks the chairperson Mrs. Umamahadevan gave the ruling that the final draft of the rules after incorporating all inputs agreed by the committee, will be made available to all members of the committee for their formal concurrence and incase of disagreement of the members in final draft of the rules, the committee shall meet once again in order to resolve all such disagreements and to reach to a general consensus

**Information**

# 1. OVERVIEW OF BOOKSHARE

Bookshare is the largest library in the world of accessible books for people with severe print disabilities (severe dyslexia, low-vision, blindness, or a mobility impairment). Bookshare is an initiative of Benetech, a technology nonprofit based in Palo Alto, California, that provides technology solutions for social causes, including human rights and the environment in addition to literacy. Benetech’s founder, Jim Fruchterman, was a MacArthur Fellow in 2006 for his work as a social entrepreneur. At Benetech, we have a commitment to helping publishers create content that is not only “born digital” but “born accessible.” Through our Born Accessible Initiative and our research and development arm, The DIAGRAM Center, we strive to transform the way content is created.

·         Bookshare has 420,000 members.

·         There are over 500,000 books in our digital library, the majority contributed by publishers.

·         We work with more than 800 publishers in the US and internationally:  <https://www.bookshare.org/cms/partners/publishers>

·         We are in 70 countries around the world with official partnerships with sponsoring agencies in 16 countries.

**LINKS**

**Bookshare:**

[**www.bookshare.org**](http://www.bookshare.org/)

[**https://www.bookshare.org/cms/about**](https://www.bookshare.org/cms/about)

**Benetech:** [**http://www.benetech.org/**](http://www.benetech.org/)

**The DIAGRAM Center:** [**http://diagramcenter.org/**](http://diagramcenter.org/)

**Born Accessible:** [**http://www.benetech.org/our-programs/literacy/born-accessible/**](http://www.benetech.org/our-programs/literacy/born-accessible/)

**HOW WE WORK**

Bookshare accepts files in EPUB 2 and 3 from publishers and then converts that content to an accessible file format called DAISY (Digital Accessible Information System). Publishers upload their files to their dedicated SCP site on our servers for password-protected download by users. We make the DAISY files we create from publishers’ EPUB files available back to them for unrestricted use.

Bookshare operates in the U.S. under a copyright exemption, the Chafee Amendment, which grants nonprofit organizations the ability to make books available to the severely print disabled without publisher permission.  By requiring individuals to register as members and provide a Proof of Disability, Bookshare ensures that only qualified individuals use the service.

Bookshare members download books, textbooks and newspapers and magazines in a compressed, encrypted file. They then read the material using adaptive technology (typically software that reads the book aloud using text-to-speech and/or displays the text of the book on a computer screen) or Braille access devices, such as refreshable Braille displays. Bookshare’s Read2Go IOS app and its GoRead Android apps are the most accessible e-book reader apps for readers with print disabilities. Many other third-party apps are available, including Voice Dream Reader (<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/voice-dream-reader/id496177674?mt=8)>.

Over 800 publishers in the U.S. and internationally are contributing their digital content to Bookshare in support of its social mission and granting permission to distribute their titles outside the U.S.  Publishing partners include Penguin Random House, HarperCollins, Hachette, Simon & Schuster, John Wiley & Sons, Taylor and Frances, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt and Scholastic -- as well as 35 university presses, including Cambridge, Harvard, Yale, Princeton, Chicago, and California along with a number of nonprofit institutions such as the World Bank, the IMF, the World Health Organization, Brookings, and the RAND Corporation.

**THE SEVEN-POINT DIGITAL RIGHTS MANAGEMENT PLAN**

Bookshare makes active efforts to ensure that its collection and its users abide by the law to maximize the benefits realized by the disability community and minimize abuse. Bookshare controls the format of the materials that it provides and ensures the appropriate copyright notices are in its digital publications. Access is restricted to disabled individuals and other authorized entities. Digital rights management helps to ensure that access remains limited to those covered by the copyright law exemption.

1. Qualified Users

Only blind or other persons with disabilities that affect their ability to access print are permitted to download copyrighted books. Bookshare follows the procedures and standards for access to books that were developed by Learning Ally (formerly RFB&D). A Bookshare user must register and supply a signed certification completed by an appropriate professional in the field of disability services education, medicine, psychology or a related area. The certifier must be a recognized expert who can attest to the physical basis that limits the applicant's use of standard print. Appropriate certifying experts may differ from disability to disability. For example, in the case of blindness and visual impairments, an appropriate certifier may be a physician, ophthalmologist, or optometrist. In the case of a perceptual disability, a neurologist, learning disability specialist, or a psychologist with a background in learning disabilities may be the most qualified certifying professional. In addition, since any U.S. resident who has previously submitted a proof of disability to NLS (National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped of the Library of Congress) or Learning Ally (formerly RFB&D) would qualify under the law, we have cooperative agreements where NLS or Learning Ally will certify to us that he or she has such proof already.

2. Contractual Agreement

All Bookshare users have to agree to terms of use that forbid violation of the copyright law restrictions on redistribution and use of copyrighted material. Users who violate these terms will lose their access to Bookshare and may suffer other legal consequences as a result of their actions. Attorneys from the publishing industry had the opportunity to comment on these agreements and Bookshare made numerous changes in response to their concerns.

3. Copyright Notice

In order to comply with the copyright law regulating the provision of accessible books to people with disabilities (17 U.S.C. § 121), Bookshare ensures that all copyrighted materials bear a notice that any further reproduction or distribution in a format other than a specialized format is an infringement. Such content includes a copyright notice identifying the copyright owner and the date of the original publication. In addition, there is other language reminding users of their obligations to use this material only as permitted by their agreements with Bookshare and the law. It also informs people who are not Bookshare users that their possession of a Bookshare digital book is a violation of the copyright law and that they should erase such a book without using or copying it. View the text of the Bookshare Legal Agreements.

4. Encryption

Bookshare encrypts a requested book for a given user, and the files are delivered through secure/encrypted channels.

5. Fingerprint

All copyrighted material downloaded is fingerprinted as part of the encryption process so that the identity of the authorized user is contained within the decrypted material in a difficult to find fashion. This way, if a user illegally redistributes material downloaded from Bookshare, it is possible to confirm both that the materials came from Bookshare and which user was responsible.

6. Security Database

All transactions, encryption codes and fingerprints are stored in a database enabling Bookshare to track any abuse to the source. Users are informed of the existence of this database as part of Bookshare's privacy program, and are informed of the limitations of the use of this data (it will only be used to respond to abuse problems, and not for marketing or other purposes).

7. Security Watch Program

A security program monitors all transactions and automatically limits any user whose account downloads more than a fixed number of titles in a given month (typically 100 titles). In addition, Bookshare regularly searches the web for illegal copies of content originating from Bookshare user downloads, and suspends the account of users found to have been the source of such content, as well as issuing take-down notices to the websites hosting such content.

**LEGAL INFORMATION**

An exception in the U.S. copyright law – The Chafee Amendment (see below) --  makes Bookshare possible under the law in the United States, as long as the copyrighted digital books are only available to people with bona fide disabilities.

The Bookshare site does not provide access to copyrighted works for the general public.

Although the requirements of the copyright law exception are quite clear, Bookshare has gone beyond these requirements to ensure broad support for the project.  They have been working with the Association of American Publishers, the main industry group, to address publishers' concerns in the design of the service.  We are also working with the leading disability organizations, including the Library of Congress and Learning Ally (formerly Recording for the Blind & Dyslexic). With extensive input from consumers, publishers and leading organizations, we have created a plan for Bookshare that can be supported by a broad array of interests.

Legal Requirements

Bookshare is an online community that allows users with print disabilities to legally share books. It includes the necessary controls to protect against use by non-disabled persons. Bookshare meets the requirements of the relevant section of copyright law, 17 U.S.C. § 121:

"... it is not an infringement of copyright for an authorized entity to reproduce or to distribute copies of a previously published, nondramatic literary work if such copies are reproduced or distributed in specialized formats exclusively for use by blind or other persons with disabilities."

• Copies may not be reproduced or distributed in a format other than a specialized format exclusively for use by blind or other persons with disabilities.

• Must bear a notice that any further reproduction or distribution in a format other than a specialized format is an infringement.

• Must include a copyright notice identifying the copyright owner and the date of the original publication.

• "Specialized formats" means Braille, audio, or digital text which is exclusively intended for use by blind or other persons with disabilities.

As a project of the Benetech nonprofit organization, Bookshare meets the definition of an authorized entity.

Bookshare is based on electronic Braille and digital talking book standards and copyright law recognizes these digital formats as specialized formats for the disabled. Braille books and four-track audio cassettes are the most commonly recognized specialized formats in use over the past thirty years.

In addition, some publishers and authors have provided permission for books and other publications they provide in digital form to be made available in accessible digital formats to individuals with qualifying disabilities either just within the United States or worldwide.

**THE CHAFEE AMENDMENT**

Copyright Law of the United States and Related Laws

Contained in Title 17 of the United States Code Circular 92

Chapter 1

Subject Matter and Scope of Copyright

§ 121. Limitations on exclusive rights: reproduction for blind or other people with disabilities1

(a) Notwithstanding the provisions of section 106, it is not an infringement of copyright for an authorized entity to reproduce or to distribute copies or phonorecords of a previously published, nondramatic literary work if such copies or phonorecords are reproduced or distributed in specialized formats exclusively for use by blind or other persons with disabilities.

(b) (1) Copies or phonorecords to which this section applies shall -

(A) not be reproduced or distributed in a format other than a specialized format exclusively for use by blind or other persons with disabilities;

(B) bear a notice that any further reproduction or distribution in a format other than a specialized format is an infringement; and

(C) include a copyright notice identifying the copyright owner and the date of the original publication.

(2) The provisions of this subsection shall not apply to standardized, secure, or norm-referenced tests and related testing material, or to computer programs, except the portions thereof that are in conventional human language (including descriptions of pictorial works) and displayed to users in the ordinary course of using the computer programs.

(c) Notwithstanding the provisions of section 106, it is not an infringement of copyright for a publisher of print instructional materials for use in elementary or secondary schools to create and distribute to the National Instructional Materials Access Center copies of the electronic files described in sections 612(a)(23)(C), 613(a)(6), and section 674(e) of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act that contain the contents of print instructional materials using the National Instructional Material Accessibility Standard (as defined in section 674(e)(3) of that Act), if -

(1) the inclusion of the contents of such print instructional materials is required by any State educational agency or local educational agency;

(2) the publisher had the right to publish such print instructional materials in print formats; and

(3) such copies are used solely for reproduction or distribution of the contents of such print instructional materials in specialized formats.

(d) For purposes of this section, the term -

(1) "authorized entity" means a nonprofit organization or a governmental agency that has a primary mission to provide specialized services relating to training, education, or adaptive reading or information access needs of blind or other persons with disabilities;

(2) "blind or other persons with disabilities" means individuals who are eligible or who may qualify in accordance with the Act entitled "An Act to provide books for the adult blind", approved March 3, 1931 (2 U.S.C. 135a; 46 Stat. 1487) to receive books and other publications produced in specialized formats; and

(3) "print instructional materials" has the meaning given under section 674(e)(3)(C) of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act; and

(4) "specialized formats" means -

(A) braille, audio, or digital text which is exclusively for use by blind or other persons with disabilities; and

(B) with respect to print instructional materials, includes large print formats when such materials are distributed exclusively for use by blind or other persons with disabilities.

**2. Hear2Read Windows SAPI Text To Speech voices available for Open Beta**

On behalf of the Hear2Read team, we are delighted to announce release of Windows SAPI Text To Speech DLL (aka TTS Engine for 7 languages:

-       Gujarati (Male and Female voices)

-       Hindi (Male)

-       Kannada (Female)

-       Marathi (Male)

-       Punjabi (Female)

-       Tamil (Male and Female voices)

-       Telugu (Male)

They are available for download at <http://www.hear2read.org/TTS_for_windows.php>.

These are designed and tested to work on Windows 7 and Windows 10 PCs only.

The voices are the same as those released for Android Hear2Read Apps in Google Play Store, except for Hindi. We did not release Hindi TTs for Android since the Google Hindi TTS is far better than Hear2Read Hindi.

For Windows 10 users, we recommend using the recently released Microsoft one core Hindi TTS voices - Kalpana and Hemant. Both of them are better than Hear2Read Hindi male voice. We are releasing the Hindi male voice primarily for Windows 7 users where the only other option for “free” Hindi TTS is eSpeak.

As one would expect with any such large undertaking, the output speech quality varies from voice to voice. Some are very good while others need improvement. We are continually working on improving the voices and will release updated voices when there is noticeable (as perceived by volunteers who are native soeakers of the particular language).

All 9 voices are somewhat bilingual, i.e. the software does its best to speak English and the Indic language. Some do it better than others. It depends on several factors that I won’t go into here. We understand the need for better English pronunciation and are working on it.

I will send our separate language and voice specific announcements with known problems that we are working to fix.  
  
Please send your questions, comments and feedback to Feedback [at] Hear2Read [dot] org..

**3. About Hamari Vaani**

Dear readers we are glad to share the following information about “Hamari Vaani” service started by Bangalore based pioneering nongovernmental organization Enable India for Hindi users. You all are appealed to refer and spread as widely as possible the below reproduced information about the “Hamari Vani” service.

**About Hamari Vaani:**

**हमारी वाणी**is an interactive voice response system that enables people to share and create content. In the year 2017 an effort was made at developing a true social platform for persons at the bottom of the pyramid. It can be very safely understood as the Facebook of the population that does not have an access to the internet or the web world. It is a social media platform for rural India that aims to create voice-based local media platforms for such communities. It not only connects these communities with each other but also engages them on topics of mutual interest.

       It works as the community media space where users can express themselves by sharing opinion, their issues, discussions and citing problems.

       It is an outreach platform which can be used by social sector by providing mobile content to reach users of the network.

       It can be used by various stake holders for engagement, announcements, data collection and feedback.

       The network can also serve as a platform to publish local specific requirements.

In respect of disability, हमारी वाणी is expected to provide a solution to scaling of the training needs, self-advocacy needs and mobility needs of the larger population.

How to use:

Give miss  call to 9266344222 from your basic phone or landline phone or any phone:  You will get call back, listen and enjoy, record if you have any information for Persons with disability.