**Voice of the Blind**

**Fortnight e-bulletin**

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

Compiled, Edited and circulated by National Federation of the Blind Karnataka

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**1. Editorial**

Dear Readers,

After a long gap of around 2 month, today we have finally succeeded to place four issues of “Voice of the Blind” in your mailbox.

They are 58th (1st to 15th December), 59th (16th to 31st December), 60th (1st to 15th January 2018) and 61st issue (16th to 31st January) respectively, under the preview of this editorial.

As the month of December and January have been quite hectic for us at NFB Karnataka we have been fully occupied in a wide range of specific time bound engagements such as the partnership with state government in celebration of International Disable day, consultation with the state government for formulation of state rules to carry out the RPD act, preparation for annual program of world Braille celebration, holding of 5 days CRE training workshop of special educators, participation in annual convention of Radio Udaan and so on.

All these specific engagements have significantly influenced our regular activity including the publication of voice of the blind in time.

We are therefore decided to bring out above mentioned four issues together and now they are on your desktop. During this period we passed a wonderful year and have entered to new year 2018, Here, we wish all our readers happy and blessed 2018.

As usual all these 4 issues are also full of news and information updates relating to rehabilitation, education, employment and social inclusion of persons with disability, global emergence of advanced assistive technology, change in public policies governing the upliftment of persons with disability, events of research, training, workshops, conferences and meetings at regional, national and international level, inclusion in sports and other recreational activities at different levels, etc.

We hope and trust that you will enjoy the reading all issues.

With best complements

Editor

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**1. World Disability Day reality check. Para swim champs are struggling to live their dreams**

For para swimmers Mohammed Shams Alam Khan and Satendra Singh, the excitement around World Disability Day seems empty. These champions are struggling to pursue their passion of swimming for their country.

Alam, who is from Mumbai, wants to participate in the Asian Para Games 2018 but is struggling to find sponsors for advanced training and to take part in qualification tournaments. Alam is the Limca Book world record holder for the longest open sea swimming paraplegic in 2014.

## No funds for para swimming champs

Alam also set a record for completing the longest open-sea swimming by a paraplegic by covering eight kilometres in four hours and four minutes in Goa. He says he is confused about whether to take up a full-time job or continue with his passion for swimming. He has no support from the Maharashtra government.

This is even after winning two gold medals during the Nationals in Udaipur in November. Alam won gold is S5 category with national records in 50m butterfly and 100m freestyle, and a silver in 50m freestyle.

### Little support from Maharashtra government

His friend Satendra Singh from Gwalior is a long distance para swimmer and is currently training in Pune with three others para swimmers Rimo Saha, Chetan Raut and Jagdish Teli for the English Channel Relays but they are struggling to raise funds required for expenditure in the competition. Raut is from Amravati.

**2. How can employers be more welcoming of people with disabilities?**

People with disabilities are not different from others in the workplace. They need the same things — to use the lift, talk to colleagues and business contacts, work on documents, be part of team training, apply for leave online, read the employee newsletter, even sip a beverage or enjoy a meal in the canteen — but may need the workplace to give them that access in different ways.

Inclusion happens at multiple levels: societal, organisational, in teams, and on a one-to-one basis. A truly inclusive workplace provides solutions to enable people with disabilities to seamlessly interact with their environment and colleagues. As more such people join the workforce, we must understand their needs and see how we can create an enabling environment.

It’s time to look at it holistically rather than from a single lens. Let us start with the physical environment.

**3. Delhi High Court issues notice over difficulty faced by blind in reading new rupee notes**

The Delhi High Court has issued notices to the Centre and the Reserve Bank of India saying that the blind are finding it difficult to use the newly launched rupee notes.

Calling it **"Grave public interest', that needs to be addressed seriously"** the court said that the blind were facing difficulty also due to the change in the size of notes.

The High Court was hearing a plea filed by the NGO, All India Confederation of Blind. The petition said that the blind were finding it hard to identify, use and make transactions with the new Rs 2,000, Rs 500, Rs 200 and Rs 50 notes.

### Change from old to new rupee notes hits blind hard

In November 2016, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had announced that Rs 500 and Rs 1,000 notes were no longer legal and that the government would introduce new Rs 500 and Rs 2,000 notes. People were asked to swap old notes for the new ones.

#### New notes violate accessibility standards, says petition

The petition has also asked the government to replace Rs 10, Rs 5, Rs 2 and Rs 1 coins as they were of a similar structure. This meant that the blind have to depend on others to go about small transactions. it also says that the new notes do not follow the accessibility standards for the disabled. The tactile marks present on some notes were hardly identifiable, would fade with usage.

**4. Scheme for the disabled launched in Assam by Vice President Venkaiah Naidu**

Calling for an inclusive society with no discrimination towards the disabled, India's Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu launched the Deen Dayal Divyangajan Sahajya Scheme on the occasion of International Day of Persons with Disabilities.

Naidu said that people should treat the disabled with empathy and not sympathy. Under the scheme every disabled person in Assam will get a one-time grant of Rs 5,000 for their treatment.

Naidu said that laws alone will not improve the situation for the disabled and that there is a need for a change in attitude. Naidu praised the Assam government for introducing the Pranam Act that requires all government employees to make contributions from their salaries for the elderly and disabled family members.

He asked the authorities to make public places accessible so the disabled are not deprived of any opportunities. He said that the state government should ensure that all beneficiaries get their dues under the various schemes introduced. He also asked banks and financial institutions to provide loans to the disabled in an easy and simplified process.

# 5. 3D-printed ear implants help improve hearing for the deaf

Scientists in the United States say that 3D-printed, custom-designed prosthetic replacements for the damaged parts of the middle ear, are helping to improve surgical treatments for the deaf.

The technique helps to improve a surgical procedure that often fails because of incorrectly sized prosthetic implants.

The surgery involves designing a prosthesis for each patient in the operating room, and has high failure rates.One reason is because of the incorrect sizing of the prostheses.

3D technology has been used to solve a number of other medical prosthesis problems, including in the areas of joint replacement and facial reconstruction surgery.

The researchers used an inexpensive 3D printer to create prostheses that hardens when exposed to ultraviolet laser light.

Four surgeons inserted the prosthesis into each middle ear. The technique increases the chances of a proper fit and reduces surgical time.

**6. World's first IT campus for Persons With Disabilities to come up in Hyderabad**

HYDERABAD: On the eve of International Day of [Persons with Disabilities](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/topic/Persons-with-Disabilities), the[Telangana government](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/topic/Telangana-government) has announced that it would set up the world's first [IT Campus](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/topic/IT-Campus) for Persons With Disabilities.  
  
On Saturday, the government of Telangana entered into an agreement with [Vindhya E-Infomedia Private Limited](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/topic/Vindhya-E-Infomedia-Private-Limited) to setup the Information Technology campus which will focus on creating employment opportunities for Persons With Disabilities.  
  
The campus will be spread over 10 acres and will come up near at the IT Park near Rajiv Gandhi International Airport. It will have all amenities like training, residential facility and delivery centers that will cater to various clients both domestic and International. The campus will create jobs for 2000 people in the next five years by providing apt training and jobs.

Vindhya E-Infomedia private limited which is said to be a pioneer in creating inclusive workspace employs PWD's as its major workforce and currently has more than 1600 employees working out of Hyderabad and Bangalore.

Majority of their workforce comprises of Physically Challenged, Hearing Impaired and Visually Impaired. The company provides back office operations (BPO) support to various BFSI, Telecom and e-commerce companies since 2006.

IT Principal Secretary Shri Jayesh Ranjan while handing out appointment letters to the new joinees, advised them to continue working harder and break the perception of disability being a barrier.

Speaking at the event Pavithra Y S, CMD of Vindya, said through the unique initiative, the government of Telangana had created history by helping an organization to setup an IT Campus exclusively for the Persons with Disabilities which does not exist anywhere in the world. "This campus will create an immense advantage for the Person with Disabilities, especially those with severe disabilities but still deserve an opportunity to lead life with dignity and self-respect," Pavithra said.

**7. Disabled get platform to showcase artistic skills**

Carnatic vocalist ‘Bombay’ Jayashri inaugurated the ‘Threads of Compassion’ art exhibition and sale at the Focus Art gallery, on Friday.

The exhibition, organised by AIM for Seva Krupa Home in collaboration with the online art community Chennai Weekend Artist, seeks to display the paintings of persons with developmental disabilities such as autism, cerebral palsy, schizophrenia, mental illness and brain injury.

It also aims to illustrate how a community can live in harmony and compassion, irrespective of mental well-being. The paintings on display includes works of the residents of the Seva Krupa Home from the ages of 18 to 65 years who have created patterns with threads of various colours.

The exhibition will be on till Sunday.

# 8. Himachal govt. did nothing for disabled in 5 years, says Umang Foundation

Umang Foundation is a public welfare trust, working towards the welfare of the people with disabilities.

The trust has stated some facts about the lack of efforts made by the Himachal Pradesh government for the welfare of disabled people in the state.

Umang Foundation has claimed that in the last 5 years nothing constructive has been done by the congress led state government for the benefit of poor and disabled people.

Although the Himachal Pradesh High Court had ordered the provision free education to the disabled up to university level, it was not implemented by the state government.

The government has also not given reservation to the disabled in education and jobs.

**9. Samarthanam gets National Award for promoting the cause of blind cricket in India**

Samarthanam Trust, which works across India for empowering the disabled, has been awarded The National Award For Empowerment of Persons With Disabilities.

The managing trustee Mahantesh G Kivadasannavar was honoured by President of India Ram Nath Kovind on Sunday.

Samarthanam Trust reaches out to the disabled across India and focuses on building an inclusive society free. It was awarded the National Award for Child Welfare in 2010 and 2014.

Samarthanam is also the patron of the Cricket Association for Blind in India, which supports the Indian Blind Cricket Team. The team has won the first T-20 World Cup in 2012, fourth ODI World Cup Championship in 2014, and T-20 Asia Cup in 2016 and also second T-20 World Cup in 2017.

Shekhar Naik, who is the former Captain of the Indian Blind Cricket team, said that the honour would inspire more people to become a part of this movement.

# 10. Kerala Blasters football team to support the cause of blind football

The Kerala Blasters team, which plays for the Indian Soccer League, will host the Indian Blind Football Federation players in their training ground to help raise awareness about blind football.

India's first blind football academy was set up in Kochi just a few months back. The Indian blind football team is at 23rd position in world rankings. Blind football is also a Paralympic sport and a blind football World Championship is organised by the International Blind Sports Association every year.

Despite a match on Sunday against Mumbai City FC, the Kerala Blasters found time to interact with the blind They are yet to win a game in the fourth season of ISL.

Their gesture of support is heartwarming and will help raise awareness and interest towards blind football and disability as a whole.

Samarthanam Trust is spread across Karnataka, Delhi, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana. The organisation also has offices in the United States and the United Kingdom.

**11. Intellectually disabled should not be called mental**

On Occasion of the World Disability Day, the National Centre for Promotion of Employment for Disabled People – NCPEDP has demanded increase in awareness about mental disabilities.

The organisation has said that it is high time that the society stops calling people with mental issues, Crazy or Mental.

Intellectual Disability is a disorder that should not be made fun of.

The people with developmental issues and learning disabilities are not crazy, they have a medical condition that needs support and help.

In India there is a lack of awareness about the various types of disabilities.

People need to be made aware of the various disabilities to increase their understanding and sensitivity.

# 12. Blind swimmer Kanchanmala to represent India at World Para Championship in Mexico

Kanchanmala Pande, the blind swimming champion from Nagpur, will represent India at the World Para Swimming Championship currently being held in Mexico.

26-year-old Kanchanmala will compete in the S-11 category and has been selected based on her excellent performance at the IDM Berlin Para Swimming Championship held in July. She will swim in the 100 metres freestyle, 100m backstroke, 100m breaststroke and 200m individual medley.

Kanchanmala is the only national swimmer who has qualified in the women's category. At the 17th National Para Swimming Championship at Udaipur, she did well in the 100m breaststroke and 200m IM and won three gold medals for Maharashtra including 100m backstroke.

Kanchanmala, who is from Amravati, represented Maharashtra several times at the national-level both in able as well as disabled category.

**13. Aadhaar must for disabled to travel free in UPSRTC buses**

BAREILLY: Physically challenged passengers will need to carry their Aadhaar cards to avail the free rides that they are entitled to in [Uttar Pradesh State Road Transport Corporation](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/topic/Uttar-Pradesh-State-Road-Transport-Corporation)(UPSRTC) buses. Corporation officials said the move, which is to be implemented from January 2018, was meant to curb cases of people producing fake disability certificates to get free rides.

UPSRTC managing director P [Guruprasad](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/topic/Guruprasad) recently made it mandatory for disabled people to carry their Aadhaar cards or a photocopy of it, along with the disability certificate to avail a free ride.

Talking to TOI, UPSRTC chief general manager HS Gaba said, "Cases of people producing fake disability certificates were recently registered at the department, following which the state government took the initiative of making it mandatory for differently-abled persons to produce their Aadhaar cards along with other relevant documents. The disability certificate isn't a foolproof way of confirming identity as people often carry fake certificates or borrow genuine ones from people they know to avail the perk. People even paste their picture on someone else's certificate and get a photocopy done to pass it off as their own. Thus, chances of faking an identity remain high and our purpose is to curb misuse of the facility."

Gaba added, "Now, the Aadhaar card of a disabled passenger will be linked to their disability certificates. The Aadhaar card contains authentic information of a person and in case there is fraud, he will get caught. Once Aadhaar cards are made mandatory, a person will think twice before committing fraud."

[Rajeev Chauhan](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/topic/Rajeev-Chauhan), UPSRTC regional manager, Bareilly division said, "According to the corporation's guidelines, only a person with 40% disability is authorised to travel free in its buses. However, many people, despite having only 5 to 10% disability borrow certificates from genuine beneficiaries (who have 40% disability) to avail the facility, which is illegal."

**14. World Disability Day: 41-year-old disabled runs pillar-to-post for rail smart card**

NOIDA: Even as the [district administration](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/topic/district-administration) is organising various seminars and programmes for the disabled on the occasion of [World Disability day](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/topic/World-Disability-day), a 41-year-old tea-stall owner suffering from 65 per cent disability is running pillar to post to get a disabled person's railcard for availing concession in railway tickets.  
  
[Shaikh Sadarul](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/topic/Shaikh-Sadarul), who contracted polio when he was just 10-years old and is suffering from post-polio residual paralysis (PPRT), had to face many problems to get a concession certificate from the health department earlier.  
  
Staying at Kakrala village in Sector 80, Sadarul says that he was initially not entertained by the health department officials when he would visit the office.  
  
However, the certificate was made without much delay after Sardul raised the issue with the state health minister Sidharth Nath Singh during his visit to the community health centre in Bhangel in May this year.  
  
The struggle however did not stop as he was not issued a ticket with concession when he tried to avail the facility for rail travel and was asked by a railway official at the New Delhi station to get a smartcard from the office of the divisional railway manager, New Delhi.  
  
"When I reached the office, I showed my concession certificate to the concerned official who pointed out that my age was missing in the document. They asked me to get the addition made in my certificate for which I again had to visit the Sector 39 office of Gautam Budh Nagar health department. However, after getting the addition, I was asked by the DRM officials to wait for four months," Sadarul said.  
  
Over five months after his application was submitted to the office of the divisional railway manager in New Delhi on June 9, multiple visits to the office have proved futile.  
  
No one picks up the phone number given to him too.

"I have visited the office two-three times. However, during my latest visit to the office last week, officials told me that my smartcard has been sent to the CMO Office in Sector 39. When I visited the CMO office, I was told that my smartcard has not been sent here," he said.

When contacted, CMO Anurag Bhargava told TOI that since, the process of issuing smart card for claiming concession on railway tickets has been recently started, the rules are not clear.

"We have got some verification forms but no smartcard has come to our office," he said.

Nitin Chowdhary, Chief Public Relations Officer, [Northern Railway](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/topic/Northern-Railway) expressed surprise that Sadarul was asked to wait for so long for his smartcard.

"[Issuance of smart card](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/topic/Issuance-of-smart-card) should not take four months. If this has happened, we will speak to the DRM officials and resolve the issue," he told TOI.

# 15. Queasy question ends disabled children’s event

Aurangabad: A children's event on International Day of Persons with Disabilities in the city had to be stopped abruptly after the participants of a disabled persons' rally had a disagreement with officials of the social welfare department.  
  
The rally on Sunday started from Kranti chowk to the zilla parishad ground at Aurangapura in the morning. The participants displayed placards and banners to raise awareness about specially-abled persons.  
  
The rally was organised by MLA Bachhu Kadu's Prahar Janshakti Party. Shivaji Gade, the district chief of the party, said, "The rally was aimed at helping common people understand the struggles of the disabled. The society needs to encourage the capacity of these individuals to support them in every possible way."  
  
The zilla parishad's (ZP) social welfare department also held a cultural programme for the children of the special schools in the city to mark the day.  
  
The ZP office had received a circular from the commissioner for disability affairs four days ago to host the programme to raise awareness among the disabled about the various welfare and rehabilitation schemes they are entitled to.

Gade, along with nearly 200 disabled persons from the rally, reached the community hall where the social welfare department's programme was under way. "I asked them when was the social welfare department planning to spend the 3% of the fund (around Rs 5 lakh) reserved for the disabled. Only three months of the current fiscal is left," Gade said.

"The question made the officials uncomfortable. They discontinued their programme abruptly and left the place," Gade added.

The disabled in the district have been facing several issues for a long time. Their calls for help to the administration have fallen on deaf ears.

The district has only one hospital that issues disability certificates. This forces people from remote villages to go there for their certificates. Unfortunately, sometimes they have to return empty handed due to rush. The district also lacks an agency to issue the unique disability ID cards. Moreover, government agencies like the ZP, Panchayat Samitis and municipal bodies have refrained from spending the money allocated for the welfare of the persons with disability.

# 16. Govt tells civic bodies to use allotted money for disabled

Pimpri Chinchwad: The state government has issued a directive to the civic authorities in municipal corporations and councils to ensure that the amount provisioned in the civic budget for differently-abled persons is used for the intended purpose.  
  
All civic bodies are required to provision 3% of the civic budget for the benefit and the welfare of differently abled persons.  
  
However, it was found that the funds were not being used for the intended purpose.  
  
"The state government has been receiving complaints that the provisioned 3% is being spent on other projects. It must be exclusively used for welfare measures (of the disabled). If any officer is neglecting the disbursal of the amount, strict disciplinary action will be initiated against him/her. The amount cannot lapse and has to be used for welfare measures," a government directive stated.

Rafique Khan, a disabled person from the Prahaar Apang Sanstha, said, "The municipal corporation authorities will have to speak to the organizations for the differently-abled. Disabled persons working at the ground-level have complete knowledge of the difficulties faced by such persons. The amount should be spent directly on the intended beneficiaries."

Chief minister Devendra Fadnavis had held a meeting in the last week of October to undertake micro-planning of the welfare works for the disabled. Assistant commissioners of the municipal corporations had been directed to provision the amount. They were also told to file reports on the use of the provisioned amount to the urban development department in February, May and November.

The central government enacted Rights of Persons with Disability Act, 2016 that recognizes that persons with disability are entitled to equal opportunities and rights to participate in political, social, economic and self-development activities in all walks of life. The state government has suggested that companies can take lead with their corporate social responsibility activities for the differently-abled persons.

Education is provided to differently-abled children in the age group of 6-18 years in special government schools. Vocational training is provided to adults.

# 17. BEST to pay disabled man who fell off a bus

MUMBAI: Coming down on BEST for showing apathy in the case of [differently-abled passengers](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/topic/differently-abled-passengers), a [Motor Accidents Claims Tribunal](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/topic/Motor-Accidents-Claims-Tribunal) has said that it is the duty of the bus driver to show extra caution and care when such passengers board from the front.

The tribunal ordered BEST to pay Rs 50,000 compensation to a now 32-year-old man who fell down and injured his foot after the bus started while he was attempting to board it from the front entry in 2009. The driver claimed that he could not see the man due to the crowd boarding.

The tribunal said, "When disabled passengers are allowed to board a bus from its front door it was expected of the driver to take extra precaution before starting the bus. Contents of the station diary entry do not show that the driver of the offending bus had taken any extra care precaution, hence even though police has not registered a crime against the driver it cannot be sufficient to hold that there was no fault of the driver in causing the accident."

The claim was submitted by Firoz Khan on February 11, 2009. He told the tribunal that on February 3, 2009 at about 7.30 am, he had attempted to board the bus near the Antop Hill bus stop. He said that the driver started the vehicle without paying much attention to him. Khan fell down and suffered injuries on his right foot. He said that at that time he was a hawker earning a monthly salary of Rs 3,500. He said that he suffered financially, emotionally and physically due to the incident. He claimed a compensation of Rs 2 lakh.

The BEST denied the claims. It said that the accident occurred due to the sole negligence or at least the contributory negligence of Khan. The BEST claimed that he had fallen while attempting to board the running bus. It said that as he could not catch hold of the bar, he slipped.

# 18. 'Hopeful, determined despite disability'

NAGPUR: On the backdrop of National Disability Day, Maharashtra Rajya Apang Karmachari Sangathan had organized a workshop cum felicitation programme for the specially-abled community at Sarpanch Bhavan, Civil Lines on Sunday. State Social Welfare Minister Rajkumar Badole was invited as the chief guest for the event and MLAs Sudhakar Deshmukh, Sudhakar Kolhe and[Milind Mane](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/topic/Milind-Mane) were the guest of honour for the event along with other senior diplomats.  
  
Deputy Commissioner, General Administration of Divisional commissioner Sanjay Dirve said, "Special initiatives by the government have tried to provide benefits to them but many issue did not reflect on the schemes. But through hard work and determination, the special ones have attained great heights and became an inspiration for all."  
  
DLSA Secretary [Kunal Jadhav](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/topic/Kunal-Jadhav) and [Ghanshyam Asudani](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/topic/Ghanshyam-Asudani) spoke on the rights of the disabled people provided by the constitution and informed the audience about the different schemes launched for the specially-abled. During the occasion Dr Irfan Rahim, Pandurang Tekade, Makrand Gore, Prakash Sute, Upendra Bhagat and Madhuri Moherkar were felicitated for outstanding work in their respective fields.  
  
President of the Sangathan Vilas Bhotmange said, "Our main is to bring the disabled people into the mainstream society and give them equal rights to live with dignity. We wish to show the world that a disabled might lack some organ or part of body but does not lack the passion and determination to achieve the goal."  
  
Overcoming Disabilities  
  
Most people had a childhood comprising fun at the park, schools and games but for[Anant Dhobe](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/topic/Anant-Dhobe) it was a little different. He claims that the polio in more than half of his body helped him learn new games which a normal child never plays. Dhobe, who is an assistant state manager at MHADA, said, "My parents claimed that I got the disease when I was one and a half years old. My family members were my best friends and we enjoyed each day together and they tried to make me feel like I am no different than any child my age. It's their guidance and support that made me realize my true potential."  
  
Anant Dhobe  
  
Kanshika Sahu says that one has a choice to define themselves either by their disability or by their abilities and she chose the latter. "At the age of 3, my parents discovered that I was orthopaedically handicapped and thus began the era of treatments, sympathy and tension accompanied with a pinch of solitude. But I decided to write the story of my life. I was homeschooled and earned a BCom degree and got a job for myself." Sahu, who works as computer operator, added that one should work hard and focus on bettering oneself.  
  
Kanshika Sahu  
  
Retired Zila Parishad employee Ranjit Joshi suffers from a severe case of polio but that didn't stop him from being awarded the National Award for efficient disabled employee and worker in 1990 by President R Venkataraman and also Shiv Chatrapati award by the state. "People now focus on the achievements but it took a long time and numerous hardships to attain them," Sahu adds. He claims that he was an avid sportsperson and has even taught swimming to normal people. "One just needs to have is confidence in oneself and the rest falls into place."

"I came into politics because I could find ind a job owing to my disability," said city's first disabled corporator Dinesh Yadav. The corporator who represents Nari, said, "I realized that in order to change the system, one has to be in it and thus I started my political journey in 2006. After various hardships I was able to mark my spot but one of the main challenges was to make people focus on my capability as a politician rather than my disability." [Yadav](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/topic/Yadav) adds that people trusted him and his work which motivated and inspired him to serve the community.

Dinesh Yadav

Sometimes one has no choice but to become one's own hero and stand up for their people. Namdev Balgar, who himself is orthopaedically handicapped, became a social activist for the disabled in the early seventies when he realized that disabled were neglected and were not even given basic human rights. "During that time people considered us untouchables and looked down upon us. Breaking this stereotype was hard but eventually with the help of some good people and governance, today numerous rights are helping one to live a dignified life."

# 19. 5 Indians with disabilities that inspire

Yesterday was World Disability Day and it was marked by various activities and events across the world. Here are some people with disabilities in India that have not given up in life.

1. Sudha Chandran is an amputee dancer and actor who has made quite a name for herself in the country. Sudha is a classical dancer and uses a prosthetic leg.
2. Malathi Krishnamurthy Holla is a para-athlete and is famous within the country and outside as well. Malathi is paralysed from the waist down and has won Gold medals in 200m race, javelin throw, discus throw and shot put.
3. Sadhna Dhand is deaf and s a passionate painter. Her work is famous and she has won several awards at both state and national level.
4. Dr Suresh Advani is a surgeon on wheelchair. He is the first Indian oncologist to successfully conduct a bone-marrow transplant.
5. Arunima Sinha is the first woman amputee to successfully climb the Mount Everest.

**20. Special schools for children with disability needed: SC to UP**

NEW DELHI: The [Supreme Court](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/topic/Supreme-Court) on Monday asked [Uttar Pradesh](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/uttar-pradesh) to come up a mechanism for promotion and facilitation of inclusive education so that students suffering from a disability are not kept away from mainstream education.  
  
The court sought a reply from the state government on how it would work out the provisions of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016, by providing inclusive education in the state.  
  
A bench of Chief Justice Dipak Misra and Justices A M Khanwilkar and D Y Chandrachud said an affidavit should be filed by the secretary of UP's department of education, while keeping in mind the provisions of the Act dealing with equality and non-discrimination.  
  
"The affidavit shall also contain the number of disabled children in the State of UP and the categories of the disability," it said.  
  
Additional Advocate General Aishwarya Bhati filed an affidavit in the apex court in pursuance of its earlier order and said the state government was keen to have special schools with special teachers to impart education to the disabled children who cannot be taught in normal schools.  
  
She said 16 special schools have already been established, which are functional, and teachers have been appointed there.  
  
These schools were imparting education to visually impaired, hearing and speech impaired, mentally disabled and physically disabled children, she said, adding that these schools have residential facilities and admit students in the non-residential category also.  
  
The state government also said that seven schools for visually impaired were located in Lucknow, Gorakhpur, Banda, Saharanpur and [Meerut](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/topic/Meerut) cities while five schools for hearing and speech impaired are in Gorakhpur, Bareilly, Agra, Farukhabad and Lucknow cities.  
  
With regard to mental disability, it said there were two schools running at Allahabad and Lucknow, while two special schools for the physically disabled were functioning in Lucknow and Pratapgarh.  
  
Bhati said 17 more schools were under construction for children with special needs.  
  
The top court also constituted a two-member committee of advocates Rishi Malhotra and Gopal Shankaranarayanan to visit the schools and file a report in six weeks. It listed the matter for further hearing in the third week of January.  
  
Earlier, the top court had questioned the lack of separate schools and distinctly trained teachers for students who suffer from autism, blindness and deafness.

It had observed that it is "impossible to think" that children, who are disabled or suffer from any kind of disability or are mentally challenged, can be imparted education in mainstream schools along with normal children.

Emphasising the need for a separate system, the court had said "the students who suffer from blindness, deafness and autism or such types of disorder may be required to have separate schools with distinctly trained teachers".

The bench was hearing a plea filed by Rajneesh Kumar Pandey, through advocate [Prashant Shukla](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/topic/Prashant-Shukla), claiming lack of sufficient number of special educators in Uttar Pradesh and other states to teach the Children With Special Needs (CWSN).

The petition by 17 teachers, who claim to have undertaken the training required to teach CWSN, has contended that to make Right to Education a success, it is necessary that qualified special educators are there in each school to help disabled kids prepare to face the challenges of life.

## 21. President Presents ‘National Awards for Divyangjan Empowerment -2017’ on International Day of Persons with Disabilities

The President of India Shri Ram Nath Kovind presented the “National Award for Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (Divyangjan)-2017” at a function organized by Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (Divyangjan) under the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment on the occasion of International Day of Persons with Disabilities here today. On this occasion, Minister for Social Justice and Empowerment, Shri Thaawarchand Gehlot, Minister of States for Social Justice and Empowerment, Shri Krishan Pal Gurjar and Shri Ramdas Athawale also graced the occasion.On International Day of Persons with Disabilities i.e. 3rd December,  the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (Divyangjan), Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment presents National Awards to Individuals, Institutions, Organisations, State/District etc for their outstanding achievements and work done towards empowerment of Persons with Disabilities. The National Awards were presented in 14 main categories. Within stipulated date, out of these 14 categories, 984 applications were received from 13 categories. Four Scrutiny Committees constituted by the Department as per the rules had scrutinized the nominations and their recommendations were considered by the National Selection Committee. The National Selection Committee met on 10th and 16th November and recommended 52 persons / institutions for the awards.Addressing the gathering, the President said that the future of the country depends on ensuring all citizens have the capacity to realise their full potential. To achieve this goal, we have to create a sensitive and harmonious society, where every person feels empowered – and a society of empathy, where one person feels the pain of another.He said that our Constitution guarantees equality, freedom, justice and dignity to all citizens, including the Divyang. The Government has enacted laws for the empowerment, inclusion and mainstreaming of differently-abled persons. No Divyang person should be evaluated by his or her physical ability, but by his or her intellect, knowledge and courage.The President congratulated the award winners and said he was optimistic they would inspire other differently-abled persons to strive to reach new heights. He also expressed confidence that citizens of our country will build an inclusive New India, with an appropriate and sensitive approach to our Divyang fellow Indians.In his address, Shri Thaawarchand Gehlot said that India has achieved historic achievements during past three and half years and many Guiness Book World Records have been established by our Divyangjans. 8589 ADIP camps were organized and more than 9 lakhs Divyangjans have been provided Equipments and Assistive devices and 400 Motorized Tricycles have also been provided. During the same period, the amount of scholarships and aids to Divyangjans have also been raised. He opined that Divyangjans are very talented. In the field of Sports, they have made remarkable achievements. He called upon people to actively participate in the propagation and publicity of several useful schemes of the government meant for Divyangjans. Under the able guidance of the Prime Minster, the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (Divyangjan) under the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment has become popular worldwide.According to Census 2011, there are 2.68 crore persons with disabilities in our country who exhibit great diversity in terms of quantum of disability as well as types of disabilities. To give focussed attention to the schemes and programmes for empowerment of Persons with Disabilities, a new Department under the Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment came into existence during the year 2012.  Since then, a number of new schemes and programmes for the empowerment of persons with disabilities have been added.  On the other hand, the financial outlay for the department is also going up every year.  The existing schemes of the department have been reviewed and in case of many modifications have been made.  Receiving of applications under two major scheme is on-line and the same are processed, funds sanctioned through the electronic mode.The history of National Awards goes back to 1969, when Awards in only two categories were instituted by the Government of India with the objective to focus public attention on issues concerning persons with disabilities and to promote their mainstreaming in society. The National Awards for empowerment of persons with disabilities have been notified in the year 2013. Now there are 14 broad categories for individuals and institutions consisting of 58 awards.  This year, an advertisement was issued by the Department in July 2017 with the last date up to 15th August.  However, on receipt of representations the last date was extended up to 10th September. 984 applications were received which were shortlisted by Four screening committees constituted for the purpose.  The National Selection Committee met on two dates i.e. 10th November, and 16th November, 2017 to finalise the list.  This year, 52 awards to individuals and institutions are being conferred. The awards consist of a certificate to each, and medal or shield in some categories as also with cash component amounting to Rs. 43.50 Lakhs.

**22. 9 cops, including four Haryana officials, booked for driving disabled man to suicide**

Rudrapur: Nearly two weeks after a 22-year-old disabled man from Nanakmatta town in Udham Singh (US) Nagar committed suicide by consuming poison, a case has been registered against 11 people, including four officials of Haryana Police and five personnel of US Nagar Police, who the deceased man alleged had harassed him in a suicide note. All have been booked under section 306 (abetment of suicide) of the Indian Penal Code.  
  
A resident of Kalyanpur Bhatta in Nanakmatta, Gururaj Singh had consumed poison on November 21 and died at a private hospital here the following day. In the suicide note, he alleged that five officials of the Haryana Police force, five personnel of US Nagar Police and a few others had harassed him for a year. A complaint was subsequently filed by the youth’s mother, Sukhdev kaur, at the US Nagar police station on November 23 against Haryana and US Nagar police officials for allegedly framing him in “false cases” and harassing him “in the name of interrogation”. Refuting the charges, US Nagar Police had earlier said that Gururaj had taken the extreme step out of depression-related illness.  
  
Senior superintendent of police (SSP), US Nagar, Sadanand Date said, “A detailed probe will be carried out in the case. Officials of the Haryana Police and US Nagar have been named in the FIR.”  
  
Station house officer (SHO) of Nanakmatta police station, Ashok Kumar, said that Gururaj was booked in two different cases in US Nagar and Haryana in 2009 and 2016 respectively. While he was booked in a case of theft in 2009, he was an accused in another case of loot at a petrol pump at Dharuhera in Rewari district of Haryana, on the intervening night of December 30-31.

Officials also said that Gururaj was “injured” in January 2017 when he had allegedly tried to flee from police even as the deceased had later filed a complaint saying he was shot at by Haryana Police due to which his left leg had to be amputated. “He was taken to the Sushila Tiwari Hospital in Haldwani where his leg had to be amputated following accident-related injuries,” SHO Kumar said.

From the Rewari police, Gururaj named SHO of Dharuhera, Kuldeep Singh; assistant sub-inspector (ASI) Naresh Kumar; ASI Virendra Singh, constables Amit Kumar and Virendra Singh in the note. He also alleged sub-inspector (SI) of Nanakmatta, Yogesh Kumar; SI of US Nagar police station, Sonika Joshi; the then in-charge of Pulbhatta police outpost, Harendra Chaudhary; constables Pritam Singh and Sunil Kumar of the Baraa police outpost of harassment.

Gururaj also mentioned names of two Dharuhera residents, Shyam Kishor and Babulal, besides Dr Ganesh Singh of Sushila Tiwari Hospital for wrongly amputating his leg.

“The names of ASI Naresh Kumar and constable Virendra Singh of Haryana Police were removed from the lawsuit since they were not found to be guilty during initial probe. Dr Ganesh Singh has also not been named in the FIR but he has been summoned for interrogation,” SSP Date added.

Dr Ganesh Singh of Sushila Tiwari Hospital, who had treated Gururaj, said, “When the patient was brought here, his leg was badly injured and infected. We had to amputate it or the infection could have caused his death. It was not a bullet injury.”

# 23. ‘World Disability Day’ observed by DLSA

Nagpur: A legal awareness programme was organized by District Legal Services Authorities (DLSA) on Sunday at Sarpanch Bhavan at Akashwani chowk in Civil Lines. A sizeable number of challenged persons were present at the programme.

ZP, CEO, Kamalkishor Futane, while addressing the gathering, highlighted problems regarding the challenged persons in their day-to-day life. He also stated about the government plans and schemes which suffers from lack of awareness ultimately depriving the section of the population for whom they were being floated. He stressed on the implementations of the existing schemes.

Deputy commissioner Sanjay Dhiware, posted at Divisional commissioner's office, the involvement of the NGOs in extending the assistance to the challenged persons in creating awareness, championing their rights and also helping them to get their due benefits. He lauded the positive efforts from the NGOs in paving a better life for the challenged section of the population.

DLSA sectretary Kunal Jadhav had thrown lights on the newly enacted laws for the challenged persons which will bring enormous help and benefit to them. He too admitted about the poor awareness regarding the schemes meant for the challenged population. Jadhav also assured that DLSA would come forward to extend any assistance required by them.

**24. Disabled achievers take to the ramp to promote inclusive marriages**

Many couples walked the fashion ramp in Chennai to promote inclusive marriages as part of the International Day of Persons with Disabilities.

Like Shalini, a fashion designer, who is married to disabled entrepreneur Visakan Rajendiran. Dressed in her best, she moved his wheelchair as both waved at the audience.

Rajendiran said that the disabled men are eligible bachelors like anybody else and deserved good-looking partners and should not compromise on this due to their disability.

Another participant, Poongothai said it was his disabled partner who proposed to him.

The event was organised by the Headway Foundation as part of its first year anniversary. Achievers included Justin Vijay Jesudas, national Paralympic swimming champion; Sathyamoorthy, international wheelchair tennis player; Meenakshi, a rights activist, and Shams Alaam, Mr India Wheelchair 2017 and paraplegic world record holder in open sea swimming.

# 25. Inclusive Spaces - Big Bazaar, Thakur Mall makes shopping easy for the blind

Shopping is not fun for everyone. And shopping in a mall can be even more confusing. Look at it from the perspective of a disabled person, and the picture is even more chaotic. Few malls in India have Braille signage, or sign language interpreters.

## Mall shopping becomes less chaotic

Future Retail Limited, the firm which hosts value format Big Bazaar, is determined to change that. They are looking at introducing accessible shopping across a few stores in India. In October, Big Bazaar launched a special **'listening session'** in 105 stores where people with disabilities were invited to experience the new features and give their feedback. Based on their inputs, changes are gradually being made.

One such Big Bazaar store in Thakur Mall, Kandivili, in Mumbai is the focus of our next photo story in the Inclusive Spaces series. Dinesh Saraiya, who is blind, and his wife Monika, a wheelchair user, sent us their pictures while they were shopping at this particular mall.

### Shopping assistants, priority counter, trained staff

From an escort who guided them from the entrance to shopping assistants, they were helped at every stage. The assistant are trained on how to communicate with the disabled and have a basic understanding about every disability. Big Bazaar is training its staff across various touch points to be sensitive to the needs of the disabled.For instance, the Saraiyas were even helped out with a vehicle to go back home.

All Big Bazaar stores have a **dedicated priority counter** for easy billing. There is trained staff at all key touch points from security to cashier to customer desk. There is even an **Accessibility Champion in every store** to handle questions.

#### Going ahead

Some of the features Big Bazaar has in the pipeline are **tactile maps in the key stores, accessible changing rooms for wheelchair users, and unisex washrooms**.

To watch the other stories in the Inclusive Spaces series, click:

[Ability On Wheels](https://newzhook.com/story/14940) New Delhi

[Children's Parks](https://newzhook.com/story/14992) Bengaluru

[DAG Modern](https://newzhook.com/story/14978) New Delhi

# 26. Disabled billiards player ranked 16 in the world

Mumbai: Polio had already left Venkateswaran Subramanian with a deformed left leg when he lost sight in his left eye at the age of six. The physical handicaps didn’t stop him from playing table tennis, but at 19, he knew they wouldn’t let him excel. But the Matunga Gymkhana had a billiards room, a game which fascinated the youngster enough for him to take it up.

Now 47, Mr. Subramanian is ranked 16 worldwide by World Billiards, the governing body for English Billiards, and has won the Open Disability Snooker Championship 2016, organised by World Disability Billiards And Snooker at Gloucester, U.K. “I was looking for something inside a cupboard when the sharp end of a clothes hanger hit me in the eye. I had already contracted polio as the anti-polio drops I was administered as a child turned out to be defective. With these disabilities hindering my performance in table tennis, I decided to switch to billiards,” he says.

Mr. Subramanian, Raja to friends, starts his day at 7.30 a.m. He gives tuition at his residence in Matunga till 10 a.m., has breakfast and begins his fitness regimen: a five-km walk in the morning, which takes him an hour-and-a-half, and a seven-km walk in the evening. This, he says, has been his routine for seven years now, and has helped battle obesity: he is now a dapper 68 kg, almost half the 112 kg he was earlier.

**Fat to fit**

Physical problems and Raja have never been far from each other. He began walking on doctor’s orders to reduce weight after a heart attack at 40, only to discover that he had osteoarthritis in his right leg. “I first start walking in water to make it easier. I would walk in the swimming pool at the Matunga Gymkhana, which helped me lose weight rapidly. Initially, it felt like the most difficult thing to do: walking back and forth, seeing the same sights every day.”

He brought his diet and lifestyle under control too: a short no-meat phase, more focus on fruits and vegetables, soups and salads, and quitting smoking. “I used to smoke more than 30 cigarettes a day. It was my smoking that caused the heart attack. Initially, it was difficult and I almost gave up twice, but I knew I would be digging my own grave if I resumed.”

Ajay Dware, Raja’s childhood friend who also plays snooker and table tennis at the Matunga Gymkhana, says, “Raja is the most dedicated person one can come across. He fought with his weight like a fighter. He has always been a fighter. Despite his ailments, he never lost heart. He never quits. Walking is the most boring exercise, yet he maintains his routine, even when he is travelling for international tournaments. He truly is a champion.”

Now, Raja says, he feels at home among fellow walkers. “Many strangers who noticed me walking and the results it brought, tell me how inspired they are by me. It feels wonderful to know your efforts are being appreciated.”

# 27. BarrierBreak wins 2017 NCPEDP-Mindtree Helen Keller Award!

The prestigious NCPEDP-Mindtree Helen Keller Awards 2017 have been given today. For the last 18 years, the awards have recognized the exceptional work being done by corporates, NGOs and individuals to enable and empower India’s 70 million disabled citizens.

Of the 10 awards announced this year, BarrierBreak Solutions Private Limited has been honored in the category of organisations from the disability sector or outside who have shown their commitment towards promoting equal employment opportunities for people with disabilities.

BarrierBreak Solutions Private Limited, which is an accessibility consulting firm based in India, has tested more than 1,800 websites and 180 mobile applications across different platforms for accessibility. They are also behind Newz Hook, which is the first inclusive app to makes news accessible to all, including people with disabilities and the elderly. 65% of their employees are persons with various types of disabilities.

Other winners are Dr. Charudatta Jadhav, Tata Consultancy Services Limited, Devanshi Joshi, Gram Bharat, and Dr. Nirmita Narasimhan, Centre for Internet and Society, Pradip Sinha Dell – EMC, in the category of Role Models with Disability.

In the category of people who have contributed to promoting employment opportunities for the disabled, are SV Krishnan – CEO, Dialogue in the Dark, and Swaminathan Subramanian, ANZ Bengaluru,

Along with BarrierBreak, Hatti Food and Beverages Private Limited, The Lemon Tree Hotel Company, and Vindhya e Infomedia Private Limited, have also won in the category of organizations that are promoting equal employment opportunities for the disabled.

# 28. Trains in India are not for disabled people

Meenakshi Balasubramanian is a disability rights activist from Chennai who does not travel by trains anymore.

She moves around on wheel chair and crutches is a polio survivor.

The lack of infrastructure for disabled in the trains has compelled her to stop travelling in them.

## **Inaccessible trains and railway stations.**

The railway stations and trains in the country are not suitable for people with disabilities due to the way they are designed.

Firstly, it is not easy for disabled people to get on a train.

The doors and corridors inside the trains are too narrow for disabled to walk through them or move on a wheelchair.

Meenakshi has even faced sexual assault while she waited for a train a few years ago.

## **Online petition demands for change**

Virali Modi, an activists started an online petition urging the government to implement disabled friendly measures in Indian railways.

The government is yet to take any action in this regard.

**29. Chennai doctor awarded by President for years of social work for disabled**

T.S. Chandrasekar is a doctor based in Chennai who has been awarded the presented the national award for 'Empowerment of Persons with Disability' by the President.

Dr Chandrasekar has been working for the welfare of people with disabilities for the past 15 years.

Dr Chandrasekar was one of the most brilliant students to pass out of the MBBS at Madurai Medical College, he graduated with 14 gold medals.

He is currently a part of the MedIndia Hospitals and takes out time regularly for social work.

He is the brain behind 21 projects for the disabled people successfully implemented in the past 15 years.

# 30. Two disabled Chandigarh women received National award from President

The president of India gave away awards to 67 people on the occasion of International Day of People with Disability, these awards were given for the contribution of these people in the empowerment of people with disabilities.

Two of the awardees belong to Chandigarh, Priyanka Saini and Shruti Hora.

They received the award in the category of Best Employees/Self Employed with Disabilities, at Delhi’s Vigyan Bhawan.

Priyanka works as a facilitator at the Tech Mahindra Smart+ Training Centre for Persons with Disabilities.

Priyanka is hearing and speech impaired since birth. Shruti Hora is blind and holds a PhD degree in music.

She is an associate professor at the Post Graduate Government College for Girls.

Both women have worked hard in life to overcome the challenges that came in their way.

# 31. Tata steel dedicates centre to disabled people

JAMSHEDPUR: [Tata Steel](http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/tata-steel-ltd/stocks/companyid-12902.cms)dedicated a centre for physically challenged people at [Noamundi](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/topic/Noamundi) block in [West Singhbhum](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/topic/West-Singhbhum)on Monday to take forward the people-oriented culture of diversity and inclusion.  
  
The centre, which will be known as SABAL, will groom these people for a brighter future by offering various courses like trainers programme, disability awareness workshops, digital literacy programme, career awareness workshops, foundation course in computer and employability and similar basic initiatives. [SABAL](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/topic/SABAL) is a joint initiative of [Tata Steel Skill Development Society](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/topic/Tata-Steel-Skill-Development-Society) (TSSDS) and Enable India for PWD. Enable India is a premier institute that has been shaping up lives of specially abled over the years in the country.

For the first time, the global Steel major ran a campaign to identify the people with disabilities in and around Noamundi. All identified persons were later connected to a unique disability ID scheme of the government.

Following the successful campaign, a total of 40 such physically challenged people were presented with a disability certificate from the government during the inaugural function on Sunday on the occasion of International Day for Persons With Disabilities.

The certificates will aid them immensely in availing welfare benefits of government aimed at empowering the disable people. The function concluded with disability awareness session, demonstration of reading without seeing ability and cultural programmes at the Officers Club.

The deputy director general mines safety (south eastern zone) Ranchi, Asim Kumar Sinha inaugurated the centre along with general manager (ore mines and quarries division), Tata Steel, Pankaj Satija.

# 32. Mahindra modifies electric cars for the disabled to support NGO initiative

Automobile company Mahindra Electric has donated three battery-driven cars under its CSR initiative to an NGO working for the physically challenged called Wheels of Change.

The NGO will use the customised electric vehicles called eVeritos as cabs under its initiative ‘KickStart’ to enable the disabled to drive their passengers safely.

The battery-powered cars have been modified to install a swivel out mechanism on the front co-passenger seat. The electric cars have been redesigned so they can offer mobility for all, including the disabled.

The NGO claims to work towards making the world accessible to people with disabilities and promote inclusion of marginalised communities. The electric cabs can also be hired by wheelchair users and people who use crutches to visit public places like parks, toilets and open grounds.

**33. After protests, govt re-examines cap on study expenses of kids of martyrs, disabled soldiers**

NEW DELHI: The [defence ministry](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/topic/Ministry-of-Defence) is "re-examining" its decision to cap the educational expenses in the shape of tuition and hostel fees paid to children of [martyrs](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/topic/martyrs) and disabled soldiers to just Rs 10,000 per month after strong protests by the affected families as well as a collective representation from the [Army](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/topic/Army), [Navy](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/topic/Navy) and [IAF](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/topic/IAF)chiefs.  
  
"The defence ministry (MoD) is seized of the matter. The order was passed (by MoD's ex-servicemen welfare department) based on the recommendations of the 7th Central Pay Commission," said an official on Tuesday.  
  
The scheme, under which a martyr's child was provided full tuition and hostel fees without any cap till he or she acquired the first degree (like BA, BTech, MBBS, BCom etc), currently covers around 3,400 children and entails an expenditure of around Rs 5 crore per year.

The scheme, which allowed complete reimbursement of tuition and other fees for children of martyrs and those disabled in action, came into force after the 1971 war to liberate Bangladesh. It was later extended to children of officers and soldiers killed or disabled in Operation Meghdoot (Siachen-Saltoro Ridge) and Operation Pawan (IPKF in Sri Lanka) as well as in counter-insurgency operations.

But a letter issued by the ex-servicemen welfare department on September 13 held that only a maximum of Rs 10,000 per month would be now be paid or reimbursed under the scheme. It has led to widespread protests, with Punjab chief minister Captain Amarinder Singh (retd) also writing to defence minister [Nirmala Sitharaman](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/topic/Nirmala-Sitharaman)that the decision was 'immoral' and 'unprincipled'.

"The fee being paid to the children of martyrs and disabled soldiers was a small price in exchange for what they had given, and continued to give, to the nation," he said, asking for a review of the decision immediately. Former Army chief and minister of state for external affairs General V K Singh (retd), too, joined in by tweeting: "Have written on the issue to RM (Raksha Mantri). Am sure Babus of the MoD will rectify this as early as possible."

The chiefs of staff committee (CoSC), which comprises the Army, IAF and Navy chiefs, has also written to the MoD that the decision should be revised to ensure the Rs 10,000 cap is lifted. "This small gesture would assure the families of our brave women and men that the nation cares for them and their sacrifices are truly appreciated by the government," said CoSC chairman and Navy chief Admiral [Sunil Lanba](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/topic/Sunil-Lanba), in the letter.

"These personnel have made the supreme sacrifice for the country and the provision of educational concessions to their wards is a small gesture to recognise their commitment to the defence of the country," he added.

# 34. ‘Priority to people with disabilities’

MARGAO: Minister for social welfare, [Pandurang Madkaikar](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/topic/Pandurang-Madkaikar)on Tuesday said that a special director will be nominated in the department of social welfare to deal with the cases of persons with disabilities. He urged the people to be considerate towards disabled and look upon them as a source of talent.

Madkaikar was speaking at the inaugural session of an event held to mark the International Day of Persons with Disabilities organised by the social welfare department in association with [Sangath](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/topic/Sangath) and Colorcon Asia Pvt Ltd, [Margao](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/topic/Margao).

Stating that there were more than 33,000 persons with disabilities in the state, Madkaikar said it was a challenge for the government and NGOs to look after their well-being. Goa is only the second state in India to implement Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, he added. Among others who were present include director of social welfare S V [Naik](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/topic/Naik) and Disability rights panel commissioner, Anuradha Joshi.

Citizens working for the welfare of people with disabilities such as Maya Kamat, Kirit Maganlal, Chetan Lakhani, Kevin Miranda, Samir Vadkal and Blaze Costabir were felicitated.

# 35. This Bengaluru centre is empowering the disabled towards independence

It is said that human spirit is one of ability, perseverance and courage that no disability can steal away. A little nudge in the right direction, however, is always welcome.

## Few disabled given opportunities in IT workforce

According to a study by the National Centre for Promotion of Employment of Disabled People, NCPDEP, of the 70 million disabled people in India, only 0.1 million are a part of the workforce in industries. A ray of hope in this grim situation is the **Centre of Excellence for Persons with Disabilities**.

The centre is a skills training **initiative by the NASSCOM Foundation and Conduent Business Services India**, that is working towards sensitising the IT sector about disability and its challenges, as well as empowering people with disabilities so they can secure a spot with top names in the industry and move forward towards a flourishing career.

### Over 60 people with disabilities placed in companies

So far they have **counselled about 250 job seekers with disabilities, trained 111 and placed 63 in leading IT companies** in Bengaluru in just nine months. Most of them are people who are deaf or speech impaired or have mobility challenges.

Joji Mammer from Kerala is a finance graduate, but he found that potential employers were more concerned about his hearing disability than skill. “I would go to these interviews and they wouldn’t even bother with questions. It was a straight 'no'."

"I would go to these interviews and they wouldn’t even bother with questions. It was a straight 'no'

Joji, who was born to deaf parents, has been disabled from birth. "I was never good with interviews and I did not understand what I was doing wrong. During the training, we actually had mock interviews, peer discussions and interactions with people from the IT sector. **The fear was gone”**.

Joji is now employed with the State Street Corporation, a US- based investment management banking company, and was one of the star speakers at the first year anniversary celebration of Centre of Excellence for Persons with Disabilities at Bengaluru on Wednesday.

Rohit from Tamil Nadu, who works with retail giant Amazon, echoed similar emotions. “My family is very poor. Whatever skills I had were not enough. As it is you are behind because of your disability and it continues even after your education." Rohit is hearing impaired as well.

Rohit's batchmates have been placed in CISCO, Equitas, Infrahedge Services, Vindhya Infomedia and Synchrony Financial.

“No one is doing a favour by employing a person with disability! They are being hired because they are qualified for it,” said a jubilant Mr.P Rajashekharan, founder of V-shesh, a training partner for the initiative. "This is a step forward, towards a functional system without disability bias.”

"This is a step forward, towards a functional system without disability bias."

The job seekers, or students, as they are fondly called at the centre, go through a **comprehensive program that teaches them skills in mathematics, accounts, computer usage, business development and communication** that includes grammar as well as written English.

“The greatest challenge is that once they graduate, they have low skills that lead to low wages, which in turn only increases disability bias. It is a vicious cycle and it can be broken by knowledge,” adds Rajashekharan.

The initiative is a one of its kind for the empowerment of the disabled in the corporate employment sector.

# 36. Braille sheets & wheelchairs - Gujarat elections set to go truly inclusive!

A Braille press of the latest model has been busy at work at the Blind People's Association in Ahmedabad for the last one week.

Walk in and you will find many sheets of Braille neatly piled up and numbered to be sent to the districts of Gujarat. There are about 60,000 sheets here and they will help make the 2017 Assembly elections inclusive for the blind.

The Braille sheets are being printed for each booth and they mention the candidate's serial number on ballot, his or her name, and the name of the election symbol of the candidate.

Voters will need to go through the names other details and decide who to vote for. They can approach the EVM which has Braille numbers against the buttons and cast their vote by pushing the button.

In the previous elections, Braille sheets were given only to those booths that had a high number of blind voters. This time, every booth will have the sheet so that the person on can cast the vote on their own.

Wheelchairs will also be put at major booths so people with mobility issues can come to the voting centres. According to Census 2011, Gujarat has over 10 lakh people with disabilities. The Election Commission has selected disabled people as ambassadors to encourage people to cast their vote.

**37. Disabled Phd scholar and guide spar over stipend form signing**

PUNE: [Ashok Patil](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/topic/Ashok-Patil), a physically disabled student pursuing his Doctorate in Philosophy (PhD), has submitted a complaint to [Savitribai Phule Pune University](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/topic/Savitribai-Phule-Pune-University)against his guide for not signing his stipend form for two consecutive months.  
  
Patil's guide, [Balasaheb Sonawane](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/topic/Balasaheb-Sonawane), told varsity authorities, that he wasn't sincere towards his work and had failed to update him about his thesis' progress. Sonawane also told them that with no progress in sight on Patil's work, signing the stipend form would be questionable.  
  
With both the student and the guide not agreeing to a truce, the Hindi department's head of the university, [Sadanand Bhosale](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/topic/Sadanand-Bhosale), suggested that the student change his guide. Patil said, "I immediately agreed to the HoD's suggestion as I was harassed enough for getting one signature on the stipend application form. I registered for my PhD in June 2016 and since then I have been with him. But suddenly, for the past two months my guide refused to sign the form, so I had to report to the university about it."

Patil has a disability in his legs. He alleged that he was made to wait by his guide at the door for two hours when he approached him for his signature.

When contacted by TOI, Sonawane, who is a professor at Camp Education Society's Dr Arvind B Telang Senior College of Arts, Commerce & Science in Nigdi, said, "I have been telling Patil to update me about the progress he has made on his thesis for many days. I have not received any response from him about it. The university pays him a stipend after my approval. However, if Patil is not doing any work on his thesis, the university would question me about why I signed the form. He has been working on his thesis for the past one year and five months and still not collected basic information about the topic he is studying. This is unacceptable."

Sonawane said when Patil was offered to change his guide, he willingly gave a 'noobjection certificate' to the university as he "no longer wants to work with Patil for performing poorly so far".

Bhosale said, "We have an [NOC](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/topic/NOC) from Patil too. We are checking the availability status of Hindi guides and in two days we shall make one available to Patil."

# 38. Delhi University to start disability course next year

NEW DELHI: [Delhi University](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/topic/Delhi-University)will [introduce](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/topic/introduce) from the [next academic session](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/topic/next-academic-session) a [diploma course](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/topic/diploma-course) on [disability](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/topic/disability), the first of its kind in the city.  
  
At the recent convocation, DU vice-chancellor Yogesh Tyagi had said the university would like to start a centre for disability studies soon. It is likely to offer several courses and hopes to "mainstream the subject by introducing research".

An eight-member preparatory committee, which will chalk out a plan to set up the centre, will hold its first meeting on December 14 to discuss the proposals. The "initiative is an extension of DU's endeavours for equality", said Anil Aneja, its chairperson. The centre will work to turn itself into a single-point window to supplement and take the discipline forward, he added.

Aneja said the centre would try to "create working professionals who will focus on disability". There is a high demand for such professionals in the corporate sector as many companies are looking to support the disabled through corporate social responsibility programmes, he claimed, adding that several NGOs, and schools and colleges also hire such professionals.

The centre also plans to set up an archive to build a network of data on disability from across the world to help researchers. "Already we have several departments in the university that allow research on disability but with this centre, it will be a focused setup," said Aneja.

Such a centre, the chairperson said, is necessary as "innovation is important to improve accessibility and make inclusion and assimilation possible". The idea is to involve both disabled and non-disabled people "as all over the world, disability as a field has become an important part of the curriculum", he added.

# 39. Court pulls up Centre for not consulting disability experts before designing new rupee notes

The Delhi High Court has told the central government and the Reserve Bank of India to examine the new currency notes and coins from the perspective of the blind as they are finding it hard to identify and use them.

The bench has told the government and the RBI to reconsider the issue after a petition said that the new notes were hard to use due to their size and tactile marks.

"This is something, which has been overlooked. Even we have seen it and found that it is difficult for the visually impaired persons to identify due to the change of size of notes also," said the court.

"This is something, which has been overlooked. Even we have seen it and found that it is difficult for the visually impaired persons to identify due to the change of size of notes also,"

The judges also said that the authorities **should have consulted disability experts** and others who worked in the field as the matter was of public interest and needed to be addressed seriously.

"Matter was of very grave public interest"

The court asked the government why the size of the currency cannot be the same as before and has said that the Centre should respond by 31 January.

But it also said that the **designing of the currency notes was a policy decision** and it does not want to interfere in it. The court was hearing petitions filed by three advocates, a company secretary and NGO, All India Confederation of Blind, who sought a change in the new currency notes to make them easily identifiable for the blind.

The NGO also sought replacement of coins of Rs. 10, Rs. 5, Rs. 2 and Re 1 because they were of a similar structure.

# 40. She hid her blind status for 11 years, now wants the world to see the potential in disability

When she was a child, Caroline Casey was diagnosed with ocular albinism, a genetic condition that severely affects the vision. She registered herself as blind 20 years ago, and is able to see things only when they are right up close to her face.

Today she is world famous as the businesswoman person behind the campaign #Valuable, which aims to increase the inclusion of the disabled in business.

## #Valuable campaign aims to highlight potential in disabled

What makes her story so fascinating is that for 11 years, from the age of 17 until the year 2000, Casey hid her disability from all her employers, and even many friends. She finally decided to open up about it to the world and dedicate her life and work to building an equal society for people with disabilities.

She says her #Valuable campaign aims to make companies aware of the potential of people like her. She says that **she spent much of her life discriminating against disability, in this case her own**.

Now she is determined to make her mark as a disability campaigner, and bring the message of inclusivity to businesses around the world.

So far she has **worked with 450 companies, over a 1000 company heads** and spoken to people to see the value of the one billion people in the world with a disability and their families.

To draw attention to the issue, she has done fundraising events like ride an elephant across India alone, a horse trek in Colombia to a young leaders summit in Bogota.

# 41. This Braille smartwatch is bringing the world closer to the blind

South Korea-based startup specialises in innovative solutions for the blind. It has created products that are low cost, small and easy to carry.

The Dot Smartwatch, which claims to be the world's first Braille smartwatch, lets the blind receive real time information from their phone, such as notifications, text messages, and Facebook messages in braille.

The smartwatch vibrates when there is a notification on the phone and the user cans elect and read the messages in Braille. This way the blind are connected, like everyone else.

Dot has developed a mechanism where there are four motorised modules under the watch’s dial and each module has six possible dots. The cell is the main component of the watch that makes the dots go up and down. Each dot is capable of moving up and down individually to display up to four characters at a time. The user can read braille on the smartwatch’s dial.

Dot has also developed its own text-to-braille engine. This is the technology that converts every text message or notification received on the phone, from English or any other language, into braille on the smartwatch.

The smartwatch also helps navigate maps, read news, check the weather and control home appliances. India is the largest market for Dot and that it wants to bring its products to help improve the literacy rates of the 60 million blind population in India.

Dot is also developing an educational Kindle-like device, which is the equivalent of a braille book for India. The device looks like a tab, and has the provision to read braille on it.

Dot has just begun shipping to the US and will soon start retailing its products in India, its biggest market.

**42. Blind Syrian refugee uses music to fight stigma against people with disabilities**

45-year-old Ehsan Al Khalili was forced to flee his home in Syria after the conflict broke out. He had no idea what the future held for him.

But two years on, the blind refugee has overcome his difficulties and is using his music to help fight the biases that people with disabilities face. He hosts music classes at a refugee camp in Azraq, Jordan, and his classes are aimed at disabled kids living in the camp.

Ehsan lost his sight when he was 11 years old when he fell into a large hole in the street when riding a bicycle with friends. The head injuries damaged the nerves in his eyes. But he did not let that come in the way of his dreams of becoming a professional music player.

He learned how to play the drum by playing along to Egyptian songs and at 16 years of age, joined a blind school. His band was all blind so he could play to female guests at traditional weddings as men and women are seated apart.

When conflict broke out, music came to save him. At the camp, he met with another disabled musician and started a music class for children, including those with disabilities.

Ehsan believes that it is important for the disabled to fully integrated in the community and hopes his example can fight the stigma about people with disabilities.

# 43. This engineering student could be India's 1st disabled video model!

26-year-old Mahalakshmi Mahadev from Bengaluru breaks the norm in many ways.

She is India's first disabled TV model and has featured in a 44-second advertisement for a textile brand.

Mahalakshmi is a polio-survivor and this becomes clear only at the end of the ad when she is placed back in her wheelchair.

Mahalakshmi, who is an technology graduate, says she was nervous at first during the shot but is now happy to make the point that the disabled can do everything. And that it is important for advertisements to turn inclusive.

Her dream to become a model came to life thanks to Chennai-based designer Shalini Visakan, who specialises in adaptive clothing for the disabled. Visakan Rajendiran, the husband of the designer, was also keen to feature a disabled model for their clothing line. No one was coming forward to feature a differently-abled person as a model.

The idea of showing her in her wheelchair at the end was to motivate others, say the ad filmmakers. The team is encouraged by the positive response to the advertisement and is ready to make such ads for anyone with disabled models. So if you are interested, this is your chance!

# 44. CBM India celebrates 50 years of working for inclusion

CBM India believes that inclusion needs an engagement that connects newer audiences with the vision of an inclusive society.

On the occasion of CBM’s 50 years in India, CBM conducted a series of activities including a national level photo and short film contest ‘A barrier free world for all” for people with disabilities and students.

Over 200 entries from across India sent in images which they feel can help raise awareness on disabilities.

The winners of the contest were facilitated at the ceremony by Mr. Varghese Chandy, Vice President at Malayalam Manorama.

CBM also held a conference on “Making Delhi A Barrier Free City” which included photo exhibition in New Delhi in October, 2017.

The conference was well received and drew in more than 200 people and students.

CBM will be hosting its last activity of the year with a photo exhibition in Bangalore at St. Joseph’s college of Arts and Science on 8th and 9th of December.

# 45. Swarga Foundation opens toilet for disabled kids at government school in Coimbatore

Disabled kids at the Government Higher Secondary School in Vagarayampalayam, Coimbatore, how have a toilet. This is thanks to the Swarga Foundation as part of the celebrations for the International Day for People with Disabilities, observed globally on 3 December.

Accessibility projects have been initiated in Corporation Government Schools across Coimbatore, with the aim to make government schools easy to use for wheelchair users and to ensure education is accessible to kids with disbailities.

Another school, Corporation Boys Higher Secondary School in Ramanathapuram in Coimbatore district, has also been made accessible in this way. The idea is to bring children with disabilities to school and empower them through education.

This year Swarga Foundation plans to introduce the programme in five more schools. These schools will have ramps for access to classrooms on the ground floor, wheelchair for toilet access, grab bars and convenient placement of utilities to help children use wheelchairs.

# 46. American University hosts event to raise funds for the blind in India

The Rutgers University in the United States recently hosted a blind date event to raise funds for free eye surgeries for people in India.

The Blind Date Auction is held every year and the collected funds are then handed over to the Sankara Eye Foundation.

Sankara Eye Foundation arranges free eye surgery for people in India who are suffering from curable blindness.

It costs around $30 to fund surgery for a person in India that includes pre-op, operation and post-op care.

Many students of the Rutgers University are Indians and they feel good about making some contribution towards the welfare of communities in India.

**47. Divyang centre: Injured on duty, paramilitary soldiers take on new skill sets**

Introduced by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) last year in December, the Divyang Skill Development Centre (DSDC) has started giving training in gardening and mobile repairing to develop entrepreneurial skills among the physically handicapped soldiers.

The centre, anchored by the Border Security Force (BSF), was introduced to impart skills among paramilitary troopers who have suffered grievous physical injuries on duty rendering them physically disadvantaged.

A total of 113 physically handicapped paramilitary troopers have been trained since it was set-up last year in December.

The trainees include 92 troopers of BSF, 13 from the Indo-Border Tibetan police, three from Central Industrial Security Force and five from Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB).

The trainees include those suffering from amputation, trauma and visual impairment.

The centre first started imparting skills related to administrative jobs like data entry, office management and radio and exchange operator. A BSF official said the move was made to impart entrepreneurship skills among troopers who would like to consider taking voluntary retirement. A select group can also be given duty as security analysts.

So far, three batches of paramilitary troopers have graduated from the centre after receiving the eight-week training. The fourth batch will graduate in January as the course has been extended to 16 months now. This is after skills like mobile repairing and gardening were introduced at the centre, officials said.

**48. School students’ team develops device for hearing impaired**

 GUWAHATI, Dec 9 - In keeping with this year’s National Children’s Science Congress (NCSC) focal theme ‘Science, Technology and Innovation for Sustainable Development: With Special Emphasis on Persons with Disabilities’, a team of young scientists from Assam Jatiya Bidyalay, who will be representing the State in the forthcoming national level NCSC at Ahmedabad, has come up with a novel device for helping the deaf in their routine activities.The device developed by the team emits vibration upon receiving a sound and alerts the user. It comprises three parts – a condenser microphone, a magnifier and frequency selector circuit, and a vibrator.

“After the condenser microphone receives a sound it converts the sound energy into electrical energy which goes to the magnifier and frequency selector circuit. The sound energy converted into electrical energy is very small in quantity and so the circuit magnifies the quantity of the energy. The magnified and selected energy goes to the vibrator through the circuit and it vibrates, alerting the person in the process,” Kaustav B Arya (group leader) and a Class VIII student, told *The Assam Tribune*.

The other young scientists in the project – all Class VIII students of the school – are Sourav Kumar Barman, Bhaswati Choudhury and Ananya Medhi.

Arya added that the vibrator would be connected directly to the body of the user so that the person could feel the vibration and be aware of the sound, e.g., a horn coming from behind, and take right decisions in that critical moment. It will be handy for a deaf person experiencing hardship while walking, driving and riding on the road.

The team has named the gadget as ‘Horn for the Deaf: A Sensitive Gadget.’

“As the cost of making the full device is just about Rs 100, every deaf person will be able to have it and use it properly,” he added.

The team has been guided by Pankaj Dutta, teacher of their school. “Sir has helped us a lot in choosing a sensitive problem and resolving to evolve a sensitive solution. We are also thankful to the Institute of Advanced Study in Science and Technology (IASST) which provided us their facilities to work on the device as we conceived it,” Arya said.

The team started experimenting on the device from June 2017. Dr Nirab Chandra Adhikary of IASST assisted the team in the process and the team created the device on September 1.

The national level NCSC will be held in Ahmedabad from December 27 to 31.

Earlier, the team had exhibited the device at the district level NCSC at Pragjyotish College here and at the State-level NCSC in Kokrajhar.

**49. Oman Pride: Omani designer creates a dress for the blind**

One of the greatest things our society has come to appreciate is how important it is to help the blind feel loved and accepted, and making it easier for them to blend in with the society and vice versa. This could be by providing them with special writing and reading equipment at workplace or offering them high-end technology devices that would contribute to making life easier for them. This year, fashion designer Ruqaya Al Harthi made a beautiful gesture with her incredible initiative to design a dress carrying Braille, the language of the blind.  
  
Ruqaya has released a collection inspired by His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said’s achievement, including dresses (abayas) that had important dates and patriotic phrases printed on them. One piece in this collection she saved for the last, and this was for a purpose.  
  
The dress was designed with minimalistic touches and raised dots (Braille) that were wrapped around its volumised cuffs, stitched at various levels. The entire National Anthem of Oman is thus inscribed on the cuffs in the Braille language.  
  
The designer, who is also the owner of Dar Saaf fashion house in Al Hail, had been developing the concept for National Day; she wanted to find a way to not only give back to the society through fashion, but also add some sparkle in the life of persons belonging to the blind community, offering them an opportunity to celebrate the most important occasion in the country without feeling excluded. In order to make that happen, she decided to pay a visit to Omar Ibn Al-Khattab Institute for the Blind and speak with the members there, in the hope that she could bring her idea to life. Little did she know that her concept was undeniably interesting and caught the institute’s attention. The persons at the centre offered their help by translating the National Anthem in Braille.

There is no doubt that the dress was designed for modest women who love to look and feel elegant, with classic colours and metallic hints, which can provide a mix of culture and luxury. The dress was created not only for women from the blind community but also for those wishing to show their support to the cause.  
  
The National Day collection is still available for women who want to continue their celebrations and wish to eliminate the invisible walls between the blind and the society

# 50. THAI airline starts special service for disabled people

Thai Airways International Plc or THAI airline has launched a special service for monks and disabled passengers.

The aim of the service id to provide assistance to the people with disabilities when they travel by air using the THAI airline.

This will also help the airline in meeting the standards set by the International Civil Aviation Organisation and the Civil Aviation Authority of Thailand.

The main focus of the airline assistance service will be on monks and passengers travelling with wheelchairs.

The assistance will starts from the initial point of the journey till the passengers reach the destination.

Help will be provided at the reservation and ticketing counters, a special check-in counter, priority boarding lanes, food and drink, and ground and in-flight assistance.

The assistance services will be provided free of charge to the passengers with disabilities.

# 51. Jammu and Kashmir government to spend 10 lakh for disabled students

The [**Jammu and Kashmir**](http://www.thehindu.com/tag/134-81/jammu-and-kashmir/?utm=bodytag)government today announced a grant of Rs.10 lakh for upgrading facilities for differently-abled students.

Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti announced the grant after meeting the students and distributed various prizes among them, an official spokesman said.

Waheed-ur-Rehman Parra, the secretary of J&K state sports council, and other state officials were present on the occasion, the spokesman added.

# 52. Palace to get green toilets, loo for physically challenged

Mysuru: Here is good news for those visiting [Mysuru Palace](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/topic/Mysuru-Palace). The structure, which lacked proper toilet facility, is set to get a green toilet.

Most of the time, [tourists](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/topic/tourists) visiting the Palace would complain about the lack of hygienic toilet facility. The green toilet facility for women at Mysuru Palace is similar to the one at Chamundi Hills, constructed by the Confederation of Indian Industry in association with Automotive Axles and Meritor, is almost ready and will be inaugurated before December 23.

The first phase of work -- construction of a toilet for women, the physically challenged and a baby care room -- is complete while renovation of men's toilet will be taken up shortly and is expected to be completed in four or five months.

Deputy commissioner D Randeep said, "There were many complaints from tourists that the toilet facility at the world-famous Mysuru Palace was not good. So the proposed toilet, which will be free of cost, will come in handy for tourists. As this happens to be a heritage building, we started construction work only after taking permission from the heritage department. The old ladies' toilet block will be transformed into a gents' block. We have also proposed such a facility at Kukkarahalli Lake and two other tourist places. They (CII and Automotive Axle) will take up this proposal at their meeting and take a decision."

N Muthukumar, former chairman, CII, Mysuru, and wholetime director of Automotive Axle, Mysuru, said, "After Mysuru was awarded cleanest city tag for the first time, we decided to do something for Mysuru. When this was brought before the DC, he advised us to construct a public toilet at tourist places as it was lacking in Mysuru. Immediately, we industrialists and members of CII accepted the offer. The new facility has separate toilet facilities for men and women and also exclusive toilet facility for the physically challenged, which was not part of the existing toilet at the Palace premise. The total cost for the project, including the proposed green toilet for women, will be around Rs 1.3crore. To start with, we will maintain it and later form a trust which will take up maintenance of these toilets.".

# 53. Train every teacher to reach out to disabled students, says President of India

The President of India Ram Nath Kovind has said that every teacher should be given special training on educating special students.

The President said that the special training will enable teachers to understand the needs of disabled students and take necessary steps for their empowerment.

The President's suggestion comes at a time when the Central Board of Secondary Education, CBSE, has set up a committee to frame a policy for educating kids with special needs.

The President also presented national awards to 52 winners, both individuals and organizations, under 14 different categories. All of them went to private companies and not a single government organization was found eligible for the award under Best Employer category.

**54. Welfare schemes elude disabled in Balangir**

BALANGIR: Thousands of physically challenged beneficiary of five blocks in [Balangir](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/topic/Balangir) district have been deprived of various welfare schemes like rural housing and[MGNREGA](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/topic/MGNREGA) of both the state and central government.  
  
Despite standing instructions from the government to help persons with disabilities on a priority basis, they are yet to be included in these programmes.  
  
Social activist Sanjib Pattnaik, who has been working towards the social and economic uplift of such persons, expressed his dissatisfaction with the implementation of welfare programmes by the administration. He said, "There is 3% reservation for physically challenged persons in all rural housing schemes, but none have been included yet. Likewise the disabled beneficiary should be provided work under individual programmes including cow shed, poultry shed and vermi-compost pit in MGNREGA but have been jobless for years."  
  
This apart persons with disabilities are unable to avail themselves of the benefits of various pension schemes like insurance, agriculture credit scheme and rural sanitation scheme due to the complex administrative process, said Pattnaik.  
  
Sanatan Kumbhar, a disabled beneficiary of Karamtala village said he was selected in a village meeting for a house under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY). "More than a year has passed since I was listed as a beneficiary, but the work order has not been issued. I had put forth the matter before the block development officer several times, but in vain."

The situation of Binapani Rana and Bishnupriya Sahu of [Kumbhari](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/topic/Kumbhari) village in Saintala block is no different. They too had a harrowing running to the the panchayat and block offices for a house under the PMAY scheme.

A week ago, more than 500 disabled persons from Titilagarh, Muribahal, Bangomunda, Turekela and Saintal block had staged a protest rally in [Titilagarh](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/topic/Titilagarh)town and submitted a memorandum of their various demands to the subcollector.

"I have instructed the BDOs concerned to look into the matter at the earliest. We are taking care to see that no beneficiary is left to get a job under MGNREGA," said Girish Singh, subcollector, Titilagarh.

The district administration has been organizing awas mela in all blocks on the 25th of every month with a single-window functioning to resolve all housing-related issues. "I have also instructed the officials to ensure that all disabled beneficiaries areprovided with a due job for at least 100 days," said collector Ashis Thakre.

**55. 5% quota for disabled in admissions: Sushil Kumar Modi**

PATNA: Deputy chief minister [Sushil Kumar Modi](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/topic/Sushil-Kumar-Modi) on Sunday said the state government would provide [5% reservation to disabled persons](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/topic/5-reservation-to-disabled-persons) in admission in schools and other educational institutes, apart from setting up a separate directorate to handle their problems and implement government schemes meant for them.  
  
Speaking at the 18th foundation day function of Bharat Vikas Viklang Punarvas Kendra cum Sanjay Anand Viklang Aspatal Evam Research Centre ([SAVARC](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/topic/SAVARC)) organized at Gyan Bhawan here, Modi said the government would also give certificates to them at special camps organized at block headquarters.  
  
Modi said of the 30-50 lakh persons who reported disability in [Bihar](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/topic/Bihar) during the 2011 Census, around 14 lakh had already been given certificates. He also asked health minister Mangal Pandey, who was also present to make arrangements of doctors at the certificate-giving camps as the types of disability had been increased by the Centre from seven to 21. "At present, the state welfare and health departments take care of the disabled persons, but now the two wings will be amalgamated into one and a separate directorate will be created," Modi said.

He added that the government had constructed ramps at many buildings in the interest of disabled persons and would now provide lift and accelerator at 28 buildings, keeping them in mind. The required money has also been allotted, he said.

Pandey, for his part, said the government would upgrade its Viklang Hospital at Kankarbagh in Patna by providing it with all necessary manpower, equipment and other facilities to develop it into a 'dedicated hospital'. Further, the trauma hospital at Bikram in Patna district, facilitated by Dr C P Thakur from his MP local area development (MPLAD) fund, would be made functional soon by aligning it with Indira Gandhi Institute of Medical Sciences, he added.

State road construction department minister Nand Kishore Yadav was also present on the occasion. The ministers and organizers of the function insisted that the state should be made 'viklang-mukt' (free from disability) by attending to their needs regarding artificial limbs and other equipment. Yadav said SAVARC has made his Patna City assembly constituency disability-free.

"The service and artificial limbs provided are free of cost," said Sunil Anand, a New York based person of Indian Origin (PIO), who was inspiration behind the launch and expansion of SAVARC from humble beginnings after the death of his son Sanjay Anand in a road accident. Some beneficiaries of the services also narrated their experiences on the occasion. They included officials of the central government from different parts of the country — Ashish Kumar Verma, Sadiq Ahmad, Akhilesh Sharma, Abhishek Singh, Sandeep Kundu, Manisha Jat and Abu Hujaifa besides Mamta Bharti (painter), as well as Kumari Vaishnavi (social activist). They, both from Bihar, separately narrated their positive experience of overcoming their "disability weakness" at crucial stages of growth and social life.

**56. Trust for the disabled slams MCC for action against petty shops**

MYSURU: Charging the Mysuru City Coroporation ([MCC](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/topic/MCC)) of colluding with big business establishments to target the physically-challenged traders who were operating roadside shops, president of the Sahara Physically [Disabled](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/topic/Disabled) Welfare Trust Zakir Hussain on Sunday asked the district administration to resolve the problem.

Hussain said, "Under the Adhara scheme, the state government provides a 4ftx4ft area to put up a petty shop, and provide Rs 20,000 for people with 75% disability to eke out a living. But, the MCC, in an overnight drive, razed all the shops."

Secretary of the trust Syed Usman said, "The corrupt officials of the MCC are hand-in-glove with big businesses." Alleging that the commissioner for zone seven Mahesh was involved in the civic body's drive against these shops, Usman added, "Atrocities against the disabled need to stop."

Usman alleged that the civic body had brought down a shop owned by Rehmat Ullah Khan in Bannimantap. "They have thus robbed him of a livelihood," he added.

Pointing out that the MCC had not responded to its repeated pleas and entreaties, members of the trust urged the district administration to look into the problem and provide a solution.

**57. UA researchers study how to improve tornado warnings for blind and deaf**

TUSCALOOSA, AL (AP) -

University of Alabama researchers are studying how they can improve Tornado warnings for the blind and deaf.  
  
UA researchers plan to interview deaf and blind communities not just in Alabama but throughout the Southeast region to better understand their needs.  
  
In the meantime, they've got an idea on how they can help them better understand tornado warnings issued by the National Weather Service.  
  
“You take the emergency weather broadcast and the deaf interpreter then you come up with the ASL emergency weather live stream,” said Darrin Griffin.  
  
Deaf Advocate and UA Communications professor Darrin Griffin would like to take this concept to the air waves and internet.

“With the meteorologist and ASL interpreter on the screen,” said Griffin.  
  
He said research shows there's a big communication gap for many deaf people and tornado warnings.  
  
“If they live alone and they work alone, they need access to information and a lot what happens in emergencies they can see something going on but they are not getting the message.  A lot of times broadcasts are happening very fast, a tornado is happening very fast, we often don't have much lee time so that's once place where that communication channel gets cut out,” said Griffin.  
  
During major natural disasters in big cities you'll see,  
  
“The Governor or mayor will be up on the stage and they'll be sign language interpreter next to them that's a very effective method to communicating with the deaf,” said Griffin.

In the next two years, they want to build technology to have live stream interpreting, during emergencies, available in various cities and locations across the country.

“They understand how to communicate with a large deaf community more effectively,” said Griffin.

**58. Punjab center for special needs kids offers to help Pakistani boy with speech impairment**

The Baba Farid Centre at Faridkot in Punjab has stepped forward to offer treatment to a 14-year-old Pakistani child who crossed the border into India. The name of the child has been given as Hammad Hussain, but its not clear if this is his real name.

Hussain crossed into India on 3 May and is now is a hostel. He crossed at Ferozepur without a passport and is on trial at the juvenile justice board. Hussain is speech-impaired and External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj had tweeted about him, asking his family to identify him and approach Indian authorities so he could be sent home.

The head of the Baba Farid Centre has offered to use behavioral management through occupational therapy to treat him and try speech therapy to make him learn sign language so more could be known about him.

The Faridkot administration has offered to give him every possible treatment and find doctors who could teach him sign language.

**59. HC slams Delhi government for not buying disabled-friendly buses**

NEW DELHI: The [Delhi High Court](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/topic/Delhi-High-Court) on Wednesday came down heavily on the city government for not buying low-floor disabled-friendly [CNG](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/topic/CNG) buses due to their high cost.  
  
"For the last 10 years you have justified not buying low-floor buses, saying the price was unrealistic without saying what is realistic or carrying out an empirical study," the court said  
  
The court questioned the basis for the government's assessment that the cost cited by [Tata Motors](http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/tata-motors-ltd/stocks/companyid-12934.cms) and [Ashok Leyland](http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/ashok-leyland-ltd/stocks/companyid-14041.cms) for supplying the low-floor buses was "unrealistic, exorbitant and unjustifiable", asking it to take a "practical, pragmatic and realistic view".  
  
"If you are comparing low-floor buses with standard floor buses to say the cost is unrealistic, then it is like comparing apples with oranges," it added.  
  
"We are pained. Sometimes you have to see what you are balancing the cost against," said the court, adding that if there was only a single manufacturer of a specialised product, then the government should go for it by taking into account the interests of the disabled persons as well as the environment.  
  
The observation came after the Delhi government's counsel told the court that it had invited bids for low-floor buses four times but there was only a single bidder (Tata Motors) and the cost was unreasonable and unjustifiable.  
  
The court also impleaded Tata Motors and Ashok Leyland as parties in the matter, so that they could inform it about the basis for the costs of their low-floor CNG buses.  
  
During the hearing, the court even said that it could send officials to jail for contempt of the [Supreme Court](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/topic/Supreme-Court)'s 19-year-old direction to augment its bus fleet.

However, the court said the city needed more buses now rather than officials in prison.

"We can still send you to jail. But what the city needs is buses, not you in jail."

in 1998 the Supreme Court had directed the government to augment its bus fleet from 5,000 to 10,000.

The court was hearing a PIL filed by a person suffering from locomotor disability, challenging the Delhi government's move to procure 2,000 standard floor buses at a cost of Rs 300 crore.

**60. 125 countries in 17 years! This blind & deaf traveler has set serious travel goals!**

Tony Giles is a blind and deaf traveler and has visited 125 countries around the world.

Despite his impairments, Giles travels on his own and has no companion. He decided to travel to every country on the planet as a challenge for his disability.

Giles started his adventurous travel in March 2000 in the United States and has covered the vast distance himself.

## Tony the Traveler

South Africa, Lesotho, Swaziland, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Iceland and Sri Lanka, he remembers all the countries he visited and how he felt in each one of them.

His travelling is funded by a monthly pension that he receives from a small amount that his father left for him.

He uses public transports and budget hotels and tries to spend as little as possible.

Tony Giles graduated with a degree in American studies from Northampton University in 2001.

He is currently back home in the UK and is still deciding the country he will travel to next year.

# 61. 9 blind children given Rs 1.8 lakh scholarships

CHANDIGARH: Rotary Chandigarh Shivalik (RCS) presented scholarships worth Rs 1.80 lakh to nine visually-challenged college and university students. The funds had been raised through a unique fundraiser, "Rotary Dinner in the Dark", held in September and October. Part of the funds came through a number of people pledging additional support to [RCS](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/topic/RCS) for ensuring that visually impaired students were able to complete their education and achieve success in life.  
  
A jury headed by J S Jyara, headmaster, Institute for the Blind, decided to confer the scholarships of Rs 20,000 each. The nine students include Manpreet Kaur (Late Col Harsharan Sandhu [Scholarship](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/topic/Scholarship)), [Labh Singh](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/topic/Labh-Singh) (Late H S Malik Scholarship), Yogita (Late [Sarabjit Singh](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/topic/Sarabjit-Singh) Scholarship), Sadanand (Late Santosh Mehra Scholarship),[Hussna](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/topic/Hussna) (Late Bimla Devi Laroia Scholarship), [Princy Rani](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/topic/Princy-Rani) (Late Bimla Devi Scholarship), Prince Wadhwa (Adhiraj and Nandini Scholarship), Sajan Singh (Late Veena Gill Scholarship) and Ravi Paswan (Rama Bhanot Scholarship).

Jyara said while cheques of Rs 10,000 each were handed over to each awardee, the balance Rs 10,000 would be given in the next semester provided the student performed well in academics in the current semester.

Manjit Kaur, president, Rotary Chandigarh Shivalik, said, "We achieved our basic objectives, to ensure that 'sighted' people respect the blind by understanding how they smilingly face the problems they face in their daily lives as well as raise funds for providing scholarships. We are making this an annual event and there will be two Rotary dinners in the Dark in the New Year on January 4, which is Louis Braille Day, and on October 15, which is White Cane Day."

Giving details of the January 4, event, Rotarian Aneesh Bhanot said this would also be a fundraiser for scholarships for the next academic session and would be limited to 50 people on a first-come, first-served basis. As RCS wants to spread the message of 'Respect the Visually Impaired' among the youth, there is a special discounted offer for students in the age group of 13-18 years.

The team of visually impaired youth who have selflessly volunteered to be part of RDID included Shiv, Amarinder, Kuljeet, Mohit, Meeta and Soni. They are being assisted by a number of volunteers.

# 62. Children with disabilities battle challenges at multiple levels to access a decent education

Be it lack of ramps and tactile pathways, students with disabilities in Delhi battle many challenges in their quest for an education.

This is despite the Right to Education (RTE) Act, 2009, that provides for children with disabilities access to mainstream education. Under RTE, one-fourth of seats in public schools are set aside for students coming from economically weaker sections and those with special needs.

There is a huge shortage of special educators in schools who can meet their needs, the lack of infrastructure support, the stigma and the poor awareness levels. There is also uncertainty whether their needs can be met with in a mainstream schooling system.

Very few schools in Delhi have full-time special educators to cater to children who may have a range of impairments. Less than 600 full-time posts of the 2,691 sanctioned have been filled so far.

Experts say that even one special educator in every school can help in creating more inclusive classrooms. In Delhi government schools, around 500-600 special educators have been given training across different fields so they can help children.

# 63. Sports meet in Hubballi for disabled

A special sports meet is being organized in the city of Hubballi, Karnataka. The athletic meet will be held at Nehru Stadium today.

The aim of the sports meet is to encourage the youth with disability in the region to take part in sports.

The meet is being organized with the joint efforts of all the Rotary Clubs and Inner Wheel Clubs of Hubballi. Disabled youngsters will get the opportunity to show their talents in the various events and athletic activities.

### 350 special children will participate

The event will be attended by 350 special children from eight schools of Hubballi. The events include 100m race, shot-put and discuss throw and many more. The criteria for the participation is disabled sportspersons in the age group between 8 to 20 years.

#### Arrangements include food and medical care

Arrangements have been made by the organisers to take care of the athletes by arranging food, water, first aid, ambulance and doctors for them.

# 64. Lack of awareness about cataract symptoms

The Alcon survey has found that in India almost 42% senior citizens fail to recognize the symptoms of cataract.

This is strange considering that 77% of the old people know that cloudy vision is a symptom of cataract.

The blindness caused by cataract can be treated in most cases by a simple surgery.

Still many people in India are forced to live with a loss of vision due to the lack of awareness and health facilities.

It is important that senior citizens should get their eyes tested regularly.

## Some Symptoms of cataract

1. Cloudy or blurred vision
2. Faded and dull colors
3. Loss of vision at night
4. Double vision or multiple images
5. Sensitivity towards light
6. Unclear shapes and outlines of objects

# 65. Tokyo airport now has sign language phones for deaf passengers!

Haneda Airport in Tokyo, Japan has started the country's first public phones that allow communication through sign language.

The system was introduced on the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, which was on 3 December.

The new system allows deaf people to sign in front of a monitor so that a sign language interpreter can translate the message by voice to the person on the other side.

The sign language phones are used in more than 20 countries at public places to reduce communication barriers.Officials plan to set up such phones at four other major airports in Japan soon.

The idea is to allow the deaf passengers to use the new airport facilities, access information and make them a part of the society.

# 66. Social media campaign finally gets this disabled child into school in Jharkhand

Little Jitisha has a disability and was being denied admission by the De Nobili School, Central Mining Research Institute in Dhanbad. But after a strong campaign on Twitter, Jharkhand Chief Minister Raghubar Das has stepped in to ensure she is not denied the right to education.

## School authorities made fun of Jitisha's disability, allege parents

The three-year-old's parents had alleged that they were humiliated by the school administration, including the principal and vice principal, who apparently made fun of her and turned them away. The parents complained to local authorities and the Child Welfare Society. The matter was taken up by disability rights activist Dr Satendra Singh, and later by India's blade runner Major DP Singh, who is behind the SwachhAbility Marathon.

### Violation of human rights and RPWD 2016

By law, all educational institutions funded or recognised by the state government are mandated to provide inclusive education to the children with disabilities. They have to be admitted without discrimination and be given education and opportunities for sports and recreation activities equally.

Its been nearly a year since the Rights of Persons with Disabilities was passed and only a few states like Delhi, Orissa Rajasthan Tamil Nadu, Telengana, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal have framed draft Rights.

**67. Gen Rawat plays host to 'special children' at Army House**

New Delhi, Dec 15 (PTI) Army chief Gen Bipin Rawat today spent time with a group of children with special needs at his sprawling bungalow here and exhorted the society to appreciate the capabilities of the disabled people.

Bathed in sunshine and human warmth, the girls and boys, aged 5-18, from an 'Asha' school run by the Army Wives Welfare Association (AWWA) in Delhi Cantonment, were treated to a show by trained Army dogs on the expansive lawn of the Army chief's residence.

"We have the five senses, and if one of these senses does not function, some other senses get pronounced. The society, should not look at them (people with disabilities) with pity, rather appreciate their special capabilities," Rawat said.

Interacting with a select group of reporters at the Army House, he said trained Army dogs are sometimes sent to Asha schools to play with these children, which also helps in therapy.

Gen Rawat, dressed in Army fatigue, walked around the lawn and shook hands with the children, who sat around neatly-kept tables. His wife accompanied him.

The enthusiasm was high, with many students standing and saluting the Army chief, who humbly reciprocated to the kids.

A boy took out his hand for a handshake with Rawat, while a girl, wearing a broad smile, greeted him with a 'namaste'.

The warmth in the air complemented the sunshine.

During the dog show, six Labradors - five of them beige coat and one black, won the hearts of children with their several routines guided by the gestures of their handlers.

'Maurya', 'Dancer', 'Cheeku' and other trained dogs also displayed their skills in sniffing and tracking, drawing plaudits from the Army chief, who also posed for a photograph with them.

Gen Rawat also hosted a lunch for the children and the staff (care-givers) from the school.

'Asha' schools run by the AWWA, are spread across the country, in different Army Commands, where children with special needs, of both defence and civilian residents, receive specialised education and rehabilitative therapy till the age of 18.

"We also have the 'Vishwas' skill training centre, where such youth, who have completed 18 years, spend time, and master one or two skills, so that they become employable and learn to stand on their own feet," a senior Army official said.

Gen Rawat, when asked if the Army was planning to expand 'Asha' schools, said, "We are hoping the corporate can come on board through their CSR (corporate social responsibility) activities." At schools, children, depending on their disability, receive speech therapy, hydrotherapy, equine therapy, canine therapy, and engage in herbal gardening and a host of other activities. PTI KND ABH .

# 68. Nagpur University to give extra exam time to disabled students

Nagpur University – NU has decided to give extra time during examinations to students with disabilities.

Disabled students of the Nagpur University will get 20 more minutes per hour time to write their exam papers. This will mean that for an exam that is for three hours, disabled students will now get and extra one hour.

This facility has been started in the university with immediate effect.

This is the first time that this facility has been started by the Nagpur University for disabled students.

The students that have visual impairment will get the option to bring writers at the exam centres for help.

## Hundreds of disabled students to benefit

This will benefit hundreds of disabled students who have been making the demand for additional time and writer facility at the university levels since these are already available at the board level.

### Verification made simpler

The University is also working on making the verification process easier for disabled students. The students will not have to visit the exam section for verification but will be able to give their medical certificates along with IDs at the exam centres.

**69. This Differently-Abled Teacher From Uttarakhand Has Been Shortlisted For $1 Million Global Prize**

Pradeep Negi, a differently-abled Indian teacher from a little-known institution in Uttarakhand beat tough competition from around the world to be named among the top 50 contenders for an $ 1 million global award.

Negi, an economics, social science and computer science teacher at Government Inter College BHEL Ranipur in Haridwar, has been shortlisted for the annual Varkey Foundation Global Teacher Prize 2018 from over 30,000 nominations and applications from 173 countries around the world.

"It is unbelievable. I am proud that I have been chosen as one of the top 50 teachers. It has motivated teachers in our community," said Mr Negi.

"I am handicapped but it hasn't stopped me from succeeding and I am glad that I can inspire other disabled people in India. I have developed a lot of innovative work in ICT for my poor children and I am glad it has been recognised," said Mr Negi, who was physically disabled at the age of two due to polio.

Negi was chosen for his fighting spirit, having suffered from bullying at school because of his disability and overcoming his adversities to use new technology tools to make economics and social subjects compelling to students.

"Congratulations to Pradeep Negi for reaching the final 50. I hope his story inspires those looking to enter the teaching profession and shines a spotlight on the incredible work teachers do all over the world every day," said Sunny Varkey, founder of the Varkey Foundation and the Global Teacher Prize.

Pradeep uses a wheelchair after having childhood polio. Despite his disability, he is determined and ambitious and wants to inspire other disabled children.

Negi has helped train more than 1,200 teachers in his state. In 2014, he was awarded the National Award of ICT by the President of India in New Delhi.

**70. Repeated failures did not deter this blind girl from following her dream**

Sapna Bariya made sure that her vision took over when her sight became poorer with age. Born in Dhar village, 29-year-old Sapna always had a problem with her eyes and there came a time when she could not read at all.

She somehow managed to clear her exams until Class 4, as students at her school were not held back. But she failed Class 5 twice as she could not read the question paper. Sapna says she felt very ashamed but she loved academics and persisted. She cleared the exam in her third attempt.

## From Dhar to Indore to Delhi

A local doctor told her parents to shift to Indore as there would be better facilities for her there. That changed matters as she got to know about Braille and she was able to learn the language in just 15 days. This revived her hopes of studying.

But the move was difficult as her parents had to leave her alone in Indore as they had to go back to Dhar to look after her three siblings. Sapna was homesick and cried a lot.

She finally finished schooling and did her graduation in political science. She took training in computer skills and even went to Delhi for a training program. **She was determined to be independent and not lean on her parents**.

She took the competitive exams for government jobs in banking sector. After three attempts, she was able to clear them and today she has achieved her dream to become a banker.

**71. Government supported schools in Maharashtra must have teachers for disabled students, rules court**

The Bombay High Court has directed the Maharashtra government to make sure that schools which are supported by state funds must have special teachers and attendants to help disabled students and staff members.

It also said that the state government is**"obligated to provide meaningful opportunities"** of education and employment to the disabled.

It told the state to ensure that **all special teachers and attendants approved by the government for the assistance of the disabled were given jobs**.

The order came after an attendant filed a petition in court after his school was closed down. He was appointed as a permanent employee by the government in 2009 at a special school in Solapur district. The school was closed down without giving any notice to the petitioner and other employees of the institute.

The government also refused to grant another job to the petitioner even though the rules state that any extra teachers and attendants for special schools must be absorbed in other schools or units if the place of their work closes down for a valid reason.

The petitioner said that the state was obligated to provide him an alternate job, and that it could not close down special schools without any reason since it received budgetary funds from the Centre for such institutes.

**72. European startup develops technology that translates sign language automatically**

A startup company called SignAll from Hungary in Europe has created a technology to translate sign language automatically.

The company is using a system of cameras and a depth sensor that allows the signer to sign freely and their signed words appear on the screen for other people to understand and communicate.

SignAll is developed to promote sign language for the deaf people. Sign language is the first language for people who are born deaf and spoken English is their second language.

The idea is to make daily life of deaf people using sign language easier. Deaf people can take SignAll to the bank, pharmacy, a car shop, school, work and anywhere.

SignAll is still in prototype stage and one can see the working prototype at CES 2018 in Las Vegas from 9 to 12 January 2018.

**73. Make public spaces disabled-friendly, SC instructs govts**

NEW DELHI: The [Supreme Court](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/topic/Supreme-Court) on Friday fixed a timeline for the [Centre](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/topic/Centre) and states to make public places accessible to the [differently abled](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/topic/differently-abled), particularly the blind, and passed a slew of directions to bring them into the mainstream of society.

A bench of [Justices A K Sikri](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/topic/Justices-A-K-Sikri) and [Ashok Bhushan](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/topic/Ashok-Bhushan) said government buildings and educational institutions must be made compatible with the needs of differentlyabled people, who number around 60-70 million in India. Almost 50% of them suffer from visual disability.

"Earlier, traditional approaches to disability depicted it as a health and welfare issue, to be addressed through care provided to persons with disabilities... from a charitable point of view. Disabled persons are viewed as abnormal, deserving of pity and care, and not as individuals who are entitled to enjoy the same opportunities to live a full and satisfying life as other members of society. This resulted in marginalising disabled persons and their exclusion both from the mainstream of society and enjoyment of their fundamental rights and freedoms," the apex court bench said.

The court said the perception of treating the disabled as ill and different from nondisabled peers needed to change as it resulted in their "severe isolation". "This raises the critical issue of creating a level playing field whereby all citizens have... fair opportunities to... realise their full potential... To ensure a level playing field, it is not only essential to give necessary education to the disabled, but it is also imperative to see that such education is imparted in a fruitful manner. That can be achieved only if there is proper accessibility to buildings where the educational institution is housed as well as to other facilities in the building, namely, class rooms, library, bathrooms etc. Without that, the disabled would not be able to avail of and utilise the educational opportunity in full measure," the bench added.

# 74. Inclusive employment seminar focuses placing disability in CSR policy

Is it the lack of opportunity, the right skills, poor access to the workplace, or one's own unwillingness to venture out and chart a course in the outside world?

These are some of the issues that came up for discussion at a **Seminar on Inclusive Employment** organised by the NGO ADAPT in Mumbai. Formerly known as The Spastics Society of India, ADAPT has been working for decades to build and communicate inclusive models of education and employment.

## How to bring India's forgotten millions into the workplace

At this seminar, the spotlight was firmly on bringing India's disabled population, the 'forgotten millions' into the workforce. ADAPT and Citibank are partnering on a research project to map the road ahead, called**Deconstruction of Work Preparedness of Disabled Adults leading to Inclusive Employment**.

"We are looking at all the blocks and barriers that come in the way of employing people with special needs", said Dr Mithu Alur, Founder-Chairperson, ADAPT. "We hope to put together and publish a code of practice so that the disabled and companies benefit."

Apart from parents and disabled employees, it was encouraging to see the presence of over 20 corporates at the seminar, like the Union Bank of India and Macquarie Bank. Hard data was quoted to show why people with disabilities have an edge at the workplace.

"We have research that shows that employees with disabilities have less absent days or sick days, as well as low attrition rates", said Dr Alur. "There is also increased transfer of skills between co-workers".

The most passionate advocates in the audience, needless to say, were disabled employees, who were present in large numbers from many fields.

"I work 10 hours a day, from 7.30 AM to 11 PM", said Krishna Morajkar, who is a senior executive handling logistics for Jet Airways. Morajkar was left disabled in a train accident when he was 17 years old.

Jasmina Khanna, who is a systems engineer with Syntel, added that the onus lay with the disabled themselves to give their best. "If you get an opportunity, don't let time constraints or other issues come in your way. If you work hard, the company will recognise you".

### Family support critical to disabled seeking employment

Interestingly, it emerged that one of the first blocks the disabled face is from family members. "My family said how will you manage outside the four walls of the house", said Morajkar. It was his father who finally relented and supported his decision to find a job.

"Remember they don't want to be home", said Dr Alur, who talked about her own experiences with her daughter, disability rights activist, Malini Chib. "They don't want to be home or nurtured once they are 22 years old. They want your support so parents have to undergo some transformation and change themselves".

Prabhat K Singh, CSR Head of Union Bank of India, who was among those in the audience, said that the seminar was useful is highlighting the perspectives and experiences of people with disabilities. "I liked the learning centre here at ADAPT and I feel we can adopt these lessons in such centres across the country".

The research paper prepared by ADAPT and Citibank will be put before a review board before it is published and hopefully used as a baseline for companies when it comes to hiring people with disabilities.

# 75. Delhi NGO is educating special needs children without dependence on medicines

Freesia Organisation is the name of an NGO based in Delhi that provides services for children with special needs.

The NGO has been successfully making changes in the development of special needs children and that too without any dependence on medication.

Freesia offers services such as early intervention, education, therapy and counselling to children with multiple disabilities without medicines.

## Children become happier and calm

Children with autism make progress through therapy that involves learning painting and studying other subjects as well.

The children starts showing improved behavior once the therapy and studies start.

They become calm and less impatient and also seem much happier.

The children get quality education and are also taught socializing skills.

Education combined with therapy helps the children feel better about themselves and also gives them a lot of self-confidence for the rest of their lives.

**76. Disabled people will enjoys Mumbai’s nightlife fun**

A special event for the disabled people will be held in Mumbai soon where they will enjoy a night out.

This will be a unique event as people with mental and physical disabilities will be able to enjoy the nightlife in Mumbai.

The event will be hosted by a disc-jockey, who is suffering from a spinal cord injury and gives lovely music.

Television celebrities and sign language interpreters will also be present in the event.

The idea for the event comes from Inclov, the first matchmaking app in the world for people with disabilities and health problems.

Most people with disabilities do not get the chance to party or visit nightclubs or a bars like others.

The event will ensure a barrier free enjoyment for all participants.

**77. Monthly Report of Sugamya Pustakalaya for the month of November 2017**

Key observations include the following :   
  
1.      This month's key  landmark is that Now there are 50 Libraries on Sugamya Pustkalaya. 3 new libraries (1)  
Ambedkar University Delhi, (2) M. P. Welfare Association for the Blind, Indore and (3) National Association for the Blind Sikkim, registered their libraries in this month.  
2.      142 new uses joined Sugamya Pustkalaya in the month of November.  
Highest 49 users joined Saksham Library and 32 new uses joined Blind Peoples Association Library.  
3.      There are 20 member libraries that have contributed books to the  
platform.  
4.      Total books uploaded on the online library till 30th November are  
6105.  
5.      New books uploaded between 1 November to 30th November are 279. In  
this month highest number of 95 books contributed by National Talking Book Library, XRCVC Mumbai contributed 44 Books.  
6.      Total downloads are 11998. Downloads between 1 November to 30th  
November are 526. Average 17 Download per day. Decrement of 1 books per day in this period.  
7.      Highest number of downloads from National Talking Book Library 206  
downloads in this period.  
8.      Total titles downloaded are 1827. New titles downloaded between 1st  
November to 30th November are 72. In this month highest number of 21 new titles downloaded from National Talking Book Library, 19 new titles download from Saksham library and 7 new titles download from Mitrajyothi Library.  
  
  
Top three performers in terms of total downloads are:  
Saksham : 4474 downloads with 1300 books NIEPVD Talking book library : 3350 downloads with 1444 books NAB Delhi : 1689 downloads with 539 books uploaded on the library.  
  
Attached Excel file “books download report” Sheet 1 contains data as on  
30 November and sheet 2 contains data as on 30 October.

**78. Activity of Youth For Seva**

Youth for Seva (YFS) started in April 2007 as a platform to provide opportunities for youth who wanted to take active part in community development despite time constraints. Through this platform, YFS aims to empower youth to become positive change makers who will enable organizations and institutions to work without a vested interest. The goal of YFS is to support schools, NGOs, government hospitals and other organizations in the social sector through volunteers who can help them mitigate some of their shortcomings and challenges.

Youth For Seva have associations with more than 30 organizations working with visually challenged people. YFS volunteers provide their service for events, writing exams as scribes, supporting their locomotive needs and audio recording of books. YFS provided 200 school kits to visually challenged students in year 2017.

**Sphoorthi**

Its an annul cultural event for specially abled. In year 2017, 350 children from 30 different NGOs took part in Yoga, Quiz, singing, pick and speak and many other competitions.

**Audio Recording**

YFS volunteers help visually challenged by audio recording their books. Audio books recordings are shared with the organizations. Students can listen to it when they need it.

**Scribe**

Youth For Seva's Project Scribe provides volunteers to write exams for visually challenged students. Every year more than 1500 students getting benefit of  this initiative. College students, working professionals, home makers selflessly come forward to donate their time to write exams. YFS coordinators connect scribes with the student in need. Scribes are provided for regular PUC, degree exams, KPSC, KES exams etc. Interested please write to : [info@youthforseva.org](mailto:info@youthforseva.org)

For any clarifications may reach at 7349246274

**79. Higher user of NVDA in India**

It will be interesting for our readers to know that out of every 4 of NVDA users one is Indian. As per a statistic report shared by DFI out of total 36319 NVDA users across the world 8485 users are from India.

**Announcement**

**1. Informal Adult Education program of AICB**

We are pleased to inform our reader that the pioneering Delhi based National organization “All India Confederation of the Blind” is going to undertake a two year academic course in formal education for those children who are dropped out in midway from main stream schools and those adults who are not allowed by their parents to join any educational institution for their formal education.

This two year course will be commenced at special residential school of the confederation at Gurgaon Haryana with generous financial support of CBM.

20 such qualifying visually challenged men and women will be enrolled for the course every year and imparted basic learning of Math, Science, Computer, Braille, Mobility, etc.,

The course will be recognized by National Institute of Open Studies. The course will be absolutely free including food, accommodation and all other basic amenities. Medium of instruction will be Hindi.

As the number seats for enrollment for every year is restricted upto 20, hence the admissions will be made on the basis of the principal of first come first serve.

Readers are requested to give widest publicity to this generous initiative of the AICB. So that the needy V.I. persons may take its advantage upto the optimum extent.

For application form and more detail please do write to office of the confederation at : [aicbdelhi@yahoo.com](mailto:aicbdelhi@yahoo.com)

**Information**

**1. Enable Travels**

We are glad to share with our readers the below reproduced significant article on Enable Travel which is an unique and revolutionary attempt of a multinational travel brand cogs and kings.

**Article an Enable Travel**

Enable Travel, launched in March 2017, is India’s first digital platform for accessible travel in India and across the world. We offer travel solutions for wheelchair users, vision, deaf & speech impaired, as well as senior citizens. Enable Travel believes in making travel easy and safe for the disabled by offering the finest recommendations, right from choosing the perfect destination to the airlines you fly on and the hotels you stay at.

Enable Travel thrives on the objective that no disability can stop anyone from reaching the top of a mountain or unwinding by a beach or even exploring ancient cultures. For the disabled, it’s now easy to explore lush mountains and take in a dip in the blue waters or soak in the glittering heritage of monuments that have stood the test of time.

Regardless of age, gender and disability, Enable Travel embraces the #CanDo spirit, which believes that everyone can and should have the opportunity to live and experience the pleasures of travel. We acknowledge the special needs of the disabled, especially when they're away from home. With an experiential panel of experts, special equipment, empathetic caregivers, multi-lingual guides, trained drivers and escorts, sign language interpreters, and packages that range from one-day excursions, to long holidays, Enable Travel guarantees that travellers are well looked after.

Let us tell you how Enable Travel makes it easier for wheelchair users to get around. Our fleet of rear-entry vans are well-equipped with portable ramps and safety harnesses to ensure wheelchairs are secure during travel. We also have amphibian chairs for safe and fun water activities along with single wheel hiking chairs. This enables travellers to access previously out-of-bound places such as mountains and beaches.

Our tours for the vision impaired are crafted to maximise the sense of smell, sound and touch, which are more refined. With the deaf and speech impaired, Enable Travel ensures that the scenic beauty of the destination, as well as the experiences there, are enjoyed like any other able-bodied person.

Enable Travel’s panel of experts includes

* Divyanshu Ganatra, ABBF’s Director (vision impaired)
* Preeti Monga, Founder & Trustee of Silver Linings (vision impaired)
* Rustom Irani, film-maker
* Prabal Malakar, former group captain affected by multiple sclerosis (wheelchair users)
* Shama Noorani, PR consultant (wheelchair user)
* Virali Modi, disability activist (wheelchair user)
* Dr. Alim Chandani, Associate Vice-President at Centum Learning (deaf)

These experts have set the perfect example for the disabled the world over by refusing to let their disabilities put a stop to their dreams. You can interact with them at Enable travel’s Firefly World Community. This is a community where you can share your experiences, be a part of a host of discussion forums, talk about your disability, find a travel buddy and a lot more, without the fear of being judged.

In a short span, Enable Travel has successfully inspired people to overcome their limitations and celebrate the #CanDo spirit so their travel dreams can turn into reality; who can now think of travel not as a challenge but as a thrill. They’ve visited new exotic destinations and have indulged in activities they never thought they could be a part of.

With an affirmative influence, Enable Travel promises to make travel more inclusive and accessible to the disabled and to senior citizen’s needs. Having a wide range of accessible holiday destinations, Enable Travel offers everything from one day excursions and weekend getaways to international trips.

A true, long term commitment to opening the door to a brand new world for the disabled, Enable Travel not only makes for India’s first accessibility holiday specialist, but also the best one. To know more about Enable Travel, visit [www.enabletravel.com](http://www.enabletravel.com).