

Disability Bulletin

Edition 14 | May to July 2026



Summary

This newsletter uses person-first language, referring to individuals as “persons with disabilities”. This is consistent with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016, and the Handbook Concerning Persons with Disabilities released by the Supreme Court of India in 2024, available on the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPwD) website. Terms such as “differently-abled” , “specially-abled, or “disabled” are avoided.

We have taken the effort to make the newsletter accessible. If you have any feedback, please do reach out to us at hello@pacta.in



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Easy to Read Summary

POLICY



1. **Invisible Disabilities:** A national policy dialogue on World MS Day 2026 adopted a 10-point Declaration on invisible disabilities and gender



2. **Differentiated Wages:** VB-GRAM G will create a separate vertical and special wage norms for persons with disabilities, elderly workers



3. **National Medical Commission (NMC) Circular:** NMC has made 'Enabling Units' for students with benchmark disabilities mandatory in all medical colleges



4. **Odisha Disability Certificate Verification:** Odisha has told departments to verify disability certificates only when there is specific doubt



5. **Rajasthan 4% Reservation in Local Bodies:** Rajasthan is considering 4% reservation for persons with disabilities in local body elections



6. **Haryana Special Needs Education Training:** Haryana plans to train B.Ed and D.El.Ed graduates in special needs education so more regular teachers can support children with disabilities in mainstream schools.



7. **PRASHAST 2.0 App:** The Education Ministry and NCERT are rolling out the PRASHAST 2.0 app so schools can screen children for all 21 disabilities early, especially learning and other invisible disabilities.

Easy to Read Summary

POLICY



- 8. UDID in Unreserved Coaches:** Railways has clarified that UDID card-holders with valid tickets can travel in 'unreserved Divyangjan coaches' in mail and express trains and must be treated as bona fide passengers.



- 9. Inclusive Dining Toolkit for Restaurants:** District by Zomato has launched an Inclusive Dining Toolkit and accessibility features on its platform to help restaurants make spaces and booking flows more accessible.



- 10. 19th Conference of States Parties to the CRPD:** The 19th COSP to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) marked 20 years of the Convention, with themes directly relevant to India's disability agenda.



- 11. Delhi's Health Insurance Proposal:** Delhi is exploring a health-insurance scheme of up to ₹13 lakh for children with disabilities to cover surgeries, treatment and assistive equipment; it is still at proposal stage.

Easy to Read Summary

LEGAL



1. **Expanded Definition of Acid Attack Victims:** The Supreme Court expands the definition of an “acid attack victim” to include survivors who sustain internal injuries or are administered acid, thereby extending the protections available under the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPwD) Act, 2016.



2. **Disability Reservation in Public Employment:** The Supreme Court holds that States cannot prescribe an upper disability threshold for reservation in public employment under the RPwD Act, 2016.



3. **Universal Accessibility Standard Operating Procedure:** The Karnataka High Court issues a binding Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) prescribing accessibility standards for public and private establishments across the State until formal rules are notified.



4. **Accessible Cinemas:** The Delhi High Court directs the authorities to improve accessibility in cinemas and requires ticket-booking platforms to display the accessibility features available for each film.



5. **Housing Reservation for Persons with Disabilities:** Karnataka becomes the first State to implement Section 37 of the RPwD Act, 2016 by reserving 5% of government housing for persons with disabilities and providing a 25% concession to persons with benchmark disabilities.



6. **Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPwD) Proposes Draft Digital Accessibility Rule:** DEPwD has proposed draft rules mandating digital accessibility standards for websites, apps, software and digital services, with phased compliance timelines and penalties for non-compliance.



01

POLICY UPDATES



1. World Multiple Sclerosis (MS) Day: National Policy Dialogue on Invisible Disabilities

Key Takeaway

A 10-point Declaration on Invisible Disabilities and Gender was adopted at the National Policy Dialogue held for World Multiple Sclerosis Day 2026 (30 May, New Delhi), MPs, policymakers, neurologists, disability rights advocates, insurance stakeholders, and persons living with MS.

Background

MS is a chronic, progressive neurological condition affecting an estimated 1.5 to 2 lakh people in India. It is one of the country's most overlooked invisible disabilities. Symptoms like fatigue, cognitive impairment, chronic pain, and bladder dysfunction are often not outwardly visible, contributing to delayed diagnosis, barriers to disability recognition, insurance challenges, and difficulty accessing long-term care.



10 POINT DECLARATION ADOPTED
on Invisible Disabilities and Gender



30 MAY 2026
World MS Day
National Policy Dialogue
held at New Delhi



1.5–2 LAKH
Estimated people
living with Multiple
Sclerosis (MS) in India

Key Details

Organised by the Multiple Sclerosis Society of India (MSSI) Delhi Chapter with Believe in the Invisible (BITI) and the Politics & Disability Forum, under the theme “Shaping Policy. Advancing Access. Improving Lives.” The Declaration’s recommendations include:

01

Recognition guidelines for invisible and episodic disabilities under the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPwD) Act, 2016

02

Flexible disability certification for people with fluctuating conditions



- 03 Inclusion of MS and other chronic neurological conditions within National Health Mission care pathways
- 04 Expansion of the Indian MS Registry Network (IMSRN) into a broader national invisible disability registry
- 05 Affordable access to disease-modifying therapies and long-term neurological care
- 06 Expanded tele-neurology services
- 07 Gender-sensitive diagnosis and treatment pathways
- 08 Stronger digital monitoring of disability rights implementation
- 09 Inclusive workplace policies for invisible disabilities
- 10 A National Mission on Invisible Disabilities

Dr. R.K. Dhamija (Director, IHBAS, and Chair of the National Task Force, NITI Aayog Brain Health Initiative) noted MS remains a priority area within the government's Brain Health Initiative, and that the Declaration's recommendations would feed into ongoing national policy discussions.

Why this Matters

It was a notable multi-stakeholder push, including a sitting Rajya Sabha MP (Menaka Guruswamy) and the Office of the Chief Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities (CCPD), to get invisible and episodic disabilities (not just visible/permanent ones) properly recognised under the RPwD Act, 2016's certification and welfare framework.

Sources

[PR Newswire / Uniindia](#)

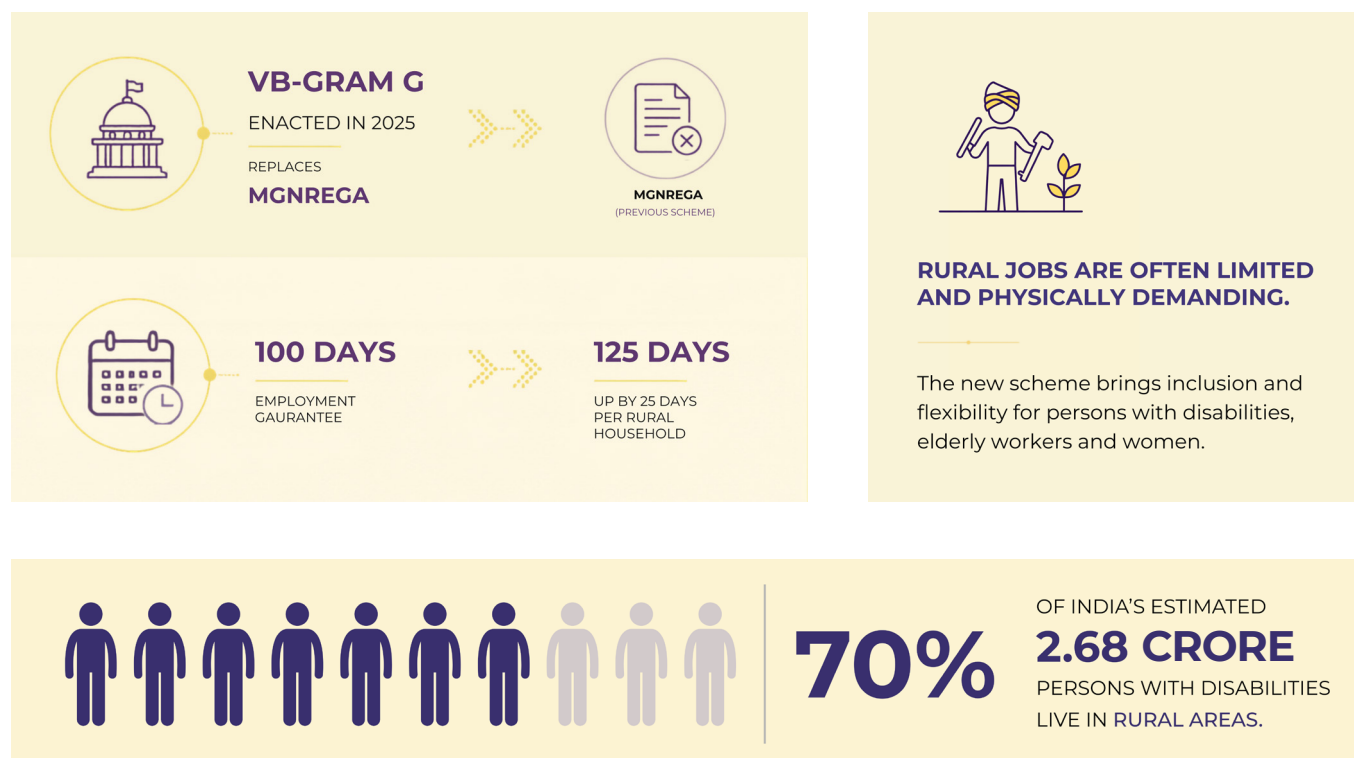
2. Differentiated Wages for Persons with Disabilities: VB-GRAM G Rural Jobs Scheme

Key Takeaway

From 1 July 2026, India's new rural employment scheme, Viksit Bharat, Guarantee for Rozgar and Aajeevika Mission (Gramin), will introduce a differentiated wage system and a separate vertical for persons with disabilities, elderly workers and women, linking wages and productivity norms to workers' capacities.

Background

VB-GRAM G, enacted in 2025, replaces the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) and expands the statutory employment guarantee from 100 to 125 days per rural household. Around 70% of India's estimated 2.68 crore persons with disabilities live in rural areas, where access to wage employment is often limited and physically demanding.



Key Details

The scheme creates a dedicated vertical within VB-GRAM G for persons with disabilities, elderly workers and those with debilitating ailments, with disability-friendly categories of work aligned to individual abilities. A differentiated “schedule of rates” (SoR) will align productivity norms and work outputs with workers’ capacities so that they can receive the full notified daily wage (currently about Rs.241-Rs.400 across States) without being disadvantaged by standard labour-intensive targets.

In special cases, these workers may be exempted from marking regular attendance or allowed alternative attendance mechanisms, and will be steered towards supervisory, support and livelihood-oriented roles rather than heavy manual labour. Families with persons with disabilities will be prioritised for beneficiary-oriented assets and work nearer to their homes to reduce travel barriers. Specific daily wage rates for persons with disabilities are still being finalised.

Why this Matters

VB-GRAM G’s differentiated wage system is a significant shift in rural employment policy: it recognises that equal wages do not require identical physical outputs, and it attempts to embed disability-friendly work design and payment structures into a mainstream jobs programme rather than a separate “disability” scheme. If implemented well, it could improve access to dignified rural employment for persons with disabilities and other workers who cannot meet conventional labour norms, while raising broader questions about how disability is treated in wage frameworks and productivity standards.

Sources

[VB-G RAM G Act and Rules / SoR clause for vulnerable groups](#)

[Press Information Bureau](#)

[LiveMint](#)

[Hindustan Times](#)

3. National Medical Commission (NMC) Directs Medical Colleges to Ensure Accessible, Inclusive Learning for Students with Benchmark Disabilities

Key Takeaway

NMC has issued a circular directing all medical colleges and NMC-regulated institutions to constitute an “Enabling Unit” to support students with benchmark disabilities, as a mandatory institutional structure rather than a voluntary measure.

Background

The circular follows Supreme Court directions in cases such as *Om Rathore vs. Director General of Health Services and Anmol vs. Union of India*, which emphasised the need for inclusive environments and reasonable accommodation for persons with disabilities in medical education.

It builds on earlier NMC guidelines that moved MBBS admissions for persons with benchmark disabilities from percentage-based thresholds to functional-ability assessments and called for disability cells and accessible infrastructure.

Key Details

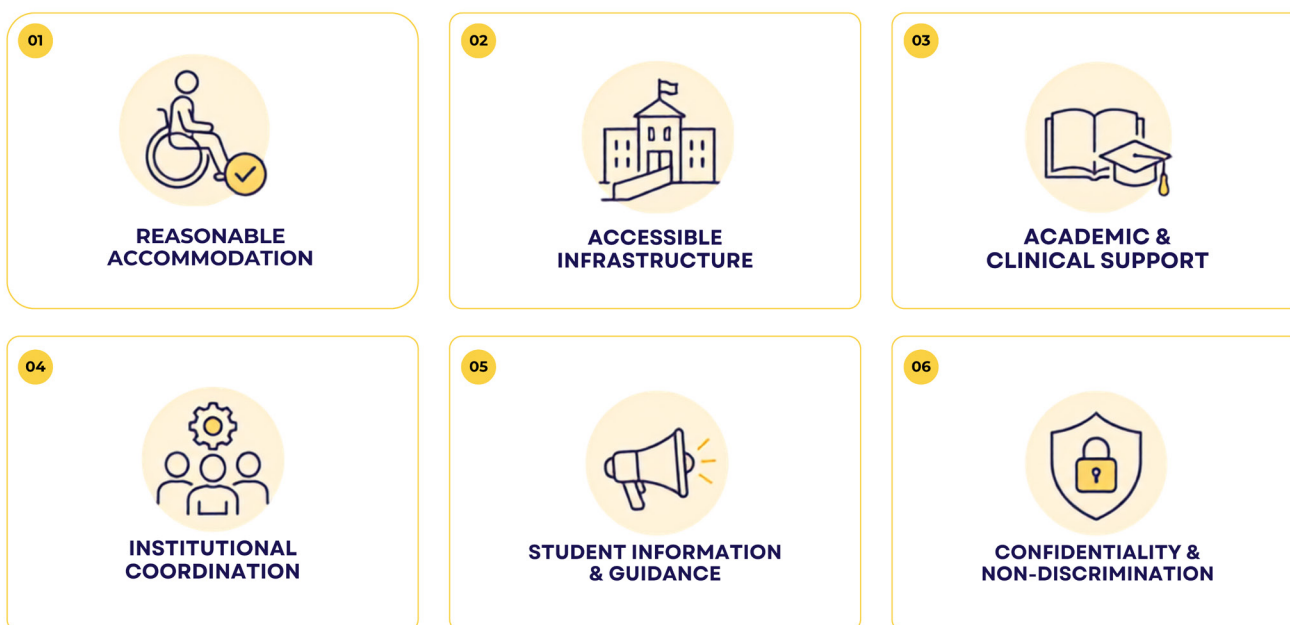
According to the circular, every medical college and institution regulated by NMC must establish an Enabling Unit that will serve as the single point of contact for students with benchmark disabilities.

The Enabling Unit is responsible for facilitating reasonable accommodation and barrier-free access, addressing requests for disability-specific support during academic teaching, clinical training and internships, and coordinating with disability assessment boards, faculty, hospital administration and other authorities to ensure timely implementation of accommodations in line with the RPwD Act, 2016 and NMC guidelines.

Institutions are required to inform students about the Enabling Unit, its role and contact details at the time of admission and through websites and notice boards, and to maintain records of requests and accommodations while ensuring confidentiality and non-discrimination.

The circular also reiterates that colleges must provide accessible infrastructure (buildings, classrooms, libraries, laboratories, hostels and other facilities) and ensure that students with benchmark disabilities are not denied admission on grounds of disability.

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE ENABLING UNIT



Why this Matters

The directive moves disability inclusion in medical education from case-by-case court intervention towards a standing institutional structure in every NMC-regulated college. It embeds reasonable accommodation, functional-ability assessments and accessible infrastructure into the governance of medical training, shaping how future health professionals with disabilities enter and navigate the system

Sources

[New Indian Express](#)

4. Odisha Limits Disability Certificate Verification to Cases with Specific Doubts

Key Takeaway

Odisha has directed all government departments to verify disability certificates of government employees only where there is a genuine doubt about authenticity, rather than through blanket re-verification or reassessment drives.

Background

The directive follows instructions from the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), which flagged human rights concerns around mass re-assessment and blanket re-verification of employees with disabilities. It aligns with the rights-based approach in Rule 8(2) of the RPwD Rules 2017, which envisages re-verification only in specific, justified cases.

Key Details

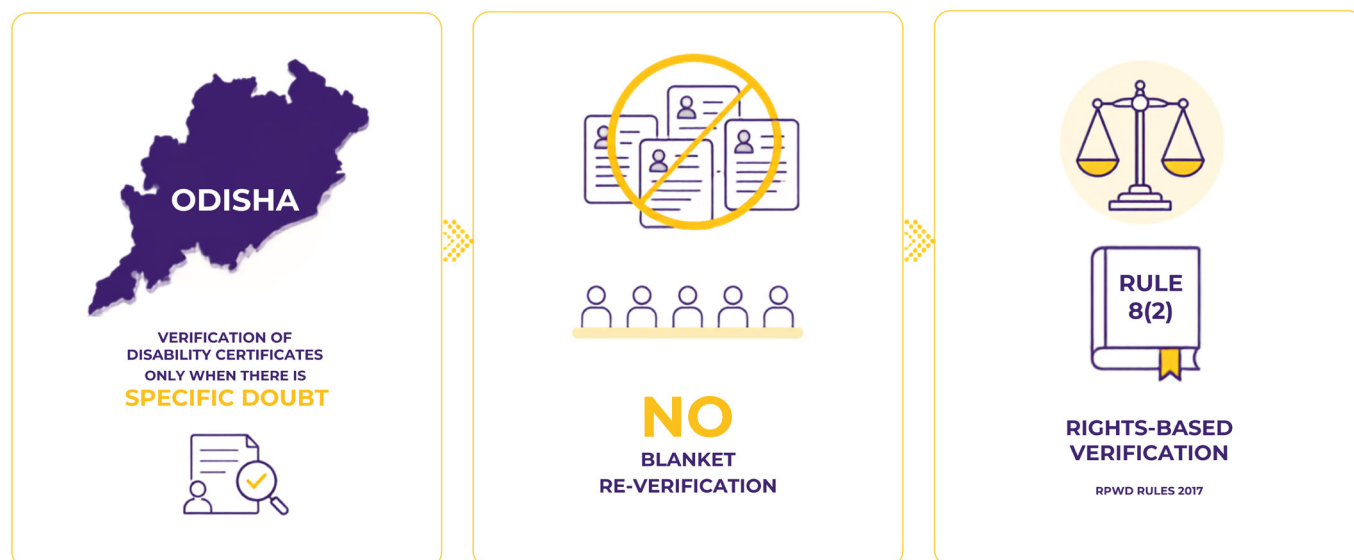
The Social Security and Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (SSEPD) Department, following directions from the NHRC, issued a letter to all government departments stating that verification of disability certificates is to be undertaken “only on the basis of specific suspicion”.

The letter clearly records that there will be no blanket re-verification or reassessment of disability certificates and that “reverification, if required, will be undertaken only when the authenticity of the certificate is doubtful”.

The NHRC, in its directions, noted that mass re-assessment and re-verification of government employees with disabilities raised substantive human rights concerns and asked the State to limit re-verification and re-assessment to cases involving suspicious certificates.

This stands in contrast with cases in Maharashtra and Punjab, where broad re-verification drives targeted staff with valid Unique Disability ID (UDID) cards, and with Karnataka’s call for case-by-case investigation of suspected fake certificates instead of blanket orders.

Key Details



Why this Matters

Odisha's approach is a useful example of getting the certification-verification balance right: it protects genuine certificate holders, including long-serving employees, from "re-verification harassment", while preserving departments' ability to act on specific fraud concerns. It also operationalises the rights-based intent of Rule 8(2), showing how States can respond to fraud worries without undermining the security of disability documentation systems.

Sources

[New Indian Express](#)

5. Rajasthan Government Reviews Demand for 4% Reservation for Persons with Disabilities in Local Bodies

Key Takeaway

The Rajasthan government is reportedly considering a demand for 4% reservation for persons with disabilities in Panchayati Raj institutions and urban local body elections.

Background

While Rajasthan already provides 4% reservation for persons with disabilities in government jobs and education, disability inclusion in elected bodies has received far less attention. Political participation of persons with disabilities, especially at the local governance level, is rarely addressed explicitly in State-level policies on representation.

Key Details

Rajasthan Social Justice and Empowerment Minister Avinash Gehlot has stated that a proposal for 4 % reservation for persons with disabilities in local bodies is under consideration by the State government.

The demand was raised by the Disability Rights Federation, Rajasthan, whose representatives have requested that the State recommend the proposal to the Chief Minister and integrate it into upcoming Panchayat and urban local body election frameworks.

Why this Matters

If implemented, this could improve representation of persons with disabilities in Panchayats and urban local bodies, moving beyond nomination-based roles to reserved elected seats. It may also open a wider policy discussion on disability representation in elected decision-making spaces and on how horizontal disability quotas can be built into local-body reservation structures

Sources

[Times of India](#)



6. Haryana Move to Train B.Ed and D.El.Ed Graduates in Special Needs Education Bodies

Key Takeaway

Haryana is reportedly moving towards equipping B.Ed and D.El.Ed graduates with training related to special needs education.

Background

Inclusive education depends heavily on whether teachers are trained to identify and support children with disabilities. General teacher training often does not prepare teachers enough for classroom inclusion, early identification, reasonable accommodation and referral support.

Key Details

According to a media report, Haryana officials discussed integrating special needs education into teacher training. The proposal includes using DIETs to train future and existing teachers in early identification and intervention.

Why this Matters

This update is relevant because inclusive education cannot work only through law or enrollment. Teachers need practical training to support children with disabilities in regular classrooms.

Sources

[Times of India](#)

7. Government Pushes PRASHAST 2.0 App for Early Detection of 21 Disabilities in School Children

Key Takeaway

The Ministry of Education and NCERT are promoting the upgraded PRASHAST 2.0 mobile app to help schools carry out early screening for disabilities, including learning disabilities. It uses a standard checklist that covers all 21 disability categories under the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 (RPwD Act, 2016)

Background

Children with specific learning disabilities, autism and other “hidden” disabilities are often identified late or mislabelled as “weak” or “disobedient”, which affects their education, mental health and access to support. PRASHAST (Pre-Assessment Holistic Screening Tool) was developed by NCERT as a disability screening checklist to support inclusive education under NEP 2020 and the RTE Act, and is now being scaled up through an app.

Key Details

PRASHAST 2.0 provides a two-part screening process: Part 1 is completed by regular class teachers based on observation; Part 2 is completed by special educators, counsellors or school heads to validate findings and tentatively categorise disabilities for referral and certification under Samagra Shiksha guidelines. The upgraded app screens for all 21 disabilities recognised under the RPwD Act 2016, including intellectual disabilities, specific learning disabilities, autism spectrum disorder, mental illness and multiple disabilities, and generates school-level reports that can be shared with authorities to initiate certification and support. The app is available in multiple languages and is being rolled out nationally so teachers, head teachers and special educators can use a uniform screening tool.

Why this Matters

If effectively implemented, PRASHAST 2.0 could reduce under-identification and misidentification of children with disabilities, especially learning and other invisible disabilities, by giving teachers a structured, school-based screening tool rather than relying only on ad-hoc judgements. Its impact will depend on teacher training, how referrals are handled, and whether screening actually leads to certification, classroom accommodations and support services for children identified through the app.

Sources

[Times of India](#) [New Indian Express](#)

8. Persons with Valid Unique Disability ID (UDID) Cards Allowed to Travel in Unreserved Divyangjan Coaches in Mail and Express Trains

Key Takeaway

The Ministry of Railways has clarified that persons with disabilities holding valid Unique Disability ID cards, and valid travel authority, may travel in unreserved Divyangjan coaches in mail and express trains and will be treated as bona fide passengers in those earmarked coaches.

Background

Transport accessibility is closely linked with independent mobility, education, employment, healthcare and social participation. UDID is increasingly used as a common disability identity document across multiple schemes and services, making its recognition in rail travel significant.

Key Details

The Ministry of Railways announced that persons with disabilities holding valid UDID cards can travel in unreserved Divyangjan coaches in mail and express trains. Railway zones were advised to implement the instructions.

Why this Matters

This links UDID to reserved rail travel spaces, potentially making unreserved train travel easier and more predictable for UDID holders, especially where general coaches are overcrowded or unsafe.

Sources

[PIB Press Release](#)

9. District by Zomato Launches Inclusive Dining Toolkit for Restaurants

Key Takeaway

District by Zomato has launched an Inclusive Dining Toolkit to support restaurants in making dining spaces more accessible.

Background

Many persons with disabilities are unable to access restaurants because of physical barriers, inaccessible menus, unclear accessibility information, lack of staff support, and difficulty knowing whether a place will be usable before visiting.

Key Details

The toolkit has been developed in collaboration with the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities, Samarthyam and The Association of People with Disability, with inputs from persons with disabilities, restaurant partners and accessibility experts. District has also introduced accessibility-related platform features such as screen-reader support, accessibility filters, accessible dining recommendations, wheelchair and elevator access details, and an option to add special assistance requests while booking tables.

Why this Matters

This is not a statutory policy change, but it is still relevant because it shows accessibility entering private-sector service spaces. It also brings attention to restaurants as public and social spaces where persons with disabilities should be able to participate equally.

Sources

[Economic Times](#)

[Restaurant India](#)

10. 19th Session of the Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)

Key Takeaway

The 19th Session of the Conference of States Parties to the CRPD was held from 9 to 11 June 2026 at the United Nations Headquarters in New York, marking 20 years of the Convention.

Background

The Conference of States Parties is an important global forum for reviewing and discussing the implementation of the CRPD. The 2026 session is especially significant because it marks 20 years of the Convention.

Key Details

The main theme of the session was “CRPD at 20: celebrating and consolidating achievements and shaping the next phase of implementation in a changing world.” The roundtable themes focused on freedom from exploitation, violence and abuse; strengthening care and support systems for autonomy and independence; and moving from participation to representation through accessible civic engagement, leadership and advocacy in political and public life.

Why this Matters

The themes are relevant for India as well, especially in relation to violence against persons with disabilities, care and support systems, political participation, accessibility and representation of persons with disabilities in public life.

Sources

[United Nations](#)

11. Delhi's Proposed Health Insurance Cover for Children with Disabilities

Key Takeaway

The Delhi government is reportedly examining a health insurance scheme offering up to Rs.13 lakh coverage for children with disabilities, to help families manage treatment, surgery and assistive-equipment costs.

Background

Delhi currently provides a Rs.2,500 per month allowance under its "Subsistence Allowance/Financial Assistance to Persons with Special Needs" scheme, along with free DTC bus travel for visually impaired persons and concessions for attendants of persons with 100% blindness. Families of children with disabilities often face high and recurring costs for surgeries, therapies and assistive devices that are not fully covered by existing schemes.

Key Details

Officials have stated that the proposal is at an early stage and is being examined at multiple administrative levels, with the implementation framework still being worked out before it is placed before the Cabinet. The scheme is envisaged to cover operations, hospital treatment, medical procedures and essential assistive equipment for children with disabilities, and may be linked to empanelled hospitals and rehabilitation centres to ensure coordinated access to specialised care. It is expected to build on Delhi's existing disability welfare measures, rather than replace them.

Why this Matters

If approved and implemented, the scheme would mark a significant expansion of Delhi's welfare architecture for children with disabilities, by addressing high-cost healthcare and assistive-technology needs more directly. As of now, it remains a proposal under discussion and should be treated as a "to watch" item rather than a confirmed policy change.

Sources

[ThePrint/PTI](#)

02

LEGAL UPDATES



1. Supreme Court Broadens Definition of ‘Acid Attack Victim’ under the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 (RPwD, 2016)

Case	Shaheen Malik vs. Union of India
Citation	Writ Petition (Civil) No. 1112/2025
Court	Supreme Court
Date	4 May 2026

Key Takeaway

The RPwD Act, 2016 has been amended to expand the definition of an “acid attack victim” to include persons who suffer internal or external injuries due to the throwing, administering or spilling of acid or a similar corrosive substance, whether caused by violent assault, self-infliction or accident.

Facts

The case was filed by Shaheen Malik, an acid attack survivor and founder of the Brave Souls Foundation. The petitioner sought recognition of all acid attack survivors under the RPwD Act, 2016.

The petitioner highlighted a gap in the Schedule to the RPwD Act, 2016. The Act defined an “acid attack victim” only as a person disfigured physically due to the throwing of acid or a similar corrosive substance. As a result, persons who had been forcibly given acid and persons who had suffered internal injuries (such as damage to the esophagus, respiratory system, etc., without visible external disfigurement) were excluded from the definition.

The petitioner submitted that these persons often suffer permanent disabilities affecting basic functions such as eating, swallowing and speaking. However, they were not recognised as persons with specified disabilities under the RPwD Act, 2016. They could not obtain disability certificates or access welfare schemes and other benefits available under the Act.

Facts

The petitioner further submitted that the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023, and the earlier Indian Penal Code, 1860, recognise both throwing and administering acid as offences. However, the RPwD Act, 2016 did not provide the same protection to all acid attack survivors. During the hearing, the Union Government informed the Court that it had already initiated the process of amending the definition under the RPwD Act, 2016.

Issues

a

Whether persons who have been forcibly given acid or persons who have suffered internal injuries due to acid exposure, without visible external disfigurement, are entitled to be recognised as persons with specified disabilities under the RPwD Act, 2016.

b

Whether the definition of “acid attack victim” under the RPwD Act, 2016 should include persons who have been administered acid, and not only persons injured by the throwing of acid.

Judgement

1. Expansion of the Definition of “acid attack victim”

The Court held that the definition of “acid attack victim” under the RPwD Act, 2016 should not be limited to persons injured by the throwing of acid. It also includes persons who have been administered acid. The Court further held that persons who suffer internal injuries due to acid exposure are entitled to protection under the RPwD Act, 2016 even if they do not have visible external disfigurement.

2. Retrospective Application

The Court directed that this interpretation would apply from the date the RPwD Act came into force in 2016. This allows eligible persons who were previously excluded to claim disability certificates, welfare benefits and other rights available under the Act.

3. Amendment to the RPwD Act, 2016

Following the judgement, the [Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment](#) issued a notification on 22 May 2026.

Judgement

The amended definition under the RPwD Act, 2016 now includes:

- persons disfigured externally or internally due to violent assault;
- self-infliction;
- accident by throwing;
- administering;
- spilling acid;
- a similar corrosive substance.

4. Burden of Proof in Acid Attack Cases

The Court observed that, in acid attack cases, the burden of proof should be placed on the accused rather than the victim. It noted that this would strengthen the protection available to survivors.

5. Liability of Acid Sellers

The Court also observed that sellers who violate the rules governing the sale of acid may be made co-accused. It noted that this would improve enforcement and help prevent the illegal sale of acid.

Sources

[Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Government of India](#)

[Livelaw](#)

2. Supreme Court Strikes Down Upper Disability Ceiling in Public Employment

Case	Prabhu Kumar vs. State of Himachal Pradesh & Others
Citation	Civil Appeal No. 868 of 2024 (2026 INSC 253)
Court	Supreme Court
Date	11 March 2026

Key Takeaway

The Supreme Court held that the RPwD Act, 2016 fixes only a minimum threshold for reservation eligibility and does not permit the State to impose an upper ceiling excluding persons with higher degrees of disability. It directed the appointment of a 90% locomotor-disabled advocate as Assistant District Attorney and imposed costs of Rs.5 lakh on the State of Himachal Pradesh.

Facts

The case was filed by the appellant, Prabhu Kumar, a practising advocate with 90% permanent locomotor disability, who challenged his exclusion from being appointed as an Assistant District Attorney in the State of Himachal Pradesh despite securing the highest rank amongst candidates in the persons with disabilities category.

In 2018, the Himachal Pradesh Public Service Commission issued an advertisement for 24 posts of Assistant District Attorney, of which two posts were reserved for persons with disabilities. The advertisement prescribed that candidates seeking reservation under the disability category should have not less than 40% and not more than 60% disability in one leg or one arm.

The appellant, who had been practising as an advocate since 2015 and had 90% permanent locomotor disability resulting from disarticulation of his left shoulder, applied under the reserved category. He successfully cleared both the written examination and the interview and secured the highest position amongst the candidates in the disability category. However, the State declined

Facts

to issue his appointment solely on the ground that his disability exceeded the prescribed upper limit of 60%.

The appellant became aware of the reason for his exclusion only after obtaining information through an application under the Right to Information Act, 2005. Aggrieved by this decision, he filed a writ petition before the Himachal Pradesh High Court challenging the validity of the upper disability ceiling. The High Court then dismissed the petition in September 2020, holding that the State is entitled to prescribe a maximum disability limit as an eligibility criterion for the post.

Further, the appellant approached the Supreme Court, contending that the RPwD Act, 2016 prescribes only a minimum benchmark disability of 40% for reservation and does not authorise the State to impose an upper ceiling excluding persons with higher degrees of disability. He also argued that the suitability for public employment must be assessed on the basis of functional ability and reasonable accommodation, rather than the percentage of disability alone.

Thus, beyond the individual grievance sought regarding the denial of appointment, the case brought into focus the broader concerns with the interpretation of the RPwD Act, 2016 the scope of reasonable accommodation in public employment, and whether persons with higher degrees of disability could lawfully be excluded from reservation despite possessing the required qualifications and functional competence.

Issues

a

Whether the RPwD, 2016 permits the State to prescribe an upper ceiling on the percentage of disability for reservation in public employment, thereby excluding candidates whose disability exceeds that limit?

b

Whether eligibility and suitability for public employment under the disability reservation framework should be assessed on the basis of the percentage of disability alone, or on the candidate's functional competence together with the obligation to provide reasonable accommodation?

c

Whether the prescription of a maximum disability limit of 60% for appointment to the post of Assistant District Attorney was arbitrary, discriminatory, and contrary to the RPwD Act, 2016 and Articles 14 and 16 of the Constitution?

Judgement

1. Minimum Benchmark and no Maximum Ceiling

The Court has held that the RPwD Act, 2016 prescribes only a minimum benchmark disability of not less than 40% for entitlement to reservation. The Act does not authorise the State to impose an upper ceiling excluding persons with higher degrees of disability. Accordingly, the prescription of a 60% maximum disability limit was held to be contrary to the statutory framework.

2. Functional Competence over Percentage of Disability

The Court reiterated that the percentage of disability cannot, by itself, determine a person's suitability for public employment. The appropriate test is whether the candidate can perform the essential functions of the post with or without reasonable accommodation. Disability percentage alone cannot serve as a valid basis for exclusion.

3. Reliance on Reasonable Accommodation Principles

Relying upon the principles laid down in *Vikash Kumar vs. UPSC* (2021), the Court held that public authorities are required to adopt an individualised assessment of candidates and provide reasonable accommodation wherever necessary. Eligibility criteria based solely on disability percentages, without any functional assessment, are inconsistent with the objectives of the RPwD Act, 2016.

4. Recognition of the Appellant's Functional Ability

The Court observed that the appellant had been practising successfully as an advocate for nearly a decade despite his 90% locomotor disability, demonstrating that a higher degree of disability did not diminish his professional competence or ability to discharge the functions of an Assistant District Attorney.

Judgement

5. Appointment and Consequential Relief

The Court set aside the judgement of the Himachal Pradesh High Court and directed the State to issue the appellant's appointment letter as Assistant District Attorney within two weeks. The appointment was directed to take effect retrospectively from 19 September 2019, together with all notional service benefits.

6. Costs for Unlawful Exclusion

Recognising that the appellant had been wrongfully deprived of appointment and compelled to pursue prolonged litigation, the Court imposed costs of Rs.5 lakh upon the State of Himachal Pradesh.

7. Affirmation of the Rights-Based Framework

The Court reaffirmed that the RPwD, 2016 is a rights-based and inclusion-oriented legislation, intended to promote equality and substantive inclusion rather than restrict opportunities for persons with disabilities. It emphasised that public employment policies must advance, and not undermine, the principles of non-discrimination, equality of opportunity, and reasonable accommodation.

Sources

[The Hindu](#)

[Indian Kanoon](#)

3. Karnataka High Court Frames Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) on Universal Accessibility

Case	PSBB Learning Leadership Academy vs. Mrs. Barnali Rout & Others
Citation	W.P. No. 11351 of 2020 (GM-RES) (NC: 2026:KHC:25589)
Court	High Court of Karnataka
Date	1 June 2026

Key Takeaway

The Karnataka High Court has issued an SOP on Universal Accessibility, requiring government offices, private establishments and digital platforms across Karnataka to become more accessible for persons with disabilities until the Government frames detailed rules under the RPwD Act, 2016.

Key features of the SOP:

- **Accessibility Standards:** Mandates physical and digital accessibility requirements.
- **Compliance Mechanism:** Requires accessibility audits and grievance redressal.
- **Time-Bound Implementation:** Prescribes phased compliance timelines.

Facts

The case arose from a writ petition filed by a private school challenging an order passed by the State Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities under the RPwD Act, 2016. The dispute concerned a teacher who sustained a severe spinal injury while attempting to rescue a student from falling from the school premises, resulting in permanent disability. Following the accident, the school bore her medical expenses, paid her salary for a period, and later offered her an administrative position. However, disputes arose regarding her continued employment and the extent of the school's obligations under the RPwD Act, 2016. The Commissioner held the school liable for disability discrimination and directed payment of compensation, prompting the school to approach the Karnataka High Court. The case also required the Court to determine the scope of the Commissioner's powers and the applicability of the RPwD Act, 2016 to private establishments.

Issues

The Karnataka High Court considered the following key legal issues:

- a Whether the protections available under the RPwD Act, 2016 particularly in relation to employees who acquire a disability during service, extend to private establishments or are confined to Government establishments?
- b Whether private employers are legally obligated to provide reasonable accommodation and explore alternative employment before taking adverse action against an employee who acquires a disability during service?
- c Whether the State Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities (SCPD) possesses the statutory authority to adjudicate employment disputes, award compensation, and issue binding directions against private establishments under Sections 80-82 of the RPwD Act, 2016?
- d Whether the order passed by the State Commissioner directing compensation and other reliefs was within the scope of the powers conferred under the RPwD Act, 2016?
- e Whether accessibility and non-discrimination obligations under the RPwD Act, 2016 require the Court to issue broader operational directions to ensure effective implementation of the legislation across the State?

Judgement

1. RPwD Act, 2016 is a Rights-Based Legislation

The Court held that the RPwD Act, 2016 is a beneficial, rights-based statute enacted to implement India's obligations under the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD). The Act must therefore receive a purposive and liberal interpretation that advances the rights of persons with disabilities rather than restricting them through a narrow reading of individual provisions.

2. Accessibility is a Fundamental Right

The Court reaffirmed that accessibility, equality, dignity, and reasonable accommodation are constitutional guarantees flowing from Articles 14, 15, 19 and 21 of the Constitution. Accessibility cannot be treated as a welfare measure or an act of charity but constitutes an enforceable legal right of persons with disabilities.

Judgement

3. Private Establishments also have Obligations

Although certain provisions such as Section 20 specifically refer to Government establishments, the Court held that private establishments are not outside the statutory framework. By reading the Act as a whole, particularly Sections 3 and 21, the Court concluded that private employers are equally bound by the principles of non-discrimination and reasonable accommodation, even though certain Government-specific protections may not directly apply.

4. Protection of Employees Acquiring Disability

The Court emphasised that an employee who acquires a disability during service should not lose employment merely because of the disability. Employers must first assess whether the employee can continue in the existing role with reasonable accommodation or be redeployed to another suitable position before considering any adverse employment action.

5. Reasonable Accommodation is a Legal Duty

The Court clarified that reasonable accommodation is a statutory obligation and not a voluntary or charitable measure. Employers are required to make necessary and appropriate modifications to enable persons with disabilities to participate equally in employment unless doing so would impose a disproportionate or undue burden.

6. Limits on the Commissioner's Powers

The Court extensively analysed Sections 80-82 of the RPwD Act, 2016 and held that while the State Commissioner possesses significant powers to investigate complaints, determine violations, and issue directions for compliance, those powers must be exercised within the limits prescribed by the statute. The Commissioner cannot assume unrestricted jurisdiction equivalent to that of a civil court unless expressly authorised by law.

Judgement

7. Accessibility Requires Systemic Implementation

Recognising the absence of comprehensive accessibility rules under the RPwD Act, 2016 the Court issued an extensive SOP applicable across Karnataka. The SOP lays down mandatory standards relating to physical infrastructure, digital accessibility, employment, education, grievance redressal, accessibility audits, governance mechanisms, enforcement measures and phased implementation timelines, which will remain in force until the State Government frames statutory rules.

Key Details of the Court Issued SOP

The Karnataka High Court issued this SOP for Universal Accessibility to operationalise the RPwD Act, 2016 until the State Government frames comprehensive accessibility rules. The SOP serves as an interim framework until the State Government notifies accessibility rules under Sections 40 and 45 of the Act and supplements the existing requirements under the National Building Code and the Harmonised Guidelines, 2021. The SOP is intended to ensure that accessibility is treated as a fundamental right rather than a welfare measure and applies to both government and private establishments across Karnataka.

01

Accessibility Recognised as a Fundamental Right

The SOP affirms that accessibility is a constitutional guarantee flowing from Articles 14, 15, 19, 21, 38, 41 and 46 of the Constitution. It adopts a rights-based approach, recognising accessibility, reasonable accommodation, universal design and non-discrimination as enforceable legal rights rather than acts of charity.

02

Universal Applicability

The SOP applies to a wide range of public and private establishments, including:

- Government offices and courts;
- Educational institutions;
- Hospitals and healthcare facilities;
- Commercial establishments, including malls, banks, hotels, and restaurants;

Key Details of the Court Issued SOP

- Religious and cultural institutions;
- Residential housing (common areas);
- Transport infrastructure; and
- Government digital platforms and, prospectively, private digital services.

03

Comprehensive Accessibility Standards

The SOP prescribes detailed accessibility requirements for public infrastructure, including:

- Step-free entrances and ramps;
- Accessible lifts;
- Accessible toilets;
- Reserved parking spaces;
- Tactile pathways;
- Braille and tactile signage;
- Accessible workstations and service counters; and
- Accessible emergency evacuation systems

04

Digital Accessibility Requirements

Government websites, applications and digital platforms must comply with WCAG 2.1 Level AA standards by ensuring:

- Screen-reader compatibility;
- Keyboard navigation;
- Closed captions;
- Indian Sign Language support for key information; and
- Adjustable text size and contrast;

The SOP further mandates that no government digital platform shall be deployed without first undergoing a digital accessibility audit and obtaining certification.

Key Details of the Court Issued SOP

05

Employment and Workplace Inclusion

Every establishment is required to adopt and implement an Equal Opportunity Policy. Employers are directed to:

- Prohibit discrimination on the ground of disability;
- Provide reasonable accommodation;
- Protect employees who acquire a disability during service;
- Conduct a job-fit assessment within 60 days;
- Explore continuation in the same role or redeployment to an equivalent position before; and considering any adverse employment action;

The SOP also requires employers to bear reasonable medical expenses where an employee acquires a disability during the course of employment.

06

Inclusive Educational Institutions

Educational institutions are required to:

- Ensure accessible campuses and infrastructure;
- Provide inclusive education for students with disabilities;
- Offer examination accommodations such as extra time, scribes, interpreters and accessible examination materials;
- Ensure that teachers with disabilities are provided reasonable accommodation and are not discriminated against; and
- Establish Disability Anti-Discrimination Committees;

07

Institutional Governance and Monitoring

The SOP directs the State Government to establish a State Accessibility Authority (SAA) and District Accessibility Committees responsible for:

- Monitoring accessibility compliance;

Key Details of the Court Issued SOP

- Conducting inspections and audits;
- Certifying compliant establishments;
- Publishing annual accessibility reports;
- Coordinating implementation across departments;

08

Accessibility Audits and Grievance Redressal

Every establishment must implement an internal grievance redressal mechanism for accessibility-related complaints. Complaints must be acknowledged, investigated and resolved within prescribed timelines, with a right to escalate unresolved grievances to the State Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities or the High Court.

The SOP also mandates regular accessibility audits and certification to ensure continued compliance.

09

Enforcement and Compliance

To secure effective implementation, the SOP provides for:

- Mandatory accessibility audits;
- Accessibility certification;
- A unified public compliance portal;
- Monetary penalties for non-compliance;
- Suspension or refusal of trade licences and occupancy certificates; and
- Criminal liability for wilful violations under the RPwD Act, 2016;

Key Details of the Court Issued SOP

10

Phased Implementation Timeline

The SOP prescribes clear implementation timelines, including:

- **Within 3 months:** Appointment of Accessibility Nodal Officers and establishment of grievance mechanisms.
- **Within 6 months:** Adoption of Equal Opportunity Policies, constitution of District Accessibility Committees, framing of accessibility rules, and installation of essential accessibility features.
- **Within 1 year:** Establishment of the State Accessibility Authority, completion of accessibility audits, launch of the Unified Accessibility Compliance Portal, and implementation of key physical accessibility measures.
- **Within 2 years:** Full accessibility compliance across establishments and completion of digital accessibility certification.

The SOP also requires annual audits, periodic review of Equal Opportunity Policies and continuous processing of reasonable accommodation requests.

Sources

[LiveLaw](#)

4. Delhi High Court Directs Authorities to Improve Accessibility in Films and Ticket Booking Platforms

Case	Rahul Bajaj vs. Mythri Moviemakers & Others
Citation	W.P.(C) 16833/2024
Court	High Court of Delhi
Date	19 February 2026 (Order) 18 July 2026 (MIB Advisory)

Key Takeaway

The Delhi High Court directed the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (MIB), the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY), and the Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC) to consider and implement measures to improve accessibility in cinemas. These measures include making information on accessible films publicly available, improving accessible ticket-booking platforms, and strengthening compliance with accessibility requirements.

Facts

The case arose when Mr. Rahul Bajaj, filed a writ petition seeking directions to ensure that the film “Pushpa 2: The Rule” is released with accessibility features such as audio description, same-language closed captions, and Indian Sign Language in cinemas, OTT platforms and other formats.

He also sought directions to make movie ticket-booking platforms more accessible for persons with disabilities. He asked for information on accessible films to be made publicly available and requested action against entities that fail to comply with accessibility requirements under the RPwD Act, 2016.

During the hearing, the petitioner submitted several suggestions to improve accessibility. He asked for an easy way to identify films with accessibility features before booking tickets. He also sought clear information on how these features can be accessed in theatres. He requested that ticket-booking apps and websites

Facts

comply with accessibility standards. He further asked the CBFC to record and publicly disclose the accessibility features available for every certified film.

Issues

a

Whether persons with disabilities have enough information to identify and access films with accessibility features?

b

Whether the MIB, MeitY and CBFC should take further steps to improve the implementation of accessibility standards for films?

c

Whether accessibility information should be made publicly available through the film certification and ticket-booking process?

Judgement

1. Court Directed Authorities to Improve Accessibility

The Delhi High Court observed that accessibility requirements already exist under the RPwD 2016, the Cinematograph (Certification) Rules, 2024 and the Guidelines of Accessibility Standards in the Public Exhibition of Feature Films in Cinema Theatres. However, it found that persons with disabilities continue to face practical barriers in accessing films.

The Court directed the MIB, the MeitY and the CBFC to consider and implement the petitioner's suggestions.

The Court directed the authorities to implement these measures with due expedition. It further directed that if any suggestion cannot be implemented, the concerned authority must file an affidavit explaining the reasons.

2. MIB Advises Ticket-Booking Platforms to Display Accessibility Information

Following the High Court's directions, the MIB issued an advisory dated 9 July 2026 to all major online movie ticket-booking platforms.

The advisory directs platforms to develop an independent mechanism on their websites and mobile applications. This mechanism should enable users to identify whether a film has accessibility features before booking tickets.

Judgement

3. Platforms Must Display Key Accessibility Details

Further the advisory also requires ticket-booking platforms to prominently display whether a film includes accessibility features such as Audio Description (AD), Closed Captions (CC)/Same Language Captioning (SLC), Indian Sign Language (ISL) or any other accessibility feature.

Where these features are available through an external application or digital platform, the ticket-booking platform must also display the name of that application or platform.

4. Information Must be Clear and Easy to Find

The advisory states that accessibility information should be displayed in a clear, accurate and easily identifiable manner. This will enable persons with disabilities to make an informed decision before booking tickets.

The MIB has also advised ticket-booking platforms to implement these measures at the earliest, preferably within seven days. The advisory aims to improve accessibility and make movie ticket booking easier for persons with disabilities.

Sources

[Indian Kanoon](#)

5. Karnataka Reserves 5% of Government Housing and Provides 25% Concession for Persons with Benchmark Disabilities

Key Takeaway

Karnataka has become the first State to operationalise Section 37 of the RPwD Act, 2016 by reserving 5% of government housing for persons with benchmark disabilities and providing a 25% concession on the allotment value of residential sites and houses.

Background

The Government of Karnataka has amended the Karnataka Urban Development Authorities (Allotment of Sites) Rules, 1991 to reserve 5% of residential sites and houses for persons with benchmark disabilities and provide a 25% concession on the allotment value. The amendment gives effect to Section 37 of RPwD Act, 2016 which requires appropriate Governments and local authorities to promote access to land and housing at concessional rates for persons with benchmark disabilities.

Key Details

1. Reservation in Housing Allotments

Urban Development Authorities across Karnataka, including the Bangalore Development Authority and other statutory development authorities constituted under the Karnataka Urban Development Authorities Act, are now required to reserve 5% of residential sites and houses for persons with benchmark disabilities.

A new Rule 5-A has also been inserted into the Karnataka Urban Development Authorities (Allotment of Sites) Rules, 1991, providing that the reserved sites shall be allotted only to persons with benchmark disabilities of 75% or more.

2. Concession in Allotment Price

Eligible applicants are entitled to a 25% concession on the allotment value of the reserved residential site or house, reducing the financial barriers to home ownership.

Key Details

3. Eligibility

To avail the reservation, applicants must:

- possess a valid benchmark disability certificate issued under the RPwD Act, 2016 ;
- have a benchmark disability of 75% or more;
- satisfy the residence requirements prescribed by the relevant Urban Development Authority; and
- not own a residential site or house in any urban area of Karnataka, either individually or through their spouse or minor children.

The detailed eligibility conditions continue to be governed by the Karnataka Urban Development Authorities (Allotment of Sites) Rules, 1991, as amended.

Current Reservation Structure (Applicable to Urban Development Authorities, including BDA):

Category	Reservation
Other Backward Classes (OBC)	10%
Scheduled Castes (SC)	17%
Scheduled Tribes (ST)	7%
Defence Personnel / Ex-servicemen	5%
State Government Employees	3%
Central Government Employees	1%
General Public	50%
Eminent Persons (Sports, Arts, Science, etc.)	2%
Persons with Disabilities	5%
Total	100%

Why this Matters

The amendment makes Karnataka the first State to implement Section 37 of the RPwD Act, 2016 through a dedicated reservation in government housing. It also aligns with Article 28 of the UNCRPD. This recognises the right of persons with disabilities to an adequate standard of living, including adequate housing, and requires States Parties to ensure equal access to public housing programmes.

By combining a 5% reservation in government housing, a 25% concession on the allotment value, and prioritising persons with 75% or more benchmark disability for the reserved quota, the amendment seeks to improve both access to affordable housing and the effective implementation of disability rights in Karnataka.

Sources

[20-year legal battle leads to landmark housing reform for Karnataka's people with disabilities](#)

6. Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPwD) Notifies Draft Disability-Access Rules for Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and Digital Services

Key Takeaway

Draft amendments to the RPwD Rules, 2016 will, for the first time, make disability-accessibility standards mandatory for overseas and Indian tech companies offering websites, apps, software or digital content to users in India, with fines, loss of registration and exclusion from government contracts for non-compliance

Background

In *Rajive Raturi vs. Union of India* (8 November 2024), the Supreme Court held that Rule 15 of the RPwD Rules, 2017, which listed accessibility standards for the physical environment, transport and ICT was ultra vires because it framed binding standards as recommendations (“may” instead of “shall”). The Court directed the government to frame enforceable rules under Section 40 of the RPwD Act, 2016; after missing the initial deadline, the government began notifying sector-wise rules from July 2025, and this ICT draft is the digital-sector piece of that exercise.

Key Details

DEPwD notified the draft RPwD(Amendment) Rules, 2026 in the Gazette on 20 July 2026, with a 30-day window for public comments.

Who is covered: Any establishment, in India or abroad, that makes websites, apps, software, digital content, ICT-based public facilities, two-way voice/video hardware or assistive consumer products available to Indian users.

Phased timelines: Larger groups (turnover above Rs.500 crore) get 1 year to comply after final notification; smaller firms get 18 months; everyone must be fully compliant within 2 years.

Key Details

Impact of non-compliance: Establishments that miss these timelines or accessibility requirements risk complaints before the Chief Commissioner or State Commissioners for Persons with Disabilities, fines under Section 89 of the RPwD Act, 2016 and, if they fail to fix issues within 90 days of being flagged, higher penalties and possible suspension or loss of registration or certification, in addition to any sanctions sector regulators may impose.

Accessibility Conformance Reports (ACRs): Each covered product or service must have a free ACR on its site/app, in both human-readable form (e.g., HTML or accessible PDF) and machine-readable form (e.g., JSON or XML); missing either is treated as non-compliance. ACRs must be prepared or checked by named accessibility experts and updated after major changes or at least every two years.

Enforcement and penalties: The Chief Commissioner and State Commissioners for Persons with Disabilities can investigate complaints, issue directions and impose fines; sector regulators may also build these accessibility duties into their own licensing and compliance frameworks.

Government procurement: Ministries and public bodies are barred from buying, deploying, upgrading or renewing non-compliant products, and must update their procurement policies within 90 days.

Grievance ladder: Every establishment must appoint a Grievance Redressal Officer; ministries and regulators must appoint Nodal Officers; there are set timelines (30/45 days) for complaints and appeals, with disability commissioners as the final forum.

National committee: A National Accessibility ICT Committee, with at least half its members being persons with disabilities, will oversee rollout and publish annual reports.

Audit ecosystem: DEPWD has also published consolidated lists of empanelled web and built-environment accessibility auditors that organisations can use to carry out accessibility audits.

Why this Matters

This is the most concrete enforcement mechanism yet for digital accessibility in India, moving from aspirational guidelines to a binding, extraterritorial regime with real financial and regulatory teeth, directly closing the gap the Supreme Court identified in *Rajive Raturi*. Still in the public-comment stage, so the final rules may shift.

Sources

[DEPwD notification \(16 July 2026\) Draft Rights of Persons with Disabilities \(Amendment\) Rules, 2026](#)

[DEPwD Consolidated list of empanelled web accessibility auditors](#)

[DEPwD Creation of Barrier Free Environment \(lists of built-environment and web accessibility auditors\).](#)



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