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Initiative for Research by Pacta

Disability Bulletin

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Summary

Pacta's *Disability Bulletin* 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.

The Disability Bulletin is brought to you by *Chitta Initiative for Research by Pacta* and is part of our ongoing effort to track legal and policy developments in India’s disability sector. This edition covers key legal and policy updates from August to September 2026.

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

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Table of Contents

POLICY UPDATES

1. United Nations Committee Adopts Guidelines on Intersectional Discrimination Against Women and Girls with Disabilities 08
2. Government Strengthens Financial Assistance and Accessibility of Financial Services for Persons with Disabilities 10
3. Kerala Child Rights Panel Calls for Comprehensive Measures for Children with Disabilities 13
4. National Medical Commission Notifies New Guidelines on Assessment of Candidates with Benchmark Disabilities for MBBS Admission 15
5. Parliamentary Committee Flags Persistent Shortfalls in Skill Development Targets for Persons with Disabilities 17
6. NITI Aayog Releases “Reimagining Care” Report, Setting Out a National Caregiving Framework With Specific Recommendations for Disability Care 19

Table of Contents

LEGAL JUDGEMENTS

1. Supreme Court Directs States and Union Territories to Consider Reservation for Cadets Disabled During Military Training 23
2. Kerala High Court Supports Renaming of Mental Health Centres as “Happiness and Wellness Centres” 26
3. Bombay High Court Holds Additional Learning Disability Cannot Disqualify a Candidate with Benchmark Disability Eligible for Reserve Bank of India Grade ‘B’ Post 29
4. Punjab and Haryana High Court Holds Multiple Disabilities Can Be Combined to Meet the 40% Benchmark Threshold 32
5. Chief Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities Fines Air India ₹50,000 and Recommends ₹5 Lakh Compensation for De-boarding a Wheelchair User 34
6. Delhi High Court Holds That Medical Assessment Boards Cannot Re-Quantify Disability Recorded in Unique Disability ID (UDID) Cards 36

REGULATORY UPDATES

7. Haryana State Legal Services Authority Launches Mobile Legal Clinics and Standard Operating Procedure for Protection of Persons with Disabilities 41
8. University Grants Commission Directs Universities to Ensure Full Compliance with the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 44
9. Government Publishes Draft Rules on Standards, Procurement and Repair of Assistive Products for Persons with Disabilities. 47

Easy to Read Summary

Policy



1. **United Nations Guidelines on Intersectional Discrimination:** The United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities has adopted new Guidelines addressing discrimination faced by women and girls with disabilities where disability intersects with gender, age, race, caste and other identities.



2. **National Fund and Accessible Financial Services:** The Government has expanded financial assistance under the National Fund for Persons with Disabilities, including support for assistive devices, disability innovation and research, while financial institutions are being trained on accessibility requirements.



3. **Kerala Disability Measures:** The Kerala State Commission for Protection of Child Rights has recommended coordinated measures for children with disabilities, including early screening, healthcare, inclusive education, easier access to disability certificates and a single-window welfare system.



4. **National Medical Commission MBBS Disability Assessment:** The National Medical Commission has introduced a competency-based assessment framework for candidates with benchmark disabilities seeking admission to the Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery (MBBS) course, and has required medical colleges to establish dedicated “Enabling Units” for students with disabilities.



5. **Skill Development Shortfalls:** A Parliamentary Standing Committee has flagged that skill-training programmes for persons with disabilities have repeatedly fallen short of their annual targets, and questioned whether the implementation of new schemes will address these existing gaps.



6. **NITI Aayog “Reimagining Care” Report:** NITI Aayog has released its “Reimagining Care” report, proposing a National Caregiving Policy and National Caregiver Council, with specific recommendations on caregiving for and by persons with disabilities.

Easy to Read Summary

Legal



1. **Reservation for Cadets with Disabilities:** The Supreme Court held that cadets who acquire benchmark disabilities during military training and are discharged before commissioning can seek reservation under the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPwD) Act, 2016, and directed States and Union Territories to consider them under the Ex-Military Personnel quota.



2. **Mental Health Centres Renamed:** The Kerala High Court supported renaming Mental Health Centres as "Happiness and Wellness Centres" to reduce stigma, while also directing improvements in staffing, security, medicines, infrastructure and transportation.



3. **Additional Disability Cannot Disqualify a Candidate:** The Bombay High Court held that a candidate who meets the disability criteria for a post cannot be disqualified merely because they also have another disability. The Court also emphasised reasonable accommodation and directed the Reserve Bank of India to appoint the candidate.



4. **Multiple Disabilities Can Be Combined:** The Punjab and Haryana High Court held that different certified disabilities can be considered together to meet the 40% benchmark disability threshold under the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPwD) Act, 2016.



5. **Air India Fined for De-boarding a Wheelchair User:** The Chief Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities fined Air India ₹50,000 and recommended ₹5 lakh compensation after a wheelchair user was de-boarded without the required medical examination and written reasons.



6. **Medical Boards Cannot Re-Quantify Disability in Unique Disability ID Cards:** The Delhi High Court held that Medical Assessment Boards assessing candidates for MBBS admission can assess their functional competency, but cannot reduce or re-quantify the disability percentage recorded in a valid Unique Disability ID card. The Court held that the card remains the primary evidence for reservation for Persons with Benchmark Disabilities, and any challenge to the disability percentage must be made through the prescribed statutory mechanism.

Easy to Read Summary

Regulatory and Other Developments



7. **Mobile Legal Services for Persons with Disabilities:** The Haryana State Legal Services Authority launched “Nyay Mitra – Justice at Your Doorstep”, using mobile legal clinics to provide free legal aid, counselling and other services to persons with disabilities, particularly in underserved areas.



8. **University Grants Commission Directs Compliance with the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPwD) Act, 2016:** The University Grants Commission directed universities and colleges to strengthen implementation of the Act, including accessibility, reservation, Equal Opportunity Cells and disability-related data reporting, with 30 September 2026 as the reporting deadline.



9. **Government Publishes Draft Rules on Standards, Procurement and Repair of Assistive Products for Persons with Disabilities:** The Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPwD) has published draft rules proposing quality standards, certified procurement, financial support, a right to repair and a 30-day grievance helpline for assistive products such as wheelchairs, hearing aids and screen readers.

01

POLICY UPDATES



1. United Nations Committee Adopts Guidelines on Intersectional Discrimination Against Women and Girls with Disabilities

Key Takeaway

At the end of its 35th session on 27 August 2026, the United Nations (UN) Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD Committee) adopted new Guidelines requiring States to identify and address discrimination that arises specifically where disability intersects with gender, age, race and other identities.

Background

The CRPD Committee is the UN treaty body that monitors how States implement the convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The new guidelines on identifying and addressing intersectional discrimination against girls, adolescents, women and older women with disabilities were developed through a participatory process.
They draw on written submissions from women with disabilities across diverse regions and identities, made in response to the Committee's calls for input in November 2025 and June 2026. The adoption coincided with the Convention's twentieth anniversary, marked at the same session.

Key Details

1. Who is Covered

The Guidelines recognise that women with disabilities are not a homogeneous group. They apply to girls, adolescents, women and older women with disabilities across the life course, including transgender, intersex, non-binary and other gender-diverse persons with disabilities.

2. A Key Distinction

The Guidelines separate "multiple discrimination" (disadvantage arising from two or more grounds considered separately) from "intersectional discrimination" – a distinct, compounded form of disadvantage that arises from the inseparable interaction of grounds such as disability, gender, race, caste and migration status, and cannot be understood by examining each ground on its own.

Key Details

3. Structural Roots

The Guidelines recognise that women with disabilities are not a homogeneous group. They apply to girls, adolescents, women and older women with disabilities across the life course, including transgender, intersex, non-binary and other gender-diverse persons with disabilities.

4. State Obligations

States parties to the Convention are called on to adopt legal and policy frameworks that identify these overlapping systems of discrimination, to consult closely with organisations of women with disabilities, and to treat disability equality and gender equality as equally governing principles rather than one being subsidiary to the other. Sector-specific guidance covers institutionalisation, education, stereotypes, harmful practices and violence, with an emphasis on accountability and adequately resourced implementation.

Why this Matters

The guidelines mark an important shift from treating disability and gender discrimination separately to recognising how multiple forms of discrimination can operate together. For India, they provide a useful reference point for reviewing disability and gender-equality frameworks and ensuring that women and girls with intersecting identities are not excluded from either.

Source

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

2. Government Strengthens Financial Assistance and Accessibility of Financial Services for Persons with Disabilities

Key Takeaway

The Government has expanded the National Fund for Persons with Disabilities to provide broader financial assistance, including up to ₹10 lakh for customised assistive devices for persons with high support needs. Separately, a Government-led initiative is working to improve accessibility and compliance across banks, insurers and other financial institutions.

Background

Section 86 of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPwD) Act, 2016 mandates the Central Government to constitute a National Fund for Persons with Disabilities (Divyangjan). The Fund was set up in January 2018 and constituted as a Trust in April 2018, consolidating two earlier funds dating back to 1983 and 2006. Chapter X of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Rules, 2017 governs its management, with a Governing Body deciding priorities for financial assistance.

Separately, the Department of Financial Services (DFS), Ministry of Finance, has been working with public financial institutions to improve accessibility for Divyangjan under the Sugamya Bharat (Accessible India) initiative.

Key Details

1. Revised National Fund Guidelines (14 August 2026)

The Governing Body has revised and expanded the scope of financial assistance under the National Fund, now organised into two categories.

For individuals with benchmark disabilities, eligible support includes travel and stay expenses for state-level achievers in sports, fine arts, music or dance competing at national or international events. It also includes customised mobility equipment or assistive devices for persons with high support needs, with assistance of up to ₹10 lakh, subject to an annual family income limit of ₹12 lakh. Support is also available for presenting research papers at international conferences.

Key Details

Fund for Assistive Devices



₹10 Lakh

Government expanded National Fund upto ₹10 lakh for customised assistive devices, subject to an annual family income limit of ₹12 lakh.

For organisations, the revised guidelines provide support for disability innovation, research and technology, including artificial intelligence-based assistive solutions. They also cover inclusive livelihoods and the “Purple Economy”, as well as capacity-building for disability-sector organisations and government institutions. Funding of up to 50% of expenditure is available for events such as Purple Fest, subject to a cap of ₹3 crore for national events and ₹5 crore for international events.

Support for Organisations

The revised National Fund for Persons with Disabilities also cover inclusive livelihoods and the “**Purple Economy**”, as well as capacity-building for disability-sector organisations and government institutions.



Balance covered from organisers or other sources

Funding of up to 50% of expenditure is available for events such as **Purple Fest**

Subject to a cap of **₹5 crore** for international events

Subject to a cap of **₹3 crore** for national events

2. DFS Workshop on Financial Accessibility (20–21 August 2026)

The DFS conducted a two-day workshop with Union Bank of India in Bengaluru, bringing together Chief Technology Officers and senior human resources functionaries from the Reserve Bank of India, the Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority, the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India, all 12 public sector banks, seven public sector insurance companies and seven public financial institutions.

Key Details

Discussions covered accessibility standards and compliance under Sugamya Bharat, legal provisions relating to accessibility, and practical gaps between policy and ground realities, with Divyangjan employees and accessibility experts sharing first-hand perspectives.

Why this Matters

Taken together, the two updates point to a broader push – on both the welfare and the financial-services sides – to make financial systems more responsive to the needs of persons with disabilities, though the real test will lie in how accessible and quickly these schemes reach applicants on the ground.

Sources

Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities

Press Information Bureau

3. Kerala Child Rights Panel Calls for Comprehensive Measures for Children with Disabilities

Key Takeaway

The Kerala State Commission for Protection of Child Rights (KeSCPCR) has submitted a report to the state government recommending coordinated, cross-department measures spanning early screening, healthcare, education, welfare delivery and the justice system for children with disabilities.

Background

The KeSCPCR is the state's statutory child rights body, constituted under the Commissions for Protection of Child Rights Act, 2005. The Commission submitted a detailed report to the state government in February 2026, flagging systemic gaps in the protection, healthcare, education and rehabilitation of children with disabilities in Kerala, and recommending measures that require coordinated action across several departments.

Key Details

1. Early Identification and Healthcare

The report calls for scientific screening of children from the pregnancy stage through early childhood to enable early identification of disabilities, along with coordinated health check-ups, nutritional support, immunisation and parent awareness programmes. It recommends permanent deployment of paediatricians, clinical psychologists, psychiatrists, speech therapists and occupational therapists at every taluk hospital, and mobile screening teams and early detection centres in each taluk, particularly for rural and hilly areas. It also seeks expanded home care, palliative care and doorstep healthcare for bedridden children with disabilities, and panchayat-level camps to issue disability certificates and Unique Disability ID cards within a fixed timeframe.

Key Details

2. Education

The Commission recommends appointing adequate special educators across government, aided and recognised unaided schools. It also recommends individual needs assessments and appropriate academic support for students with disabilities.
It calls for disability-friendly infrastructure, including ramps, wheelchair-accessible pathways, handrails, Braille signboards and accessible toilets. The Commission also recommends a special priority mechanism for Plus One admissions, so that students with disabilities can access their preferred courses closer to home.

3. Welfare Delivery

Benefits such as pensions, scholarships, travel concessions, treatment and rehabilitation assistance, and assistive devices are currently administered by different departments. The Commission says that this fragmented system causes delays in accessing these benefits. It has recommended a single-window mechanism to coordinate these services. It has also recommended subsidised centres for the repair and maintenance of assistive devices. The Commission further recommends dedicated budget lines for children with disabilities in the annual development plans of panchayats, municipalities and corporations.

4. Child Protection and Justice

The report recommends converting all police stations into child-friendly and disability-friendly spaces, with mandatory training for police personnel handling cases involving children with disabilities, and the provision of sign-language interpreters, special educators and communication-support experts during investigations and while recording statements.

Why this Matters

If acted upon, these recommendations would move Kerala's response to children with disabilities from a fragmented, department-by-department system towards a single, coordinated, rights-based framework – though implementation will depend on whether the state government commits the staffing and budgets the report calls for across departments.

Source

Kerala State Commission for Protection of Child Rights

4. National Medical Commission Notifies New Guidelines on Assessment of Candidates with Benchmark Disabilities for MBBS Admission

Key Takeaway

The National Medical Commission (NMC) has introduced a competency-based framework for assessing Persons with Benchmark Disabilities (PwBD) seeking admission to the Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery (MBBS) course. Separately, it has directed every medical college to set up a dedicated "Enabling Unit" for students with disabilities.

Background

The NMC regulates medical education in India under the National Medical Commission Act, 2019, with MBBS admissions governed by the Graduate Medical Education Regulations, 2023. Courts have previously found aspects of the disability assessment process for medical admissions inadequate, including the Supreme Court's directions in Om Rathore vs. Director General of Health Services & Ors., and a further order dated 21 July 2026 in Anmol vs. Union of India & Ors.

Key Details

1. New Assessment Guidelines

On 27 July 2026, the Undergraduate Medical Education Board of the NMC notified the Guidelines on Assessment of Persons with Benchmark Disabilities for Admission to the MBBS Course for 2026–27. The guidelines introduce a competency-based framework for assessing PwBD candidates, rather than relying solely on the percentage of disability. Candidates must continue to have a benchmark disability of at least 40% to qualify under the PwBD category.



40% Benchmark Disability

Candidates must continue to have a benchmark disability of at least 40% to qualify under the PwBD category.

Key Details

2. Individualised Certificates and Appeal

Medical assessment boards must now issue detailed, individualised eligibility certificates with written reasoning, rather than a blanket determination based on disability percentage. Candidates who disagree with an assessment can appeal before an appellate authority under the Directorate General of Health Services, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. The NMC has also increased the number of designated assessment centres.

3. Enabling Units

In a separate circular issued on the same day, the NMC directed every medical college and institution under its jurisdiction to establish an "Enabling Unit" as a single point of contact for PwBD students. The Unit will facilitate reasonable accommodation and barrier-free access and coordinate with assessment boards, faculty and hospital administration. It will also support students during clinical training and internships and maintain confidential records of accommodation requests. Colleges must publish the Unit's contact details on their websites, admission materials and notice boards. They are also encouraged to conduct periodic sensitisation and capacity-building programmes for faculty, administrative staff and students.



Enabling Unit

Every medical college and institution under its jurisdiction to establish an "Enabling Unit" as a single point of contact for PwBD students.

Why this Matters

The new framework shifts PwBD assessment for MBBS admissions towards an individualised, competency-based assessment, rather than relying solely on the percentage of disability.
The mandatory Enabling Units also extend the focus beyond admission by creating an institutional mechanism for reasonable accommodation, accessibility and support throughout medical education, including clinical training and internships.

Sources

National Medical Commission

National Medical Commission

5. Parliamentary Committee Flags Persistent Shortfalls in Skill Development Targets for Persons with Disabilities

Key Takeaway

A Parliamentary Standing Committee report on the disability affairs budget has found that skill-training programmes for persons with disabilities have repeatedly fallen short of their annual targets. The Committee has also raised concerns about whether new schemes will be implemented effectively.

Background

The annual budget of the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPwD) is examined each year by the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Social Justice and Empowerment. The Committee's 18th Report, on DEPwD's Demands for Grants for 2026–27, was tabled in Parliament on 11 March 2026, and its findings on the skill-training shortfall were highlighted again in media coverage in August 2026.

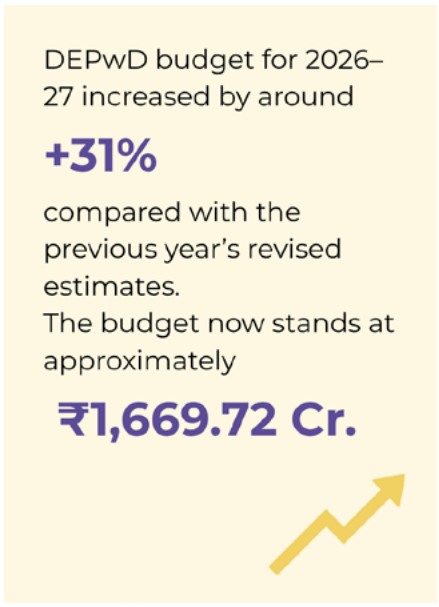
Key Details

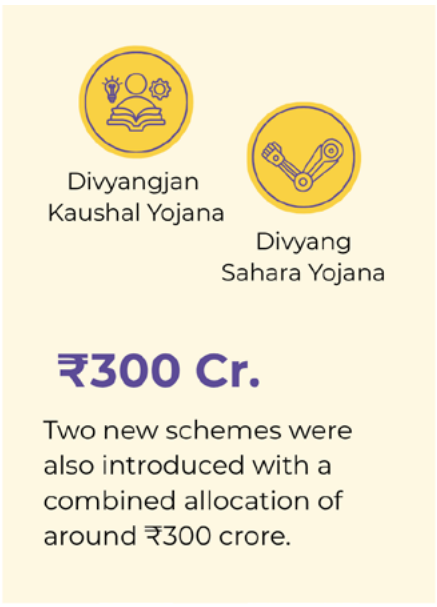
1. Budget Increase

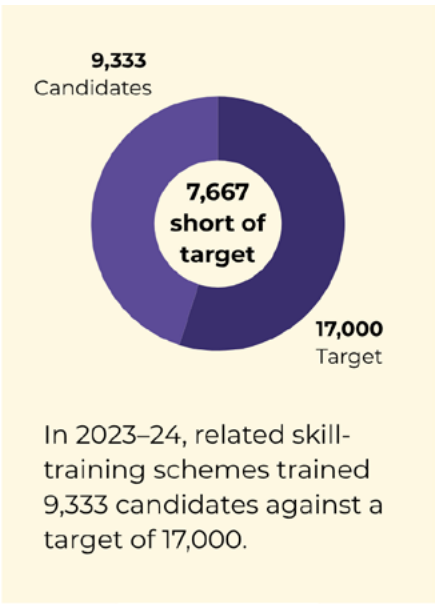
The Committee noted that the DEPwD budget for 2026–27 increased by around 31% compared with the previous year's revised estimates. The budget now stands at approximately ₹1,669.72 crore. Two new schemes were also introduced with a combined allocation of around ₹300 crore. The Divyangjan Kaushal Yojana will provide customised, industry-aligned skill training in sectors such as information technology, animation and visual effects, hospitality, and food and beverage services. The Divyang Sahara Yojana aims to improve access to assistive devices, including through the Artificial Limbs Manufacturing Corporation of India.

2. Skill-Training Shortfall

The Committee found that skill-training programmes for persons with disabilities under the National Action Plan for Skill Development of Persons with Disabilities have repeatedly fallen short of their annual targets. This shortfall has also been highlighted in earlier Committee reports. For example, in 2023–24, related skill-training schemes trained 9,333 candidates against a target of 17,000.







Key Details

3. Implementation Concern

Given this track record, the Committee questioned whether adequate implementation frameworks would be in place in time for the two new schemes' enlarged budgets to be deployed effectively, rather than repeating the underutilisation problems flagged in previous years.

Why this Matters

Despite higher funding, skill-training targets for persons with disabilities have repeatedly not been met. The new ₹200 crore scheme of Divyangjan Kaushal Yojana will need better implementation, monitoring and job linkages to ensure that the funds actually help more persons with disabilities gain skills and employment.

Source

Parliamentary Standing Committee on Social Justice and Empowerment

6. NITI Aayog Releases “Reimagining Care” Report, Setting Out a National Caregiving Framework With Specific Recommendations for Disability Care

Key Takeaway

NITI Aayog has released “Reimagining Care: Strategies for Empowering Caregivers in Viksit Bharat@2047,” proposing a National Policy on Caregiving and a National Caregiver Council, with specific recommendations addressing caregiving for and by persons with disabilities.

Background

NITI Aayog released the report on 5 August 2026 in New Delhi, with Vice Chairperson Dr. Ashok Kumar Lahiri, Member Dr. R. Balasubramaniam and Chief Executive Officer Nidhi Chhibber in attendance, along with representatives of the World Health Organization, UNICEF, the World Bank, UN Women and the International Labour Organization. The report covers family caregivers, community caregivers and paid professional caregivers, and estimates that India’s care services market will grow from $ 29.62 billion in 2023 to $ 72.31 billion by 2030.



Key Details

1. National Policy and Institutional Architecture

The report recommends a National Policy on Caregiving and a National Caregiver Council to set common training standards, accredit caregiving courses, and coordinate across ministries. It also proposes a National Caregiving Qualification Framework covering training, certification and accreditation, including recognition of prior learning for experienced informal caregivers.

Key Details

2. Disability Care Provisions

The report notes that the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016, recognises 21 categories of disabilities, creating a substantial and diverse need for specialised care. It addresses persons with disabilities both as recipients of structured caregiving support and, in parts of its workforce recommendations, as potential caregivers themselves.

3. Social Security and the Care Economy

The report calls for expanded social security coverage, entrepreneurship support for care-sector micro, small and medium enterprises, including access to schemes such as Mudra loans, and training and counselling support for family and community caregivers.

4. Unpaid Care Burden

Citing Time Use Survey data, the report notes that Indian women spend an average of 299 minutes a day on unpaid domestic and caregiving work, compared with 97 minutes for men, as part of the case for professionalising and better supporting caregiving.



5. Global Positioning

The report situates India's caregiving workforce within a projected global shortage of skilled care and health workers, and recommends international mobility pathways and partnerships for Indian caregiving professionals.

Why this Matters

For the disability sector, the report is significant because it treats caregiving as a distinct, fundable policy domain intersecting with disability, rather than folding it into treatment-focused health policy. Whether its recommendations translate into funded, accessible and affordable caregiving support, particularly for families who cannot afford paid care, will determine whether it changes the everyday position of persons with disabilities and their caregivers, or remains a framework document.

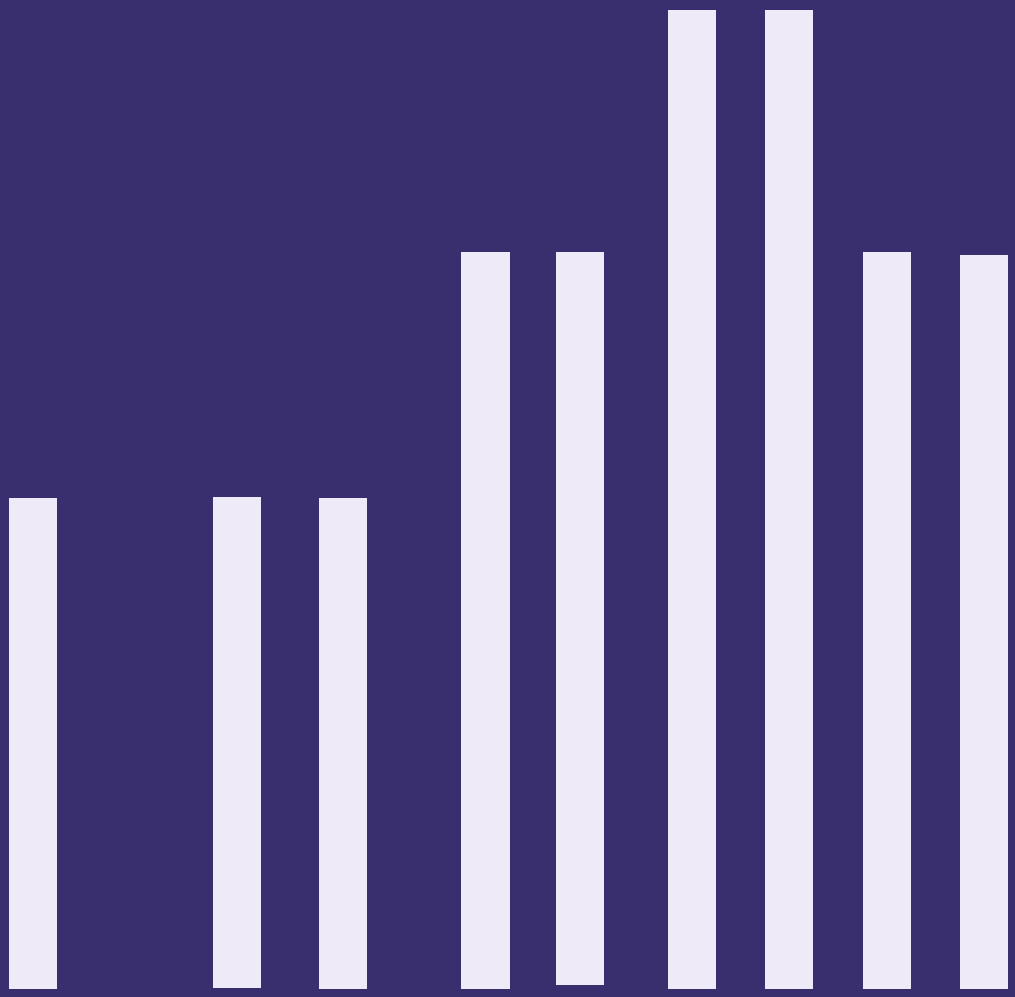
Sources

NITI Aayog

Press Information Bureau

02

LEGAL UPDATES



1. Supreme Court Directs States and Union Territories to Consider Reservation for Cadets Disabled During Military Training

Case	In Re: Cadets Disabled in Military Training Struggle
Citation	Suo Motu Writ Petition (Civil) No. 6 of 2025
Court	Supreme Court of India
Date	4 August 2026

Key Takeaway

The Supreme Court recognised that cadets who acquire benchmark disabilities during military training and are subsequently discharged should not be excluded from employment-related reservation benefits. The Court held that such "out-boarded" cadets are entitled to seek reservation under Section 34 of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 (RPwD Act) and directed States and Union Territories to consider extending reservation to them under the Ex-Military Personnel quota. The Court also directed consideration of a suitable scheme for cadets whose disabilities fall below the benchmark disability threshold.

Facts

This matter arose from the challenges faced by cadets who acquire disabilities during military training and are subsequently "out-boarded" before completing their training or receiving a commission. The Supreme Court took suo motu cognisance of the issue, particularly in light of the difficulties faced by such cadets in accessing medical care, welfare benefits and employment following their release. The Court examined the rehabilitation mechanisms available to these individuals, with particular focus on cadets who acquire benchmark disabilities, as they do not fall within the statutory definition of "ex-servicemen" and may consequently be excluded from certain benefits and rehabilitation measures.

Issues

a. Whether cadets who acquire benchmark disabilities during military training and are discharged before commissioning are entitled to reservation benefits under Section 34 of the RPwD Act, 2016?

b. Whether such “out-boarded” cadets should be considered for reservation under the Ex-Military Personnel quota of States and Union Territories?

c. Whether a separate rehabilitation or welfare scheme should be formulated for cadets whose disabilities are below the benchmark threshold?

Judgement

1. Reservation under the RPwD Act, 2016

The Court observed that Section 34 of the RPwD Act, 2016 requires the appropriate government to reserve not less than four per cent of vacancies for persons with benchmark disabilities. The Court held that out-boarded cadets who satisfy the benchmark disability requirement ought to be entitled to the benefit of reservation and should be permitted to apply in the reserved category.

2. Retrospective Application

The Court directed the States and Union Territories to consider granting reservation to out-boarded cadets with benchmark disabilities under the Ex-Military Personnel quota. The Court clarified that this consideration should be made notwithstanding the definition of “Ex-Servicemen” adopted by the Department of Personnel and Training.

3. Amendment to the RPwD Act, 2016

The Court also directed the Union Government to consider preparing and extending a suitable scheme for out-boarded cadets whose disabilities do not meet the benchmark disability threshold under the RPwD Act, 2016

4. Medical and Welfare Benefits

The Court noted that Ex-Servicemen Contributory Health Scheme benefits had been extended to the affected cadets, including coverage of medical expenses for life.

Judgement

5. Individual Proceedings before High Courts

The Court clarified that the pendency of the suo motu proceedings would not prevent individual cadets from pursuing appropriate writ petitions before the High Courts. Where such petitions had been disposed of because of the pendency of the Supreme Court proceedings, the concerned petitioners were given liberty to seek their revival.

Source

LiveLaw

2. Kerala High Court Supports Renaming of Mental Health Centres as “Happiness and Wellness Centres”

Case	The High Court Legal Aid Committee vs. State of Kerala & Ors.
Citation	W.P. (C) No. 16603 of 2026
Court	High Court of Kerala
Date	3 September 2026

Key Takeaway

The Kerala High Court welcomed the State Government’s decision to rename Mental Health Centres as “Happiness and Wellness Centres” as a measure aimed at reducing the stigma associated with mental healthcare. The Court, however, emphasised that the change in nomenclature was only a first step and called for improvements in staffing, security, medicines, transportation and infrastructure at the Centres. Subsequently, the Indian Medical Association (IMA) and the Indian Psychiatric Society (IPS) raised objections to the new nomenclature, particularly seeking retention of the terms “mental health” or “psychiatric” in the name. The Court permitted them to place their objections before the State Government for consideration.

Facts

This case forms part of a long-running public interest litigation concerning the condition of mental health institutions in Kerala. The institutions concerned are specialised government-run psychiatric/ mental-health institutions under Kerala’s Health and Family Welfare Department and form part of the State’s public healthcare infrastructure. Their functioning as mental health establishments is governed by the Mental Healthcare Act, 2017, which provides a rights-based framework for access to mental healthcare, treatment, dignity and safeguards for persons with mental illness. The proceedings originated in 1996 following directions issued by the Supreme Court in Sheela Barse vs. Union of India. The Kerala High Court has continued to monitor the conditions at the State’s Mental Health Centres, including through inspections of the Centres at Thiruvananthapuram, Thrissur and Kozhikode.

Facts

During the proceedings, the Court raised concerns regarding deficiencies in staffing, infrastructure and security at the Centres. The Court had also considered the possibility of conducting a social audit of the institutions. In response to the Court's observations regarding the stigma associated with mental health institutions and the manner in which the Centres and their patients are perceived, the State Government informed the Court that it had decided to rename the Mental Health Centres as "Happiness and Wellness Centres".

The Court recorded its appreciation of the decision, observing that the change in name could contribute to addressing the stigma associated with the Centres. At the same time, it emphasised that renaming was only the first of several measures required and directed attention to deficiencies in staffing, security, medicines and transportation.

Subsequently, the IMA and the IPS raised objections to the new nomenclature. They sought an opportunity to place their concerns before the State Government. The organisations' objections included the concern that the terms "mental health" or "psychiatric" should continue to appear in the name of the institutions. The Court permitted them to submit their objections to the Principal Secretary, Health Department, and directed the competent authority to hear their representatives.

Issues

a. Whether the State's decision to rename Mental Health Centres as "Happiness and Wellness Centres" adequately addresses concerns relating to stigma and the treatment of persons receiving mental healthcare?

b. Whether the State is required to undertake measures to improve the infrastructure, staffing, medical care and living conditions in Mental Health Centres?

Judgement

1. Renaming of Mental Health Centres

The Court welcomed the State Government's decision to rename Mental Health Centres as "Happiness and Wellness Centres". The Court considered the change to be a positive first step towards reducing the stigma associated with mental healthcare, while making clear that it was the first of the many measures required

Judgement

2. Adequate Staffing and Basic Facilities

The Court identified the shortage of personnel as an immediate concern. It called for sufficient numbers of attendants, cooks, dhobis and security personnel to be made available at the Centres.

The Court's concern was linked to the conditions in which patients were being kept, including the need to confine patients because of inadequate staffing and security arrangements.

3. Secure Infrastructure

The Court directed attention to the construction of compound walls to secure the perimeters of the Centres. Adequate perimeter security was considered necessary to ensure that patients could be accommodated safely without unnecessary confinement.

4. Continuous Availability of Medicines

The Court required the uninterrupted availability of medicines necessary for both mental and physical health, based on the requirements identified by the superintendents and doctors of the Centres.

5. Transportation Facilities

The Court also directed that at least one or two vehicles should be made available at the Centres, preferably electric vehicles, for transportation of food and other purposes.

6. Objections to the Renaming

Following the State's notification, the IMA and the IPS raised objections to the new nomenclature. The High Court permitted the organisations to submit their concerns to the Principal Secretary, Health Department, and directed the competent authority to hear their submissions.
The Court also indicated that the objections could be considered by the Government before finalising the approach to the nomenclature.

Source

LiveLaw

3. Bombay High Court Holds Additional Learning Disability Cannot Disqualify a Candidate with Benchmark Disability Eligible for Reserve Bank of India Grade ‘B’ Post

Case	Shritij Mohan Shrivastava vs. Reserve Bank of India & Anr.
Citation	W.P. (L) No. 7619 of 2026
Court	High Court of Bombay
Date	5 August 2026

Key Takeaway

The Bombay High Court held that a candidate who satisfies the disability category identified for a post cannot be disqualified merely because the candidate also has an additional disability. The Court held that the petitioner, who had Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) (Mild) along with Learning Disability (Dyslexia and Dysgraphia), was eligible for the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Grade ‘B’ post since ASD (Mild) was an identified suitable category. The Court also reiterated that reasonable accommodation is a prerequisite to assessing the eligibility of persons with disabilities.

Facts

The petitioner, Shritij Mohan Shrivastava, was issued a Permanent Disability Certificate and Unique Disability ID Card on 29 June 2022 by Lokmanya Tilak Municipal General Hospital and Medical College, Sion, Mumbai. The certificate recorded Autism Spectrum Disorder with Learning Disability (Dyslexia and Dysgraphia) and a 60% permanent disability.

On 10 September 2025, the RBI issued an advertisement for recruitment to the post of Officer in Grade ‘B’. The advertisement identified ASD (Mild) and Mental Illness as suitable categories of benchmark disabilities for the post. It also provided for candidates with multiple disabilities involving the specified categories.

Facts

The petitioner applied for the post under the Persons with Benchmark Disabilities category. However, on 13 February 2026, the RBI informed him that he would not be permitted to appear for the interview as it considered him ineligible under the specified disability criteria. The RBI subsequently clarified its position by email dated 16 February 2026. The petitioner challenged the decision before the Bombay High Court, stating that he had ASD (Mild), which was a disability category identified as suitable for the post, and that his additional learning disability should not make him ineligible.

On 17 March 2026, the High Court passed an interim order allowing the petitioner to appear for the interview and directing that his candidature should not be rejected merely because he also had Dyslexia and Dysgraphia, subject to the final outcome of the petition. The petitioner subsequently appeared for and passed the interview, while his appointment was kept on hold pending the Court's final decision.

Issues

a. Whether a candidate who satisfies the disability category identified as suitable for a post can be disqualified merely because the candidate also has an additional disability which is not independently identified as suitable for that post?

b. Whether the petitioner, having ASD (Mild) along with Learning Disability (Dyslexia and Dysgraphia), satisfied the disability eligibility criteria prescribed for the RBI Grade 'B' post?

c. Whether the principle of reasonable accommodation is required to be considered before determining the eligibility of a person with disability?

Judgement

1. Additional Learning Disability Cannot Render an Otherwise Eligible Candidate Ineligible

The Court held that the petitioner could not be considered ineligible merely because he additionally had a learning disability. The Court noted that the petitioner was certified as having ASD (Mild), which was expressly included among the disability categories identified as suitable for the Grade 'B' post. The Court further observed that the recruitment advertisement itself recognised multiple disabilities, including combinations of the specified categories. Therefore, the presence of an additional learning disability could not, by itself, disqualify the petitioner.

Judgement

2. Eligibility to Be Determined in Light of the Identified Disability

The Court held that the petitioner met the eligibility criteria relating to disability as specified by the Government of India notification dated 4 January 2021 and the RBI recruitment advertisement. The Court rejected the RBI's contention that the petitioner's additional learning disability made him ineligible merely because Specific Learning Disability was not separately identified as a suitable category for the post.

3. Reasonable Accommodation as a Prerequisite

The Court reiterated that a person with disability is required to be provided reasonable accommodation as a prerequisite to assessing eligibility, particularly where the person already satisfies the disability criterion prescribed for the post. The Court had taken the same view in its earlier interim order dated 17 March 2026, holding that the petitioner should not be disqualified on the basis of his additional learning disability.

4. Appointment Directed

The Court noted that the petitioner had already appeared for and passed the interview, pursuant to the interim order, and that his appointment had merely been kept in abeyance. Accordingly, the Court allowed the petition, set aside the rejection of his candidature and directed the RBI to issue an appointment order in his favour within one week from the date a copy of the judgement became available.

Source

LiveLaw

4. Punjab and Haryana High Court Holds Multiple Disabilities Can Be Combined to Meet the 40% Benchmark Threshold

Case	Sakander Singh Virk vs. State of Punjab & Ors.
Citation	CWP-16604-2026 (O&M)
Court	High Court of Punjab and Haryana at Chandigarh
Date	19 August 2026

Key Takeaway

The Punjab and Haryana High Court has held that where a government employee has more than one certified disability, these can be read together as "Multiple Disabilities" – a distinct specified disability under the RPwD Act, 2016 – to meet the 40% benchmark disability threshold, even where neither disability independently crosses that mark.

Facts

Sakander Singh Virk, an Assistant Sub Inspector in the Punjab Police, had a 25% hearing disability and 25% locomotor disability, giving him an overall disability of 44%. As he was due to retire at 58 on 28 February 2026, he sought an extension up to 60 under Rule 3.27 of the Punjab Civil Services Rules, which allows extensions for employees with certain disabilities.

The Senior Superintendent of Police, Jalandhar (Rural), rejected his request, stating that neither disability individually reached the 40% threshold, his disabilities could not be combined to meet the requirement, his application was filed late, and he had not completed the required medical fitness examination.

Issues

a. Whether two disabilities, each below 40%, can be combined to meet the 40% benchmark disability requirement under the RPwD Act, 2016?

b. Whether the three-month notice requirement under Rule 3.26 applies to applications for extension under Rule 3.27?

c. Whether a medical examination by the Civil Surgeon is mandatory for such an extension?

Judgement

1. Multiple Disabilities Can Be Considered Together

The Court held that "Multiple Disabilities" is itself recognised as a specified disability under Item 5 of the Schedule to the RPwD Act, 2016. Therefore, the petitioner's disabilities could not be considered in isolation merely because each individual disability was below 40%. Since the competent medical authority had certified his overall disability at 44%, he satisfied the definition of a "person with benchmark disability" under Section 2(r) of the RPwD Act, 2016.

2. Three-Month Notice Requirement

The Court held that the three-month notice requirement under Rule 3.26(a) does not apply to applications under Rule 3.27, as Rule 3.27 specifically overrides Rule 3.26. Therefore, Virk's application could not be rejected solely because it was not submitted three months before retirement.

3. Civil Surgeon Examination is Not an Automatic Requirement

The Court further held that a medical examination by the Civil Surgeon is not a mandatory precondition in every case. Such an examination may be required where the competent authority has reason to doubt the employee's fitness. In the present case, no such basis was established.
The Court also relied on the earlier decision in Prem Nath vs. Punjab Water Resources Management and Development Corporation (2023), which held that the provisions concerning disability in the Punjab Civil Services Rules must be interpreted consistently with the RPwD Act, 2016, rather than the repealed Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act, 1995.

4. Outcome

The Court quashed the orders rejecting the extension and held that Virk was entitled to continue in service until the age of 60 years, along with consequential service and monetary benefits, including arrears from 1 March 2026.

Source

Indian Kanoon

5. Chief Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities Fines Air India ₹50,000 and Recommends ₹5 Lakh Compensation for De-boarding a Wheelchair User

Case	Falguni Maheshwari vs. Air India Limited & Ors
Citation	Case No. CCPD-OF-0002/1111/2026
Court	Court of the Chief Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities (Divyangjan)
Date	24 September 2026

Key Takeaway

The Chief Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities (CCPD) imposed a ₹50,000 fine on Air India and recommended ₹5 lakh compensation after a wheelchair user was de-boarded from a connecting flight without an in-person medical assessment or written reasons.

Facts

Ms. Falguni Maheshwari, a person with 80% locomotor disability and a wheelchair user, travelled from Frankfurt to Delhi on an Air India flight without any issue. After boarding her connecting flight from Delhi to Bhuj and taking her seat, the cabin crew questioned her ability to travel independently and asked for a “Fit to Fly” certificate.

She was subsequently de-boarded. No in-person medical examination was conducted at the airport and she was not given written reasons for the decision. Her powered wheelchair was also returned in a damaged condition, and she incurred additional expenses for alternative travel.

Air India stated that the decision was taken on safety grounds, based on the cabin crew’s observations about her condition, and that she was later allowed to travel after obtaining a “Fit to Fly” certificate.

Issues

a. Whether Air India's decision to de-board the complainant without an in-person medical examination and written reasons violated the applicable Civil Aviation Requirements (CAR)?

b. Whether the treatment amounted to discrimination on the ground of disability under the RPwD Act, 2016?

c. Whether Air India was liable to provide compensation and other relief for the incident and the damage to the complainant's wheelchair?

Judgement

1. Violation of Civil Aviation Requirements

The CCPD found that Air India had failed to comply with Para 4.1.36 of the CAR, which requires an in-person medical assessment and written reasons where a passenger's fitness to travel is questioned. The airline had relied on the observations of its cabin crew without following this procedure.

2. Violation of Disability Rights

The CCPD held that the incident was inconsistent with the principles of equality, dignity, non-discrimination and reasonable accommodation under the RPwD Act, 2016. The CCPD also referred to the Supreme Court's decision in Jeeja Ghosh vs. Union of India (2016), which recognised the rights of passengers with disabilities and the need for sensitivity in their treatment by airlines.

3. Compensation and Directions

The CCPD imposed a ₹50,000 fine on Air India under Section 89 of the RPwD Act, 2016 and recommended ₹5 lakh compensation to the complainant for the distress, humiliation and expenses caused. Air India was also directed to conduct an internal inquiry, sensitise its staff on disability rights and reasonable accommodation, and submit an Action Taken Report within 60 days.

Delhi International Airport Limited was not held responsible for the de-boarding decision, as this was considered to be within Air India's responsibility.

Source

CCPD Order

6. Delhi High Court Holds That Medical Assessment Boards Cannot Re-Quantify Disability Recorded in Unique Disability ID (UDID) Cards

Case	Aashiya vs. National Medical Commission & Ors. and Shivam Kumar vs. Union of India & Ors.
Citation	W.P. (C) No. 12368 of 2026 and W.P. (C) No. 12499 of 2026
Court	High Court of Delhi
Date	24 September 2026

Key Takeaway

The Delhi High Court held that Medical Assessment Boards assessing candidates for admission to the Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery (MBBS) course under the Persons with Benchmark Disabilities (PwBD) category may independently assess a candidate's functional competency, but cannot re-quantify or reduce the percentage of disability recorded in a valid UDID card. The Court held that the UDID card remains the primary documentary evidence of the existence, nature and extent of the disability, and any challenge to the disability percentage must be pursued through the statutory certification and appellate mechanism rather than through the admission-stage Medical Assessment Board.

Facts

The petitions concerned two candidates who had applied for admission to the MBBS course through the National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (Undergraduate) [NEET (UG)] 2026 under the PwBD category.

In Shivam Kumar's case, the petitioner was an 18-year-old candidate with a permanent visual disability. His Disability Certificate and UDID card, issued by the DePwD, recorded his disability at 60%. His NEET (UG) admit card also recognised his disability and granted him compensatory time. He secured a PwBD rank of 409.

Facts

Under the Guidelines on Assessment of Persons with Benchmark Disabilities for Admission to the MBBS Course, 2026 (2026 MBBS Guidelines), candidates seeking admission under the PwBD category were required to appear before a designated Medical Assessment Board and obtain an Eligibility Certificate.

Shivam appeared before the Medical Assessment Board along with his UDID card. While his UDID card recorded a 60% disability, the Medical Assessment Board assessed his disability at 30%. At the same time, the Board found that he was capable of pursuing the MBBS course and did not pose a threat to patients.

The petitioner subsequently approached the Chief Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities. The Chief Commissioner permitted him to participate in counselling on the strength of his valid UDID card, subject to the outcome of the disability assessment proceedings. However, the Appellate Medical PwBD Assessment Board subsequently affirmed the 30% assessment. His candidature was consequently shifted from the PwBD category to the General category.

In Aashiya's case, the petitioner had a permanent locomotor disability of 61%, as recorded in her Disability Certificate and UDID card. She appeared for NEET (UG) 2026 under the General-PwBD category and obtained a PwBD rank of 638. However, the Primary Disability Assessment Medical Board re-quantified her disability at 16% and declared her ineligible for PwBD reservation. The Appellate Disability Assessment Board subsequently confirmed the 16% assessment.

Both petitioners therefore approached the Delhi High Court challenging the Medical Boards' assessments and seeking restoration of their candidature under the PwBD category.

Issues

a. Whether the Medical Assessment Boards constituted under the 2026 MBBS Guidelines could re-assess or reduce the percentage of disability already recorded in a valid UDID card?

b. Whether the Boards' assessment of functional competency permitted them to independently determine the percentage of a candidate's benchmark disability?

c. Whether a candidate could be denied PwBD reservation on the basis of a reduced disability percentage determined by the Medical Assessment Board at the admission stage?

Judgement

1. UDID Card is the Primary Documentary Evidence of Disability

The Court examined Clauses 9.2 and 9.3 of the 2026 MBBS Guidelines. Clause 9.2 provides that every PwBD candidate must possess a valid Permanent UDID Card, which serves as the primary documentary evidence of the existence, nature and extent of the specified disability.

The Court therefore held that the disability percentage recorded in the valid UDID card has primacy for determining eligibility for reservation under the PwBD category.

2. Functional Competency is Different from Disability Quantification

The Court drew an important distinction between two separate functions:

- Quantification of disability: determining the percentage of disability; and
- Functional competency assessment: determining whether the candidate can undertake the MBBS course and subsequently practise medicine.

Under the 2026 MBBS Guidelines, the Medical Assessment Board is authorised to undertake the second assessment. It may determine whether the candidate can acquire and perform the essential competencies required under the Competency Based Medical Education curriculum, including with reasonable accommodation or assistive technology.

However, the Court held that the Guidelines do not authorise the Board to revisit the percentage of disability recorded in the UDID card. Thus, the Board could ask:

"Can this candidate, with appropriate accommodation or assistive technology, successfully undertake the MBBS course?"

But it could not use that assessment to ask:
"Is this candidate really 60% disabled or only 30% disabled?"

That distinction was central to the Court's reasoning.

Judgement

3. PwBD Reservation is Linked to the Benchmark Disability Recorded Under the Applicable Framework

The Court noted that the 2026 MBBS Guidelines continue to recognise the benchmark disability prescribed under the RPwD Act, 2016 for determining eligibility for PwBD reservation. At the same time, admission to the MBBS course is subject to an objective assessment of functional competency.

Accordingly, the Court treated reservation eligibility and functional suitability for pursuing the course as distinct questions. A Medical Assessment Board may therefore conclude that a candidate is functionally capable of completing the MBBS course, but it cannot reduce the disability percentage in the UDID card merely because its own assessment produces a different percentage.

4. The Medical Board Cannot Override the Statutory Certification Process

The Court also examined Sections 56, 57 and 59 of the RPwD Act, 2016. These provisions establish the framework for assessment of disability, designation of certifying authorities and appeals against decisions of the certifying authority.

On this basis, the Court held that if an authority has a grievance concerning the disability percentage recorded in a UDID card, it must challenge that certification through the prescribed statutory appellate mechanism. It is not open to a Medical Assessment Board conducting an admission assessment to simply disregard the existing UDID card or reduce the disability percentage recorded in it.

5. Reliance on the Supreme Court's Functional Competency Approach

The Court also relied on the Supreme Court's decision in Om Rathod vs. Director General of Health Services, particularly its observations that Disability Assessment Boards should focus on functional competence rather than merely quantifying disability. The Supreme Court had also recognised that the quantification recorded in the UDID card can be used to assess eligibility for reservation, while assessment at the admission stage should focus on the candidate's functional competency for the particular course.

The Delhi High Court considered this approach consistent with the statutory framework and the 2026 MBBS Guidelines.

Judgement

6. Decision

The Court set aside:

1. the Medical Assessment Board's assessment dated 7 August 2026 in Shivam Kumar's case;
2. the Appellate Board's Eligibility Certificate dated 14 August 2026; and
3. the corresponding assessments and Eligibility Certificates in Aashiya's case.

Since the first two counselling rounds had already concluded, the Court directed that both petitioners be permitted to participate in the third round and the mop-up round, if available, based on their rank and entitlement under the PwBD category, with their disability treated in accordance with their respective UDID cards.

The Court, however, declined to direct the creation of supernumerary seats, noting that the petitioners still had subsequent counselling opportunities available to them.

Source

CaseMine

7. Haryana State Legal Services Authority Launches Mobile Legal Clinics and Standard Operating Procedure for Protection of Persons with Disabilities

Key Takeaway

The Haryana State Legal Services Authority (HALSA) launched the "Nyay Mitra – Justice at Your Doorstep" initiative and a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for complaint redressal, legal aid and protection of persons with disabilities, including prisoners with disabilities. Together, the initiatives seek to strengthen last-mile access to legal services and establish a more uniform, accessible and rights-based mechanism for addressing abuse, violence and exploitation of persons with disabilities.

Background

HALSA launched two initiatives aimed at strengthening access to justice for persons with disabilities:

1. "Nyay Mitra – Justice at Your Doorstep", a mobile legal services initiative; and

2. an SOP for Complaint Redressal, Legal Aid and Protection of Persons with Disabilities, including Prisoners with Disabilities. The initiatives were launched by Justice Deepak Sibal, Judge of the Punjab and Haryana High Court and Executive Chairman of HALSA, in September 2026.

The initiatives were launched by Justice Deepak Sibal, Judge of the Punjab and Haryana High Court and Executive Chairman of HALSA, in September 2026.

On 2 September 2026, HALSA launched these two initiatives alongside its existing legal aid network, which already includes 321 village-level legal aid clinics and 56 urban legal aid clinics functioning under 22 District Legal Services Authorities and 33 Sub-Divisional Legal Services Committees across Haryana. The mobile legal services vans were described as mobile extensions of these Legal Services Institutions, intended to operate through planned "Justice Circuits" covering the entire State.



The Haryana State Legal Services Authority

Nyay Mitra
Justice at Your Doorstep

SOP seeks to operationalise Section 7 of the RPwD Act, 2016.

321
Village-level legal aid clinics across Haryana.

56
Urban legal aid clinics functioning across Haryana.

22
District Legal Services Authorities across Haryana.

33
Sub-Divisional Legal Services Committees across Haryana.

Key Details

Under the Nyay Mitra initiative, HALSA has deployed four mobile legal services vans to operate as mobile legal clinics across Haryana. The vans will follow pre-planned routes, with priority given to remote and underserved areas.

The mobile clinics will provide:

- free legal aid;
- legal guidance;
- pre-litigation counselling;
- assistance with victim compensation claims;
- alternative dispute resolution services;
- Tele-Law consultations;
- assistance in accessing welfare schemes; and
- legal awareness and literacy programmes.

As per HALSA's concept note, the four vehicles will operate across different zones of Haryana. Each vehicle will ordinarily remain in a district for two months before moving to another district.

HALSA also introduced an SOP for complaint redressal, legal aid and protection of persons with disabilities, including prisoners with disabilities. The SOP establishes a standardised mechanism for addressing complaints relating to abuse, violence and exploitation of persons with disabilities. HALSA states that the SOP seeks to operationalise Section 7 of the RPwD Act, 2016.

HALSA's existing network of district and sub-divisional legal services committees gives Nyay Mitra a ready institutional base to build on.

Why this Matters

Persons with disabilities may face physical, geographical, communication and institutional barriers when accessing legal services. The Nyay Mitra initiative seeks to address these barriers by taking legal services to remote and underserved communities through mobile legal clinics.

The SOP provides an institutional framework for responding to complaints involving abuse, violence and exploitation of persons with disabilities. Together, the initiatives seek to strengthen access to legal aid and provide a more structured mechanism for responding to rights violations.

Source

LiveLaw

8. University Grants Commission Directs Universities to Ensure Full Compliance with the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPwD) Act, 2016

Key Takeaway

The University Grants Commission (UGC) has issued a fresh advisory directing all universities and colleges to fully implement the RPwD Act, 2016, warning of action against non-compliant institutions, and setting 30 September 2026 as the deadline to submit disability-related data.

Background

The UGC is the statutory body responsible for coordinating standards in Indian higher education. In a letter dated 27 August 2026 and published on its website on 14 September 2026, UGC Secretary Prof. Shyama Rath directed all universities to comply with the RPwD Act, 2016 and follow earlier directions issued in connection with the Supreme Court's orders of 15 December 2017 on accessibility and reservation for persons with disabilities in educational institutions. The advisory follows similar UGC communications issued in 2020 and 2024.

The Supreme Court's 2017 orders arose from Disabled Rights Group & Anr. vs. Union of India & Ors. A Bench led by Justice A.K. Sikri held that the reservation requirement for persons with disabilities in government and government-aided educational institutions must be strictly complied with. At the time, Section 39 of the Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act, 1995 provided for 3% reservation. This requirement is now contained in Section 32 of the RPwD Act, 2016 which provides for 5% reservation. The Court further held that denying persons with disabilities appropriate educational facilities amounts to discrimination. It also directed the UGC to finalise accessibility guidelines for higher-education institutions. The UGC subsequently issued the Accessibility Guidelines and Standards for Higher Education Institutions and Universities. The guidelines provide for their implementation in phases over a period of five years.

3%

Section 39
of The PWD(EPF) Act

Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act, 1995 provides for 3% reservation for persons with disabilities in government and government-aided educational institutions.

5%

Section 32
of The RPWD Act

Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 provides for 5% reservation for persons with disabilities in government and government-aided educational institutions

Panjab University reported meeting its 5% admissions reservation quota

1.7%
Teaching Staff



1.07%
Non - Teaching



But only **11 of 634 teaching staff and 22 of 2,055 non-teaching staff** were persons with disabilities,

Key Details

1. Reservation Compliance

Universities must ensure compliance with Section 32 of the RPwD Act, 2016, which concerns the reservation of seats for persons with disabilities in admissions to each course, and must notify the UGC annually of the number of students with disabilities admitted to each course.

2. Reporting and Consequences

Institutions must submit the required information to the Chief Commissioner or State Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities, as applicable. The UGC has stated that appropriate action may be initiated against institutions that fail to comply with these requirements under Section 89 of the RPwD Act, 2016.

3. Accessibility and Internal Structures

Universities and affiliated colleges must prepare and implement a time-bound accessibility action plan, adopting the Harmonised Guidelines and Space Standards for Barrier-Free Built Environment for persons with disabilities as the applicable standard. Institutions must also form an Internal Committee – comprising teachers, staff, students and parents – to address the day-to-day needs of persons with disabilities and oversee implementation of relevant schemes, and ensure their Equal Opportunity Cells are functional.

Data Submission

Universities must furnish statistical information on students with disabilities admitted, teaching and non-teaching staff recruited, and fellowships and scholarships provided to students with disabilities, through the UGC's Universities Activity Monitoring Portal, by 30 September 2026. Universities have also been directed to circulate these instructions to all constituent and affiliated colleges. Universities must furnish statistical information on students with disabilities admitted, teaching and non-teaching staff recruited, and fellowships and scholarships provided to students with disabilities, through the UGC's Universities Activity Monitoring Portal, by 30 September 2026. Universities have also been directed to circulate these instructions to all constituent and affiliated colleges.

Why this Matters

Most of these obligations are not new – they trace back to the RPwD Act, 2016 itself and the Supreme Court's 2017 directions. What distinguishes this round is the UGC's explicit warning of consequential action under Section 89 and a firm data deadline, suggesting an intent to monitor compliance more closely than in earlier cycles.

A UGC survey conducted in July 2026 illustrates the scale of the gap this advisory is meant to close: at Panjab University, for instance, only 11 of 634 teaching staff and 22 of 2,055 non-teaching staff were persons with disabilities, even though the university reported meeting its 5% admissions reservation quota, with recruitment and promotion quotas lagging further behind.

Source

University Grants Commission, Advisory Related to the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016

9. Government Publishes Draft Rules on Standards, Procurement and Repair of Assistive Products for Persons with Disabilities

Key Takeaway

DEPwD has published the draft Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPwD) Amendment Rules, 2026, which propose a binding framework for assistive products such as wheelchairs, hearing aids and screen readers. The draft covers product classification, Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) standards and certification, procurement, financial support, a right to repair and grievance redressal. Objections and suggestions have been invited from the public within thirty days which is to be addressed to Shri Ram Charan Meena Under Secretary to the Government of India, Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (Divyangjan), Room No 11 A, 5th Floor, PanditDeenDayal Antyodaya Bhawan, CGO Complex, Lodhi Road, New Delhi, 110003 or by email at rcmeena.79@gov.in.

Background

The DEPwD, under the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, has published the draft RPwD (Amendment) Rules, 2026, proposing a dedicated framework for assistive products and technology. The draft seeks to establish standards for product safety and accessibility, certification requirements, procurement procedures, financial assistance and repair mechanisms.

It follows the Supreme Court's judgement in Rajive Raturi vs. Union of India & Ors. dated 8 November 2024, which emphasised the need for clear, mandatory accessibility standards under the RPwD Act, 2016. The Court directed the Union Government to separate non-negotiable rules from the broader guidelines in Rule 15 of the RPwD Rules, 2017, as Section 40 of the RPwD Act, 2016 requires.

The notification is dated 8 September 2026 and was published in the Gazette of India (Extraordinary) on 3 October 2026. It proposes inserting a new clause (d), titled "Assistive Products and Technology (Standards and Accessibility)", into Rule 15(1) of the RPwD Rules, 2017.

Key Details

1. Classification of Assistive Products

The draft defines an assistive product as any device a person with disability uses to carry out everyday activities more independently, such as a wheelchair, hearing aid, white cane, screen reader, Braille display or communication app. Products are grouped into three categories:

- **Essential:** Products needed for routine and everyday activities, such as hearing aids, mobility aids, screen readers, spectacles and wheelchairs;
- **Specialised:** More advanced products needed by specific groups, such as augmentative and alternative communication devices, cochlear implants and prosthetics; and
- **Emerging:** Innovative technologies such as artificial intelligence-enabled communication devices, robotics and brain–computer interface systems.
  The lists are to be reviewed periodically, and an emerging product may move to the essential or specialised category once its specifications are standardised. “Assistive technology” is defined broadly to include assessment, fitting, training, repair and ongoing support. The definition of “user” covers persons with disabilities under the RPwD Act, 2016 and may extend to people with temporary functional limitations, such as fractures or post-surgical conditions.

2. Standards and Certification

BIS, or another authority designated by BIS or the Central Government, will prescribe standards for essential and specialised assistive products. If standards are set in phases, the phases and the technical reasons for them must be notified, with priority given to products that have caused accidents because of a lack of standardisation. Only products made to these standards may carry the standard mark, and BIS will prescribe how manufacturers can obtain permission to use it.

3. Wheelchair Safety and Mobility Aid Passport

All standard manual and motorised wheelchairs and wheeled mobility devices must be fitted with transit-ready, tie-down securement brackets. Manufacturers of powered wheelchairs and other powered mobility devices will be legally required to supply a “mobility aid passport” – a portable guide setting out the device’s exact dimensions, weight, battery type and disassembly instructions.

Key Details

4. Procurement and Online Portal

Government procurement of assistive products, including devices, software and integrated systems, must be through a transparent tendering process. Essential products may be procured from self-certified entities, but specialised products may be sourced only from manufacturers licensed by BIS or another designated authority.

A Competent Authority will set up an online Assistive Products Portal for applications, certification, procurement, distribution tracking and grievance monitoring. Working with the Ministry of Consumer Affairs' Right to Repair portal, it will extend the right to repair to assistive products.

5. Financial Support and Right to Repair

The Central and State Governments must frame schemes offering financial support to eligible users, including subsidies, reimbursements and insurance coverage. Insurance policies and government schemes must cover not only the initial cost of assistive products, but also replacement, repair and reimbursement where users have paid directly. The provisions on grievance redressal, insurance coverage and replacement will apply to essential assistive products.

The Ministry of Consumer Affairs' Right to Repair Scheme will be extended to essential and specialised assistive products. During disasters or emergencies, national and state disaster management authorities must ensure immediate replacement or provision of essential assistive technology as part of relief and rehabilitation.

6. Helpline and Accident Database

A national toll-free helpline will be set up for user feedback and complaints, with a mandatory resolution timeline of thirty days. The helpline, grievance redressal systems and awareness campaigns must be multimodal, including voice, text-based platforms and Indian Sign Language interpretation.

Any malfunction of an assistive device that causes injury or an accident must be investigated and the findings recorded. BIS or another notified body will maintain an Assistive Technology Accidents Database, which will guide the phasing of standard-setting and decisions on prohibiting non-standard assistive products.

Why this Matters

Assistive products are often what make it possible for persons with disabilities to study, work, travel and live independently, yet many are sold without binding quality or safety standards. By making standards, certified procurement, repair and time-bound grievance redressal part of the RPwD Rules, 2017 the draft responds directly to the Supreme Court's call in Rajive Raturi for clear, non-negotiable accessibility rules.

Several details remain open, however. The Competent Authority is not named, financial support depends on schemes yet to be framed, and protections on grievance redressal, insurance and replacement are limited to essential products. The consultation period gives disability organisations and users an opportunity to seek clarity on these points before the rules are finalised.

Source

Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities

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