



DISABILITY BULLETIN

Developments in Disability Law & Policy

Edition 13, January - April 2026

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. Banking: The RBI Ombudsman Scheme now includes persons with disabilities, but it is not clear what support and accommodations will be provided.

2. Education: Odisha has introduced a new programme to improve early support, teaching, and training for persons with intellectual disabilities.

3. Tourism: Kerala is working to make tourism more inclusive, including better awareness and use of technology.

4. Union Budget: Funding for disability inclusion has increased and new schemes have been introduced, but overall spending remains low.

5. Elections: New measures such as ramps, transport, assistive tools, and postal voting aim to improve participation.

6. Governance: A proposal has been made to create a National Commission for Persons with Disabilities.

7. Law-making: A new handbook supports parliamentarians in including disability issues in their work.

8. Health Insurance: A recent report highlights barriers faced by persons with disabilities in accessing insurance.

Easy to Read Summary: Legal

1. **Prisoners' Right to Health:** Courts affirm prisoners' right to regular healthcare, disability support, and dignified living conditions.

2. **Special Educators' Rights:** Supreme Court mandates TET qualification and equal pay for special educators across States.

3. **Disability Reservation & Merit:** Supreme Court holds that merit governs unreserved disability posts, open to all categories.

4. **Right to Die with Dignity:** Supreme Court allows withdrawal of life support in irreversible cases to uphold dignity.

5. **Accessible Examinations:** Courts uphold the right to assistive technology and reasonable accommodations in exams.

Other Updates:

6. **Disability Certification Reform:** Government introduces uniform disability certificate formats for consistency and verification.

7. **Strengthening Disability Governance:** Government focuses on better certification, assistive access, inclusive education, and technology use.

8. **Regulating Stem Cell Therapy for Autism:** Strict rules limit stem cell use for Autism to approved treatments and regulated research only.

Policy Developments

1. The RBI Integrated Ombudsman Scheme and Disability Inclusion: Reforms and Limitations

Key Takeaway

A revised iteration of the Reserve Bank Ombudsman Scheme, 2021, will come into effect from 1 July, 2026, and has integrated progressive disability-inclusive provisions. However, some uncertainties remain regarding the nature and extent of reasonable accommodation, and an absence of a clear definition for the scope of 'facilities for differently abled'.+

Background

The Reserve Bank Integrated Ombudsman Scheme, 2021, simplified the grievance redressal process at the RBI by enabling customers of Regulated Entities (REs), including banks, Non-Banking Financial Companies (NBFCs), Payment System Participants (PSPs) and Credit Information Companies, to register their complaints through a centralised system.

The Scheme aims to resolve the customer grievances related to 'deficiency in service' by REs in a speedy, cost-effective and satisfactory manner.

Key Details

Disability-centered changes include:

- a. Addition of 'Persons with Disabilities' category under 'Details of the Complainant' in the Form Of Complaint to be lodged with the RBI Ombudsman under Clause 11(2)
- b. Addition of 'Facilities for differently-abled persons' as a ground while filing about the nature of their complaint

Although the changes appear favourable, some uncertainties persist:

- a. **Reasonable Accommodation:** The Scheme does not specify the nature or extent of accommodations to be provided during grievance redressal. This creates ambiguity around
 - a. Accessibility of hearings
 - b. Timelines
 - c. Modes of communication
 - d. Availability of assistive technologies
- b. **'Facilities for Differently Abled':** The term and scope is not clearly defined, leaving uncertainty on whether it includes:
 - a. Physical accessibility
 - b. Digital accessibility
 - c. Communication support
 - d. Service-related accommodations

Source:

1. [Reserve Bank Integrated Ombudsman Scheme, 2026, Experian India](#)
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2. Strengthening Inclusive Education for Persons with Intellectual Disabilities: The Odisha–NIEPID MoU

Key Takeaway

The Government of Odisha has entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the National Institute for Empowerment of Persons with Intellectual Disabilities (NIEPID). The said MoU seeks to strengthen early identification, education, capacity building, and community awareness for Persons with Intellectual Disabilities (PwIDs) across the State.

Background

The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 expressly recognises persons with intellectual disabilities as a distinct category.

It also provides for provisions such as Section 17(c), which mandates the appropriate Governments and local authorities to facilitate inclusive education by providing qualified teachers to support children with intellectual disabilities.

Key Details

A positive step in this regard has been taken by the Department of Social Security & Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (SSEPD), Government of Odisha, which has entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the National Institute for Empowerment of Persons with Intellectual Disabilities (NIEPID).

This MoU seeks to strengthen the following areas:

1. Early Identification

- a. Strengthening early identification and intervention services for persons with intellectual disabilities

2. Education:

- a. Utilisation of NIEPID's specialised curriculum, designed to address the unique learning needs of students with intellectual disabilities, and to ensure quality education in accordance with national standards.
- b. Implementation of these curriculum frameworks across state-run special schools and Grant-in-Aid schools

3. Capacity Building

- a. Ensure training programmes for special educators, caregivers, and frontline workers
- b. Equipping professionals with modern pedagogical tools and digital learning content
- c. Establishment of joint research facilities to derive and implement best practices and quality resources for people with intellectual disabilities

4. Community Awareness

- a. Promote inclusion through research, documentation, and community awareness campaigns
- b. Reducing social stigma associated with intellectual disabilities by educating the public and disseminating best practices
- c. Constitution of a Joint Coordination Committee (JCC) to monitor implementation and ensure the objectives of the MoU are achieved efficiently

Duration

The MoU shall remain in force for a period of three years until January, 2029, with scope for further extension.

Source:

1. [Pragativadi](#)
2. [The Hindu Business Line](#)
3. [The Times of India](#)

3. Advancing Inclusive Tourism in Kerala: Policy Initiatives and Perspectives

Key Takeaway

As an extension of the 'Barrier-Free Kerala Tourism Project', a two-day conclave titled 'Kerala for All: Tourism Without Barriers' was jointly organised by Kerala Tourism and the Hindu Group on January 31, and February 1, 2026.

Background

Kerala launched the Barrier-Free Kerala Tourism Project in 2019 under the purview of the larger Sugamya Bharat Abhiyan or Accessible India Campaign, 2015, wherein it put in place basic infrastructure and facilities at all major tourist centres.



100 tourist centres in Kerala

are now elderly- and disability-friendly. Consequently, Fort Kochi in Kerala was declared the first disability-friendly heritage site in India in 2016.

A two-day conclave titled

'Kerala for All: Tourism Without Barriers'

was jointly organised by Kerala Tourism and The Hindu Group.

Alt Text (Visual/Image Description): Infographic showing that over 100 tourist centres in Kerala are now elderly- and disability-friendly. It highlights that Fort Kochi was declared India's first disability-friendly heritage site in 2016. The graphic also mentions a two-day conclave titled 'Kerala for All: Tourism Without Barriers', organised by Kerala Tourism and The Hindu Group. Visual elements include a map of Kerala and a wheelchair accessibility icon.

The conclave included Shri Suman Billa, Additional Secretary and Director General, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, and Shri K. Biju, Secretary, Kerala Tourism.

Key Details

The dignitaries addressed the following points:

- a. **Beyond Infrastructure:** Inclusion must not be limited to reasonable accommodations with regard to infrastructure; it must extend to broader societal awareness, including disability-friendly, elderly-friendly, and women- and child-friendly measures.
- b. **Broadening Disability-lens:** There is a need to move beyond viewing accessibility only through the lens of wheelchair users and to address diverse disability needs
- c. **Role of Technology:** Emphasis on integrating accessibility within multimedia platforms and emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence.
- d. **Responsible Tourism:** Local tourism models can play a key role in building awareness and promoting inclusive practices at the community level.
- e. **Scaling Participation:** Responsible tourism units should expand their role to include structured awareness-building and sensitisation efforts.
- f. **Policy Development:** Inputs from international dialogues and conferences should be consolidated while framing new standards, with a focus on implementation through collaboration with local self-government institutions.

Source:

1. [The Hindu](#)
2. [Press Release](#)

4. Annual Budget: Renewed Commitments Towards Persons with Disabilities

Key Takeaway

The Union Budget reflects a measured yet meaningful increase in fiscal commitment towards disability inclusion, with a stronger emphasis on accessibility, assistive technology, and livelihood generation. However, allocations remain proportionally low, and concerns persist regarding the effectiveness of newly introduced schemes.

Background

The Union Budget functions as a key instrument through which the State translates its constitutional and statutory obligations into tangible action. For persons with disabilities, budgetary allocations are critical to ensuring access to assistive technologies, rehabilitation, and support systems that enable independent and dignified living.

The current Annual Budget signals a measured yet meaningful progression in fiscal commitments towards disability empowerment, reflecting an increased policy emphasis on accessibility, inclusion, and rights-based governance which are well demonstrated through the two new schemes launched by the government.

Key Details

1. Budget Allocation

The Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPwD) was allocated **₹1,669.72 crore for 2026-27**, marking an increase of approximately 30% from the previous fiscal year, **which was shown to be ₹53,47,314.81 crore**.

Despite this rise, the allocation remains less than **1% (0.0312%)** of the total Union Budget expenditure.

Allocations, in the budget documents for the DEPwD, have increased marginally for existing schemes such as:

- a. National Programme for Assistance to Disabled Persons, for the purchase and fitting of aids and appliances
- b. Deendayal Disabled Rehabilitation Scheme
- c. Centre for Disability Sports

At the same time:

The allocation for implementation of the RPwD Act, 2016 has decreased from **₹200 crore** of the **previous year to ₹125 crore in 2026-27**, raising concerns regarding enforcement capacity.

The Artificial Limbs Manufacturing Corporation of India (ALIMCO) has been allocated **₹143 crore**, excluding additional funding under new schemes, reflecting continued reliance on the corporation for assistive technology provisioning.

2. Divyangjan Kaushal Scheme

₹200 crore has been allocated for skill development.

The scheme focuses on:

- a. Industry-relevant, customised training specific to each divyang group
- b. Sectors such as Information Technology, AVGC (Animation, Visual Effects, Gaming, Comics), Hospitality, and Food & Beverages
- c. Creating dignified livelihood opportunities through task-oriented and process-driven roles suited to persons with disabilities

3. Divyang Sahara Yojana

The budget announced a new initiative named Divyang Sahara Yojana for which ₹100 crore is allocated. The scheme aims to ensure timely, reliable, and affordable access to modern assistive solutions for persons with disabilities and senior citizens.

Key objectives include:

- a. Scaling up production of assistive devices through ALIMCO
- b. Strengthening research and development
- c. Integrating advanced technologies, including artificial intelligence
- d. Proposed assistive solutions include:
- e. Mobility aids
- f. Low-vision and low-hearing devices
- g. e-Braille readers
- h. Smart hearing instruments
- i. Cognitive assistive technologies, tailored to diverse needs

Assistive Technology Ecosystem

By positioning ALIMCO as a national hub for innovation and quality in assistive technology, the Budget aims to reduce import dependence, spur domestic manufacturing and create new opportunities for Indian startups and MSMEs in this critical social sector.

- a. Strengthening of 100 Pradhan Mantri Divyasha Vayoshri Kendras (PMDVKs) across the country
- b. Proposal to establish 80 additional Assistive Technology Marts

These centres aim to:

- a. Enable informed choice through product trials, with dignity
- b. Provide professional counselling
- c. Bridge last-mile access gaps between users and assistive technologies
- d. The assistance to persons with disabilities has been allocated ₹375 crore for Purchase and Fitting of Aids and Appliances scheme.

- e. The current allocation thus reflects an increase of approximately 13.6% over the previous year, indicating a strengthened fiscal commitment towards improving access to assistive devices for persons with disabilities.
- f. It is envisaged that the Divyang Sahara Yojana and the Assistance to Persons with Disabilities for Purchase/Fitting of Aids and Appliances (ADIP) Scheme will operate in tandem to strengthen and enhance the assistive technology ecosystem in India.
- g. Notably, the **₹143 crore allocation** to ALIMCO does not include the additional ₹100 crore under the new scheme, indicating that public expenditure on assistive technology is on a steady upward trajectory.

Concerns and Critiques

Despite increased allocations surrounding the twin schemes announced in the Budget, there has been scepticism regarding their productivity. Concerns have been raised regarding the effectiveness of the newly introduced schemes:

- a. The Divyangjan Kaushal Scheme has been criticised as a continuation of previously ineffective skill-training programmes that have not generated sufficient employment for persons with disabilities.
- b. The Divyang Sahara Yojana has been described as a repackaging of existing budgetary support to ALIMCO, rather than a substantially new intervention.

Source:

- 1. [Press Release](#)
- 2. <https://share.google/IYVb8wEBOSuAwwgXP>
- 3. [Press Release 2](#)

5. Measures by the Election Commission of India for an Inclusive and Universally Accessible General Election to the Legislative Assemblies of Assam, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal and Puducherry, 2026

Key Takeaway

The Election Commission of India has introduced a range of accessibility measures for the 2026 State Assembly elections, focusing on infrastructure, targeted facilitation, and assistive technologies to enable inclusive participation of persons with disabilities and senior citizens.

Key Details

On 15th March, The Election Commission of India (ECI) has issued instructions to the Chief Electoral Officers of Assam, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal and Puducherry, in order to make the election process accessible for voters with disabilities and senior citizen wheelchair users, to ensure provisions be made such that:

1. Infrastructure:

- a. Polling stations are located at ground floor/road entry level and ramps with proper gradient are provided; prioritisation for entering polling booths; and designated parking spaces close to the entrance of polling station premises.
- b. Chief Electoral Officers (CEOs) to provide a proper transport facility in each and every polling station on the day of the poll, assisted by trained RO/DEO volunteers.

2. Specialised Facilitation:

- a. Targeted and need-based facilitation is provided at polling stations, identification and linkages of persons with disabilities to their respective polling stations, and necessary disability-specific arrangements made for their smooth and convenient voting experience on poll day.
- b. Special facilitation extended to electors with speech and hearing impairment.
- c. At the polling station, person with visual impairment persons can take a companion along with them to cast their vote on their behalf (as provided in Rule 49N of the Conduct of Elections Rules, 1961). However, no person can act as a companion for more than one such voter.
- d. Optional Postage Ballot 12: For persons with disabilities, COVID-affected voters, and senior citizen 85+ age voters, who cannot attend physically, they can opt for home-voting via postal ballot with secrecy.
- e. Special focus should be laid on sensitisation of polling personnel regarding special needs of the differently abled electors.
- f. Every Assembly Constituency will feature at least one polling station managed exclusively by women, and one managed by persons with disabilities.

3. Accessibility Features and Digital Innovations:

- a. Dummy Ballot Sheets in Braille will be available in all Polling Stations. Any voter with visual impairment can use this sheet, and after studying the contents of this sheet, can cast his/her vote on his/her own using the Braille facility on Ballot Units of EVMs without any help from a companion.
- b. The electors with disabilities can request for wheelchair facilities by registering on Divyang (Saksham) Module of ECINET.
- c. The UDID card is officially recognised as one of the 12 approved photo ID documents for voting.

Source:

1. [Election Commission of India](#)
2. [The Sangyan](#)

6. Proposal in Rajya Sabha for setting up National Commission for persons with disabilities

Key Takeaway

A proposal has been made in the Rajya Sabha to establish a National Commission for Persons with Disabilities with independent powers and regional presence to strengthen disability rights protection and governance.

Background

On March 13, MP Bhim Singh proposed replacing the existing commissionerate system with a National Commission for Persons with Disabilities.

Key Details

Proposing the establishment of an independent National Commission for Persons with Disabilities, and the replacement of the current commissionerate system. **He proposed that the mandate should:**

- a. Address concerns of persons with disabilities
- b. Protect their rights
- c. Recommend legal changes

- d. Monitor implementation of schemes
- e. Be structured similarly to other National Commissions
- f. Have independent powers to take action
- g. Regional offices to ensure accessibility and wider reach

Source:

1. [The Hindu](#)

7. Accessibility in Cinema: Mandatory Audio Description and Captions for Films

Key Takeaway

From 15 March 2026, all new films released in India must include audio description and same-language captions, marking a significant step towards accessibility in the entertainment sector for persons with visual and hearing impairments.

Background

Section 42 of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPwD) Act, 2016 mandates that the government ensure accessibility in electronic media through features such as audio description and captions. However, implementation remained limited for several years.

In 2023, a petition before the Delhi High Court highlighted the lack of accessibility features in the film *Pathaan*. The Court directed that accessibility features be included in its OTT release and instructed the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting to develop enforceable accessibility standards for films.

Key Details

This marks a shift from legal obligation to enforceable implementation, expanding access to cinema for persons with disabilities and addressing long-standing barriers in the entertainment ecosystem. Provides guidance to parliamentarians on raising disability-related questions during Zero Hour

a. Government Guidelines (2024)

The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting issued the Guidelines of Accessibility Standards in the Public Exhibition of Feature Films in Cinema Theatres for Persons with Hearing and Visual Impairment on 15 March, 2024.

b. Mandatory Accessibility (2026)

Under Clause 6.1. of the guidelines, all new films must include:

- a. Audio description for persons with visual impairment
- b. Same-language captions for persons with hearing impairment

c. Phased Implementation

The requirement was already applicable to multilingual films and those seeking National Awards, and will now extend to all films from March 2026.

d. Technology-Based Access

Accessibility in theatres is enabled through mobile applications that synchronise with film audio to deliver captions and audio descriptions in real time.

Source:

1. [Indian Express](#)

Contributed by Mission Accessibility

8. NCPEDP Handbook Beyond the Visible: A Handbook on Disability Inclusion for Parliamentarians

Key Takeaway

The NCPEDP handbook aims to equip parliamentarians with practical tools and insights to better understand disability issues and actively advance inclusive lawmaking.

Background

The National Centre for Promotion of Employment for Disabled People (NCPEDP) has developed a handbook titled "Beyond the Visible: A Handbook on Disability Inclusion for Parliamentarians." The handbook is intended to guide lawmakers in understanding disability in India and to foster active participation in removing barriers for persons with disabilities.

Key Details

The handbook seeks to strengthen disability-inclusive governance by enabling parliamentarians to engage more effectively with policy, oversight, and lawmaking processes related to disability rights

- a. Provides guidance to parliamentarians on raising disability-related questions during Zero Hour
- b. Sensitises lawmakers to the lived realities and needs of persons with disabilities
- c. Aims to bridge the gap between the provisions of the RPwD Act, 2016 and tangible legislative action

Source:

1. [New Indian Express](#)

9. NCPEDP White Paper Highlights Gaps in Inclusive Health Insurance

Key Takeaway

The NCPEDP white paper highlights significant barriers in India's health insurance systems for persons with disabilities, underscoring gaps in accessibility, awareness, and equitable participation.

Background

A new white paper by NCPEDP, 'Inclusive Health Coverage for All', examines how India's insurance landscape remains largely inaccessible to the lived realities of the disability community. Drawing on insights from more than 5,000 persons with disabilities across 34 States and Union Territories, the paper highlights systemic barriers within existing insurance processes.

Key Details

The white paper bridges gaps between the lived experiences of persons with disabilities and ongoing policy conversations on health insurance and accessibility. In the context of expanding initiatives such as Ayushman Bharat and broader efforts to strengthen insurance systems, the findings underscore the importance of understanding how persons with disabilities navigate these processes, and whether existing systems are designed to enable their full and equitable participation.

Key Findings

- a. Barriers related to knowledge, attitudes, and perceptions among persons with disabilities and insurance providers
- b. Gaps in needs assessment within insurance systems
- c. Patterns of rejection of insurance applications affecting persons with disabilities

Source:

1. [NCPEDP](#)

Legal Developments

1. Periodical Medical Check-Ups as a Fundamental Right of Prisoners

Case	M. Kalaiselvi vs. State of Tamil Nadu & Ors.
Citation	W.P. (Crl.) (MD) No. 993 of 2026
Court	Madurai Bench of the Madras High Court
Date	23 February, 2026

Key Takeaway

Madras High Court recognised prisoners' right to healthcare, dignity, and reasonable accommodation under Article 21; issued directions for periodic medical check-ups and disability-sensitive prison reforms.

Facts

The case was filed by the petitioner, M. Kalaiselvi, seeking relief for her father, Murugesan, a 67-year-old prisoner serving a life sentence in Central Prison, Palayamkottai. The case brings attention to the condition of prisoners who acquire disabilities during incarceration and the corresponding duties of prison authorities to ensure their care and dignity.

Murugesan had been in custody for over six years when he developed severe health complications arising from diabetes, including vascular issues and ulcers. Due to the progression of his condition and lack of timely medical intervention, he underwent amputation of his right leg on October 10th, 2025 while in prison. The petitioner contended that the amputation could have been avoided had there been early diagnosis, proper medical supervision, and a diet suited to his medical needs.

Following the amputation, Murugesan became a person with disability and required continuous medical care, rehabilitation support, and assistance for daily activities. The petitioner highlighted that the existing prison infrastructure and facilities were inadequate to meet his specific needs as an amputee and a diabetic patient.

In this background, the petitioner sought the grant of 28 days of ordinary leave without police escort under the Tamil Nadu Suspension of Sentence Rules, 1982, on humanitarian and medical grounds. The plea emphasised that such leave was necessary to enable proper care, recovery, and support outside the prison environment.

The case also raised broader concerns regarding the treatment of prisoners with disabilities, particularly those who acquire disabilities while in custody. It highlighted issues such as lack of periodic medical check-ups, absence of disability-friendly infrastructure, and failure to provide reasonable accommodation and appropriate medical care within prisons.

Thus, beyond the individual relief sought, the case brought into focus the systemic gaps in ensuring healthcare, accessibility, and dignity for prisoners with disabilities. It also highlighted the responsibility of prison authorities to uphold these rights under constitutional and statutory frameworks.

Issues

- a. Whether a life convict who has suffered severe disability (amputation) while in custody is entitled to ordinary leave without escort, particularly in light of his medical condition, age, and need for rehabilitation and family support?
- b. Whether prison authorities are under a legal obligation to provide reasonable accommodation, accessible infrastructure, and specialised medical care to prisoners with disabilities, including those who acquire disabilities during incarceration?
- c. Whether failure to provide timely diagnosis, appropriate diet, and medical care to prisoners amounts to a violation of the right to life and dignity under Article 21 of the Constitution ?

Judgement

- 1. Grant of Ordinary Leave:** The Court allowed the writ petition and directed the prison authorities to grant the convict 28 days of ordinary leave without escort, subject to specified conditions such as periodic reporting before the local police and adherence to prison rules. The Court recognised that humanitarian considerations, particularly serious medical conditions and disability, justify relaxation in the mode of leave.
- 2. Individual-Centric Disability Accommodations:** The Court issued detailed directions to ensure that the petitioner's father is provided with immediate and appropriate accommodations, including:
 - a. Assistive devices such as a wheelchair or crutches
 - b. A cot and table to minimise physical strain
 - c. Accessible toilet facilities (western toilet or commode adaptation)
 - d. Regular counselling and rehabilitation support
 - e. Continuous medical monitoring, especially to prevent complications such as ulcers
 - f. A tailored diabetic diet, including sugar-free provisions where necessary

The Court also directed that, considering his age and disability, he be housed in a location within the prison that ensures easy access to essential facilities and, if required, be provided assistance from another inmate.

- 3. Systemic Reforms in Prison Healthcare:** Recognising systemic deficiencies, the Court directed the prison authorities to:
- a. Conduct periodic comprehensive medical check-ups for all prisoners at least once every two years
 - b. Ensure early diagnosis and intervention to prevent avoidable disabilities such as amputation
 - c. Provide condition-specific diets based on individual health needs (e.g., diabetic or renal conditions)

The Court emphasised that failure to provide such care could lead to preventable health deterioration and is unacceptable in a custodial setting.

- 4. Special Measures for Diabetic Prisoners:** The Court specifically directed the Dean of the Government Medical College and Hospital, Tirunelveli, to conduct a medical camp in the prison to identify prisoners suffering from diabetes and ensure:
- a. Provision of medicines and insulin where required
 - b. Availability of appropriate dietary options
 - c. Ongoing medical supervision for diabetic inmates

- 5. Enforcement of Disability Rights Framework:** The Court reaffirmed that reasonable accommodation is a mandatory legal obligation under the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016, and not a matter of discretion. It directed the authorities to implement, with immediate effect, the Supreme Court's guidelines on prisoners with disabilities. The Court further clarified that prisoners with disabilities have the right to approach constitutional courts to enforce these entitlements.

- 6. Recognition of Constitutional Rights:** Importantly, the Court held that the right to periodic medical care and appropriate living conditions forms an integral part of Article 21. It underscored that incarceration does not strip a person of their fundamental rights, and the State, having custody over prisoners, bears a heightened duty of care.

The judgement concludes with a broader call for transforming prisons into humane, accessible, and rights-compliant institutions, grounded in dignity, equality, and compassion.

Source:

1. <https://share.google/jZnrLi8avNOGvDi3K>

2. TET Requirement for Special Educators & Compliance on Pay Parity

Case	Rajneesh Kumar Pandey & Ors. vs. Union of India & Ors.
Citation	W.P. (C) No. 132 of 2016
Court	Supreme Court of India
Date	17 February, 2026

Key Takeaway

Supreme Court addressed gaps in implementation of TET requirements and pay parity for special educators; directed Union and States to file compliance affidavits.

Facts

The case is about the regulation of qualifications and service conditions of special educators, who are essential for implementing inclusive education for children with disabilities. The petitioners approached the Court, highlighting serious gaps in how States and Union Territories are implementing norms related to the appointment, qualification, and treatment of special education teachers.

The matter is a continuation of earlier Supreme Court orders dated 21 July, 2022 and 07 March, 2025, which directed all States and Union Territories to comply with a Ministry of Education communication dated 10 June, 2022. **This communication laid down two key requirements:**

- a. Teacher Eligibility Test (TET) as a qualification for teachers, and
- b. Parity in pay and service conditions between special educators and general teachers.

However, it was brought to the Court's notice that compliance has been inconsistent across States. **In particular:**

- a. Several States have not conducted TET for the secondary level (Classes IX–XII), making it unclear how the qualification requirement can be implemented.
- b. Many special educators, especially those working on a contractual basis, are paid less and given inferior service conditions compared to general teachers, despite performing similar roles.

During the hearing, the Union of India clarified that TET qualification is mandatory for appointment of special educators at the secondary level. At the same time, the Court noted that there is lack of clarity and uniformity in implementation, particularly regarding whether States have actually conducted such TET examinations and followed the prescribed norms.

The Court was also informed that many States have failed to comply with earlier directions, especially regarding ensuring pay parity. While some States, such as Kerala, have filed compliance affidavits, the overall situation reflects uneven and inadequate implementation of inclusive education standards across the country.

Issues

- a. Whether qualification of the Teacher Eligibility Test (TET) is mandatory for appointment of special educators at the secondary level (Classes IX to XII)?
- b. Whether the directions issued by the Ministry of Education regarding recruitment processes and applicability across all educational stages are binding on States and Union Territories?
- c. Whether States have complied with the Supreme Court's earlier directions ensuring parity of pay and service conditions between special educators and general teachers?
- d. Whether failure to conduct TET examinations for the secondary stage reflects non-compliance with statutory and judicial mandates?

Judgement

- 1. Clarification on TET Requirement:** The Court recorded the submission of the Union of India that TET qualification is mandatory for appointment of special educators for Classes IX to XII. It directed the Union to file an affidavit formally confirming this position.
- 2. Applicability of Recruitment Guidelines:** The Court required the Union of India to clarify, through affidavit, that the recruitment-related communication dated 10th June 2022 applies uniformly across all educational stages, including foundational, preparatory, middle, and secondary levels.
- 3. Direction for Disclosure on TET Conduct:** The Court directed the Union to provide details on whether any TET examinations for the secondary stage have been conducted since 2010, and if so, to furnish particulars.
- 4. Compliance by States:** Noting concerns of non-compliance, the Court directed all State Governments to file affidavits within one month demonstrating compliance with earlier Supreme Court directions (dated 21 July, 2022 and 7 March 2025), particularly regarding parity in pay and service conditions for special educators.

5. **Monitoring of Implementation:** The Court acknowledged submissions that several States had failed to implement the required parity and emphasised the need for accountability through compliance reports.
6. **Further Hearing:** The Court scheduled further hearings to examine compliance by specific States, including Kerala, West Bengal, and Odisha, while taking note that Kerala had already filed its affidavit in compliance with earlier directions.

The order reflects the Court’s continued supervisory role in ensuring uniform standards in teacher qualifications, enforcement of equitable service conditions for special educators, and compliance with its prior directives across States.

Source:

1. [LivELaw](#)

3. Reservation in Horizontal Categories under Unreserved Quota: Merit Prevails

Case	The West Bengal State Electricity Transmission Co. Ltd. & Ors. vs. Dipendu Biswas & Ors.
Citation	Civil Appeal No. 10262 of 2025 (2026 INSC 330)
Court	Supreme Court of India
Date	7 April, 2026

Key Takeaway

Supreme Court held that unreserved horizontal posts are merit-based and open to all categories, allowing migration of more meritorious reserved category candidates.

Facts

The case arises from a recruitment process conducted by the West Bengal State Electricity Transmission Company for the post of Junior Engineer (Civil). One of the vacancies was reserved under the Unreserved category for Persons with Disabilities (Low Vision). The recruitment notification stated that if a suitable candidate was not available in this category, the post could be filled by candidates with disabilities from other categories based on merit.

Two candidates are relevant in this case. One candidate belonged to the Unreserved category with low vision disability and scored 55.667 marks. The other candidate belonged to the OBC-A category with the same disability and scored higher, i.e., 66.667 marks.

Since the OBC-A candidate had higher marks, he was selected for the Unreserved (PWD-LV) post. However, the unreserved category candidate challenged this decision, arguing that since a suitable unreserved candidate was available, the post should not have been given to someone from a reserved category.

The Single Bench of the High Court agreed with the selection based on merit. But the Division Bench took a different view and held that the post should go to the unreserved category candidate if such a candidate is available.

The matter was then brought before the Supreme Court to decide whether a more meritorious candidate from a reserved category can be selected for an unreserved disability post.

Issues

- a. Whether a more meritorious PWD-LV candidate from a reserved category (OBC-A) can be appointed to a UR (PWD-LV) post over a less meritorious unreserved PWD-LV candidate?
- b. Whether the condition in the recruitment notification restricts appointment to only unreserved candidates when available?
- c. Whether principles of horizontal reservation permit migration of candidates from reserved categories to unreserved posts based on merit?

Judgement

- 1. Merit Governs Unreserved Horizontal Posts:** The Supreme Court held that posts under the Unreserved category, even when horizontally reserved (such as UR-PWD-LV), are open to all candidates possessing the required disability, irrespective of their social category. Merit remains the decisive factor.
- 2. Mobility Across Categories Permitted:** The Court reaffirmed that candidates from reserved categories can migrate to unreserved posts if they are more meritorious. Accordingly, Respondent No. 3, being more meritorious, was rightly appointed to the UR (PWD-LV) post.
- 3. Direction for Disclosure on TET Conduct:** Horizontal reservations cut across vertical categories. A UR (PWD-LV) post is not confined to “unreserved” social category candidates but is open to all PWD-LV candidates, regardless of caste or category.

4. **Compliance by States:** The Court clarified that the clause stating that other candidates may be considered only in the absence of a UR candidate cannot override the principle of merit. It cannot be interpreted to give preference to a less meritorious unreserved candidate over a more meritorious reserved candidate.
5. **Error by High Court:** The Division Bench erred in treating the Unreserved category as a separate class and in denying consideration to more meritorious candidates from reserved categories. This interpretation was contrary to established reservation jurisprudence.
6. **Final Decision:** The Supreme Court set aside the Division Bench judgement and restored the Single Judge's decision, upholding the appointment of the more meritorious candidate from the reserved category.

The judgement reinforces that unreserved posts whether vertical or horizontal are fundamentally merit-based and open to all eligible candidates, ensuring equality under Articles 14 and 16 of the Constitution.

4. Withdrawal of Life-Sustaining Treatment Permitted in Irreversible Vegetative State: Right to Die with Dignity Upheld

Case	Harish Rana vs. Union of India & Ors.
Citation	Miscellaneous Application No. 2238 of 2025 (2026 INSC 222)
Court	Supreme Court of India
Date	11 March, 2026

Key Takeaway

Supreme Court permitted withdrawal of CANH in an irreversible vegetative state, reaffirming passive euthanasia and right to die with dignity under Article 21.

Facts

The case concerns Harish Rana, a 32-year-old man who has been in a permanent vegetative state (PVS) for over 13 years following a severe brain injury caused by a fall in 2013. Since the accident, he has remained completely dependent on medical support, including a tracheostomy for breathing and a feeding tube (PEG tube) for nutrition and hydration. Medical reports confirm that he has 100% permanent disability, with no awareness of his surroundings and no ability to communicate or perform any basic functions.

Despite continuous treatment and care, including repeated hospitalisations and home-based care by his family, his condition has shown no improvement. Medical experts have consistently stated that his condition is irreversible, with no possibility of recovery. He continues to survive only with the help of Clinically Assisted Nutrition and Hydration (CANH).

The petitioner, through his parents, approached the Court seeking directions on whether continued medical treatment, particularly CANH, should be withdrawn, as it only prolongs his life without improving his condition. The parents emphasised that the prolonged state has caused continuous suffering and does not allow him to live with dignity. They also expressed concerns about long-term caregiving and the absence of any meaningful quality of life.

Pursuant to the Court's directions, both a primary medical board and a secondary medical board (AIIMS) examined the patient. Both boards confirmed that:

- a. The patient is in an irreversible permanent vegetative state
- b. There is no chance of recovery
- c. Continued treatment is medically futile, serving only to prolong biological existence

The family, after years of care and consultation with doctors, expressed a clear and informed decision that continuing treatment is not in his best interests and requested that he be allowed to die with dignity.

Issues

- a. Whether continued life-sustaining treatment (such as CANH) for a person in a permanent vegetative state violates the right to live with dignity under Article 21?
- b. Whether withdrawal of such treatment is legally permissible as passive euthanasia under Indian law?
- c. Whether CANH (feeding through medical devices) constitutes "medical treatment" that can be withdrawn?
- d. How should the "best interest of the patient" be determined in cases involving persons with severe disabilities who cannot express their wishes?

Judgement

- 1. Recognition of Right to Die with Dignity under Article 21 of the Constitution of India:** The Supreme Court of India reaffirmed that the right to life under Article 21 includes the right to die with dignity, particularly in cases involving irreversible medical conditions. The Court emphasised that dignity must be preserved not only during life but also in the process of dying, thereby extending constitutional protection to end-of-life decision-making.
- 2. Nature of CANH and Application of Passive Euthanasia Principles:** The Court held that Clinically Assisted Nutrition and Hydration (CANH), administered through devices such as a PEG tube, constitutes medical treatment rather than basic care. As such, it can be withdrawn or withheld under law. Relying on *Common Cause vs. Union of India* (2018), the Court reiterated that withdrawal of life-sustaining treatment (passive euthanasia) is legally permissible where such treatment serves no therapeutic purpose and merely prolongs suffering or an irreversible condition.
- 3. Best Interest of the Patient and Medical Assessment:** The Court emphasised that the “best interest of the patient” is the central consideration, rather than mere continuation of biological life. In this case, medical evidence established that the patient was in a permanent vegetative state (PVS), with no possibility of recovery, rendering continued treatment medically futile. The Court relied on findings of both the primary and secondary medical boards, which independently confirmed the irreversible nature of the condition and the lack of benefit from continued treatment, ensuring an objective and medically grounded decision.
- 4. Role of Family and Distinction between Allowing and Causing Death:** Due weight was given to the views of the patient’s family, who had been primary caregivers for over 13 years and expressed an informed decision that continued treatment only prolonged suffering and undermined dignity. The Court clarified that withdrawal of treatment does not amount to causing death but allows the patient to die naturally due to the underlying condition, thereby distinguishing it from active euthanasia, which remains impermissible.
- 5. Directions, Safeguards, and Need for Implementation Framework:** The Court permitted withdrawal of CANH subject to procedural safeguards and directed that adequate palliative care be provided to ensure a dignified and pain-free end-of-life process. It also highlighted gaps in the implementation of *Common Cause* guidelines, calling for clearer procedures for medical boards and greater awareness among medical professionals. Importantly, the judgement underscores that persons with severe disabilities or irreversible conditions must not be subjected to prolonged and undignified suffering through artificial life support, shifting the focus toward autonomy, dignity, and best interests.

Source:

1. [Live Law](#)

5. Accessibility in Competitive Examinations for Persons with Disabilities: Right to Reasonable Accommodation

Case	Hoor Anisbhai Jinwala vs. National Testing Agency & Ors.
Citation	W.P.(C) 6546/2025
Court	High Court of Delhi
Date	8 January, 2026

Key Takeaway

Delhi High Court upheld the right to assistive technology in exams and directed authorities to provide reasonable accommodation.

Facts

The petitioner, a 24-year-old person with 100% visual impairment, sought reasonable accommodations to appear for the UGC-NET examination conducted by the National Testing Agency (NTA). She specifically requested the use of a computer system with screen-reading software, accessible question papers, compensatory time, and exemption from graphical questions.

Despite multiple representations and a directive issued by the Chief Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities (CCPD) directing NTA to provide such accommodations, the respondent failed to comply. Consequently, the petitioner approached the High Court under Article 226 of the Constitution.

Issues

- Whether a candidate with visual impairment is entitled to the use of computer-based assistive technology (screen-reading software) in competitive examinations?
- Whether examining bodies are obligated to provide reasonable accommodations under the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016?
- Whether failure to implement accessibility guidelines amounts to a violation of statutory and constitutional rights?

Judgement

- 1. Right to Use Assistive Technology Recognised:** The Court held that persons with benchmark disabilities must be allowed to choose the mode of examination, including the use of computers with screen-reading software, in line with government guidelines.
- 2. Reliance on Statutory Guidelines:** The Court relied on the 2018 Office Memorandum which mandates that examination bodies should leverage technology to make exams accessible (e.g., Braille, e-text, screen readers).
- 3. Support from Supreme Court Precedent:** The Court referred to Yash Dodani vs. Union of India, where the Supreme Court recognised the right of candidates with visual impairment to write exams using computers instead of scribes.
- 4. Direction to NTA:** NTA was directed to provide the petitioner with a computer equipped with screen-reading software (such as JAWS/NVDA) for the next examination cycle.
- 5. Provision of Scribe as Backup:** In addition to assistive technology, the Court directed that a scribe be provided as a backup, ensuring no disadvantage to the candidate.
- 6. Non-Compliance Safeguard:** The Court granted liberty to the petitioner to revive proceedings if the directions were not complied with.

Source:

1. [India Kanoon](#)

Contributed by Mission Accessibility

Other Updates

6. Standardising Disability Certification: Adoption of Revised Proforma under RPwD Amendment Rules, 2024

Background

The Department of Posts, through its communication dated 28 January 2026, has directed all concerned authorities to adopt the revised disability certificate formats issued by the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPwD) under the RPwD (Amendment) Rules, 2024. These revised formats (Form V and Form VI) aim to standardise the process of issuing and verifying disability certificates, particularly in recruitment, while ensuring alignment with the RPwD Act, 2016.

Prior to this amendment, the use of multiple and outdated formats often resulted in the rejection or questioning of otherwise valid certificates, delays in verification processes, and inconsistent recognition of disabilities across institutions. The revised proforma seeks to address these gaps by introducing a uniform, legally compliant, and streamlined system that ensures greater clarity, consistency, and reliability in disability certification.

Key Takeaway

Introduces uniform disability certificate formats (Form V & VI), improving consistency, authenticity, and integration with UDID systems.

Key Details

- 1. Introduction of Revised Certification Formats under the 2024 Amendment: The amendment formally introduces two standardised formats:**
 - a. Form V for persons with a single disability
 - b. Form VI for persons with multiple disabilities
 - c. These formats replace earlier non-uniform templates and establish a single framework applicable across institutions.
- 2. Detailed and Structured Disability Assessment:** The revised forms require comprehensive information, including:
 - a. Type and category of disability (from a recognised list)
 - b. Affected body part
 - c. Medical diagnosis
 - d. Percentage of disability (in figures and words)
 - e. Nature of disability (permanent or temporary)

This ensures that disability assessment becomes more objective, standardised, and verifiable.

- 3. Explicit Recognition of Multiple Disabilities:** A significant change is the introduction of a separate format for multiple disabilities, which:
- Records each disability individually
 - Provides a consolidated disability assessment
 - Reflects the complexity of lived experiences more accurately
 - This corrects earlier gaps where multiple disabilities were inadequately documented.

This corrects earlier gaps where multiple disabilities were inadequately documented.

- 4. Alignment with Statutory Disability Categories under RPwD Act, 2016:** The forms incorporate a comprehensive list of recognised disabilities (as reflected in the tables in the document), including locomotor disability, visual and hearing impairments, intellectual disability, autism spectrum disorder, mental illness, chronic neurological conditions, and others. This ensures that certification is fully aligned with the legal framework and recognised categories under the RPwD Act, 2016.
- 5. Strengthening Authenticity and Medical Accountability:** The revised proforma mandates certification by notified medical authorities and includes:
- Identification details of the person with disability
 - UDID enrolment/registration details
 - Photograph and signature/thumb impression
 - Official authentication by medical boards
 - Enhancement of the credibility and reliability of disability certificates
- 6. Integration with UDID and Digital Governance Systems:** The format is designed to integrate with the Unique Disability ID (UDID) system by enabling:
- Standardised data capture
 - Easier digital verification and tracking
 - Reduction of duplication and fraud
 - More efficient and technology-driven disability governance system
- 7. Mandatory Adoption Across Recruitment and Other Agencies:** The circular extends beyond UPSC and SSC, requiring all recruitment agencies and departments (including banking, defence, and other public authorities) to adopt the revised formats. This ensures uniform treatment of disability certificates during recruitment and related processes.

Conclusion

The RPwD (Amendment) Rules, 2024 introduce a comprehensive reform in disability certification by standardising formats, improving accuracy in assessment, and ensuring consistency across institutions. By linking certification with legal categories and digital systems like UDID, the amendment reduces administrative barriers and strengthens fair recognition of persons with disabilities, particularly in employment and access to benefits.

Source:

- [Ministry of Communication, Government of India](#)

7. Strengthening Disability Governance in India: Key Outcomes of the 8th Central Advisory Board Meeting (2026)

Background

The 8th meeting of the Central Advisory Board on Disability (CAB) was held on 8 January 2026 under the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment. The Board plays a key role in guiding the implementation of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 and strengthening coordination between the Centre, States, and stakeholders.

The meeting focused on critical areas such as inclusive education, accessibility, early identification, assistive technology, and better implementation of government schemes like UDID and ADIP.

Key Takeaway

Focus on strengthening UDID, assistive devices, inclusive education, AI use, and improving governance and coordination.

Key Details

1. Strengthening Disability Certification – Unique Disability ID (UDID):

Efforts were discussed to improve the Unique Disability ID (UDID) system, which is the centralised mechanism for issuing disability certificates. Key steps include:

- a. Expanding medical assessment boards and increasing the number of empanelled hospitals
- b. Use of digital platforms, including Aadhaar-based integration, to streamline applications
- c. Measures to speed up processing and reduce backlog of pending certificates

Aim: To make disability certification faster, more transparent, and accessible, particularly in rural and underserved areas.

2. Assistive Devices – Assistance to Disabled Persons (ADIP) Scheme:

The Assistance to Disabled Persons for Purchase/Fitting of Aids and Appliances (ADIP) Scheme was reviewed with a focus on improving reach and efficiency:

- a. Expansion of Pradhan Mantri Divyasha Kendras (PMDKs) for distribution of assistive devices
- b. Use of the ARJUN portal (Artificial Limbs Manufacturing Corporation of India's digital platform) for tracking beneficiaries and preventing duplication
- c. Greater focus on funding, outreach, and coverage, especially in North-Eastern states

Aim: To ensure timely and equitable access to quality assistive devices for persons with disabilities.

3. Inclusive Education and Early Intervention:

The Board emphasised strengthening inclusive education systems and early support mechanisms:

- a. Focus on early identification and intervention for children aged 0–6 years, recognising this as a critical developmental stage
- b. Addressing the shortage of trained special educators and support staff
- c. Integration with schemes such as Samagra Shiksha (India's integrated school education programme)

Aim: To improve learning outcomes, school readiness, and long-term inclusion in education systems.

4. Use of Technology and Artificial Intelligence (AI):

The role of technology in disability inclusion was highlighted as a growing priority:

- a. Promotion of Artificial Intelligence (AI)-based assistive technologies, including speech-to-text tools, smart readers, and navigation applications
- b. Use of AI in education, skilling, and vocational training to create personalised learning pathways

Aim: To enhance independence, accessibility, and employment opportunities for persons with disabilities.

5. Governance and Implementation Gaps :

Several structural challenges in implementation were identified:

- a. Delays in fund utilisation and submission of incomplete proposals by States and Union Territories
- b. Need for stronger coordination between different Ministries and Departments
- c. Strengthening the institutional role of State Commissioners for Persons with Disabilities and improving grievance redress mechanisms

Aim: To improve accountability, coordination, and effective delivery of disability-related schemes and services.

Outcome

The meeting resulted in clear action points for Ministries and States, including:

- a. Expanding UDID access and improving certification systems
- b. Scaling assistive device distribution and early intervention centres
- c. Strengthening inclusive education and use of AI
- d. Improving coordination, funding utilisation, and accountability mechanisms

Overall, the outcome reflects a shift towards technology-driven, inclusive, and better-coordinated disability governance in India.

Conclusion

The discussions reflect a comprehensive approach covering policy review, scheme implementation, and future initiatives in disability governance. While multiple initiatives are underway across sectors, the meeting highlights the need for stronger coordination, timely fund utilisation, improved infrastructure, and effective use of technology. The overall direction points towards a more integrated, data-driven, and inclusive system that can better translate policy commitments into meaningful outcomes for persons with disabilities.

Source:

1. [Office Memorandum](#)

8. Regulating Stem Cell Therapy in India: Supreme Court Directions and NMC Advisory

Key Takeaway

Tightens regulation by restricting stem cell therapy to approved uses and mandating ethical, research-based application.

Background

The National Medical Commission (NMC) issued an advisory dated 25 March, 2026 directing all medical institutions to comply with the Supreme Court's judgement in *Yash Charitable Trust & Ors. vs. Union of India & Ors.* (2026).

The case addressed the growing and largely unregulated use of stem cell therapy, particularly for Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Concerns were raised about the safety, ethical compliance, and scientific validity of such treatments being offered outside approved frameworks.

Following the judgement, the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) and Department of Health Research (DHR) issued detailed guidance to regulate the use of stem cell therapies and ensure strict adherence to approved medical and research protocols.

Key Details

1. Restriction to Approved Medical Use

Stem cell therapy can now be used in routine clinical practice only for conditions that are officially recognised as “standard care” by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. These approved uses are limited and largely relate to blood disorders, cancers, and certain immune conditions where sufficient scientific evidence exists. This means that doctors and hospitals cannot freely prescribe stem cell treatments beyond this defined list, ensuring that only validated and safe applications are practiced.

2. No Approval for Mesenchymal Stem Cell Therapy

The advisory clearly states that mesenchymal stem cell (MSC) therapy is not approved for any disease condition. Despite being widely marketed for several conditions such as autism, cerebral palsy, and neurological disorders, MSC therapy does not qualify as standard treatment in India. Its use in routine healthcare settings is therefore prohibited.

3. Use Beyond Approved List Only as Research

For diseases that are not part of the approved standard care list, stem cell therapy can only be conducted within a research framework. This ensures that experimental treatments are not misused or prematurely offered to patients as cures. Such use is strictly limited to structured clinical trials and cannot be part of regular medical practice.

4. Regulatory Approval Based on Manipulation Level

The regulatory pathway for stem cell research depends on how the cells are processed. If the stem cells undergo more than minimal manipulation, the research falls under the jurisdiction of the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO). If the manipulation is minimal, the research is regulated by the Department of Health Research (DHR). In both cases, additional approvals from national-level regulatory committees are required, ensuring multiple layers of oversight.

5. Mandatory Ethical Safeguards in Research

All stem cell research must comply with the ethical guidelines issued by the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR). This includes obtaining informed consent from patients, ensuring that the treatment is provided at no financial cost to participants, and guaranteeing compensation in case of any injury or adverse outcomes. These safeguards are intended to protect patients from exploitation and harm during experimental procedures.

6. Institutional Oversight and Ethics Approval

Before any stem cell research can be conducted, it must be approved by an Institutional Ethics Committee (IEC) that is registered with the Department of Health Research. This ensures that every study is reviewed for ethical compliance, scientific validity, and patient safety before being allowed to proceed.

7. Illegal Status of Unauthorised Treatments

Any use of stem cell therapy outside the approved list of conditions or without proper regulatory approval is considered illegal. This includes offering such therapies commercially or presenting them as established treatments. Institutions and practitioners engaging in such practices may face strict legal and regulatory action.

8. Mandatory Compliance and Circulation

The advisory directs all medical colleges, practitioners, and affiliated institutions to strictly follow these rules and widely circulate the guidance. The aim is to ensure uniform awareness and prevent misuse of stem cell therapies across the country. Non-compliance will attract legal consequences.

Outcome

This advisory significantly tightens the regulation of stem cell therapy in India by clearly separating approved medical treatment from experimental research. It explicitly prohibits the commercial or routine use of stem cell therapy for unapproved conditions like autism, ensuring that such interventions are not misrepresented to patients.

Source:

1. [National Medical Commission](#)

Disability Census 2026-27

21

disability categories to be enumerated

16

regional languages for self-enumeration

2

phases of the Census process

Key Takeaway

The Census 2027, the first after the enactment of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPwD) Act, 2016, will recognise all 21 categories of disabilities through improved and trained enumeration. It will also introduce digital processes and self-enumeration, marking a significant shift in disability data collection in India.

Background

For the first time, the Census will be conducted digitally, with an option for self-enumeration available as a web-based facility in 16 regional languages. This allows respondents to submit data independently, with inputs permitted from any member of the household. Disability data will be captured both during self-enumeration and the subsequent survey process.

Key Details

Phases of Enumeration

Phase 1: House Listing & Housing Census

- Scheduled between April 1 and September 30 (state-wise timelines)
- Conducted over a 30-day period, with an optional 15-day window for self-enumeration prior to house listing
- Households can digitally submit information (including disability data) before the enumerator visit
- Focus on housing conditions, amenities, and household-level data

Phase 2: Population Enumeration

- Scheduled for February 2027
- Will include detailed enumeration of persons with disabilities
- Questionnaires for disability enumeration are expected to be finalised by September 2026
- Training manuals and toolkits will be developed, followed by training of enumerators and supervisors in consultation with stakeholders

1. Parliament Panel Seeks Accurate Enumeration of All Disabilities in

Key Takeaway

A Parliamentary Standing Committee has emphasised the need for accurate and comprehensive enumeration of all 21 disability categories to strengthen data-driven policymaking.

Key Details

In March, in its report presented in the Parliament, the Standing Committee on Social Justice and Empowerment noted that the presently available estimates of persons with disabilities in the country are based on the Census of 2011 which covered only seven disabilities. Highlighting the need for a robust and reliable database of persons with disabilities (PwDs), supplemented by the UDID framework, the committee recommended that:

- a. The government urged the Registrar General of India (RGI) to ensure accurate and comprehensive enumeration of all 21 categories of disabilities in the Census 2027, in alignment with the RPwD Act 2016, particularly those disabilities that are not visible.
- b. The parliamentary panel highlighted that this would greatly assist in evidence-based policy formulation and more effective targeting of welfare schemes for persons with disabilities.

Source:

1. [Times of India](#)
2. [PIB Press Release 1](#)
3. [PIB Press Release 2](#)

2. Challenges with Self-enumeration Raised by Disability Advocacy Groups

In April, digital challenges in Self-enumeration were raised by Disability Advocacy Groups, with regard to:

- a. Website functionality issues
- b. Inaccessible CAPTCHA (audio/visual barriers for users with visual and hearing impairment)
- c. Process flowchart not accessible for printing
- d. FAQ section incomplete (heading without content)

These concerns indicate potential non-compliance with:

- a. Draft Assistive Technology (Standards and Accessibility) Rules, 2025
- b. GIGW (Guidelines for Indian Government Websites)

Source:

1. [Disability Rights Alliance India](#)

