



E-BUZZ

July 2017 (14th Edition)

Greetings from the Institute for Vision Rehabilitation!

It's our pleasure to bring forth yet another edition of E-Buzz to you!

This edition brings you updates and happenings ranging from assistive technology to leisure, from education to government policies, from social gatherings to accessible places from the world around us.

Hope you find this useful. Please do share it with your contacts who you think would benefit from it.

- **GST Levied at 5% concessional rates on assistive devices for persons with disabilities**

From Braille writers and Braille papers to wheelchairs, talking books, assistive listening devices and implants for the persons with disabilities will attract a GST rate of 5%, whereas inputs and raw material for manufacturing the same attract 18% GST. “Since the final consumer tax is lower than the tax on inputs, a domestic manufacturer can claim refund,” an official statement said.

Explaining the rationale, it said if these devices of equipment were exempted from GST, imports would continue to be at zero per cent duty. In fact, the 5% concessional GST rate on such devices and equipment will result in a win-win situation for both the users of such devices, persons with disabilities as well as the domestic manufacturers of such goods. It is for this reason that the council has kept these items in the 5% rate group.

Source: <http://www.livemint.com/Politics/r4I2kTITY1EepcMQqYTnoN/GST-Devices-for-disabled-taxed-at-concessional-5-rate-say.html>

- **Learn Braille without the presence of a specialized instructor!**

The biggest barrier to Braille literacy is a lack or complete absence of high-quality Braille instruction. Currently, students with vision loss are unable to learn and practice Braille reading independently- all of their learning hinges on the presence of a teacher who knows Braille.

Here’s a patent pending tool called Read Read that allows students with vision loss to learn Braille independently. It is a hardware device that consists of a set of tiles that represent the speech sounds in the English language and it utilizes the same ‘capacitive-touch’ technology that allows you to interact with the touch screen of a smartphone or tablet, but pairs the technology with manipulative-

based best practice reading instruction. The Read Read has been tested by over 300 educators and school administrators in the Harvard Graduate School of Education.

Source: <https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/1063261056/the-read-read-harvards-braille-literacy-tool-for-t#start-of-content>

- **Want to date someone?..... then here's a place to be!**

Persons with disabilities across the country found a platform, similar to dating applications such as Tinder and OkCupid, to help them look for suitable partners with the launch of smartphone application Inclov in January 2016. A month later, the founder started organising offline meetings called Social Spaces. “We try to do these meetups at different kinds of places, places where persons with disabilities don’t feel secluded, where anyone could be a part of it without feeling awkward,” the startup’s cofounder Shankar Srinivasan told PTI. The casual meetings had so far been held on beaches, at public parks, yoga studios, cafes, restaurants and hotels. “It’s not like lining up 10 guys and 10 girls with their biodata, instead of that, we play games, do activities and interact with each other. We also do stand-up comedies, musical performances, yoga sessions, karaoke, storytelling and much more,” the cofounder added. With success stories like that of a Polio-affected couple getting married and more in the making, the team wants to take Inclov to a global level by the end of next year.

Source: <http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/matchmaking-meetup-to-open-delhis-nightlife-to-differently-/1/972863.html>

- **Gear up to participate in All India Madanlal Khandelwal Braille essay writing competition 2017**

All India Confederation of the Blind is organising 'Madanlal Khandelwal Braille essay writing competition' for persons with vision loss. If you are a skillful writer, then here's a chance for you to win an exciting cash prize. The last date to submit your essays is 15th September, 2017.

Source: <http://www.aicb.org.in/announcements2017.html>

- **Central Railways to begin SMS Helpline for persons with disabilities**

Following the complaints from the passengers with disabilities, Central Railways is all set to implement a system where passengers just need to send a SMS to a number, which will then be forwarded to the concerned department. "The SMS-based helpline will be set up in a couple of days and be ready for implementation," said Divisional Railway Manager of CR, Mumbai Division, Ravinder Goyal. Asked about the difference between the existing helpline and the proposed helpline, the officer said, "Sometimes it is not possible to make a call. In such a case, when we get a message (on the helpline) it will be transferred to the concerned department for an immediate response."

Source: <http://mumbaimirror.indiatimes.com/mumbai/other/cr-to-begin-sms-helpline-for-handicapped-passengers/articleshow/59465570.cms>

- **An app to help find accessible places for persons with disabilities**

BillionAbles has announced the launch of a new app called 'BillionAbles', which is aimed at finding accessible places across India for persons with disabilities. According to the developers, the app will serve as "India's first Access Guide. "It is a crowd sourced app which lists accessible venues and services under categories such as accessible restaurants and hotels, accessible shops and malls, accessible entertainment joints, wellness and disability events,, public transport, accessible tours, accessible cabs, accessible washrooms, accessible parking spaces, etc," explained BillionAbles in a press statement.

Source: <http://indianexpress.com/article/technology/tech-news-technology/billionables-android-app-will-help-find-accessible-places-for-disabled-people-4741273/>

- **Scholarship for girls with vision loss**

Under the scheme of Marga Schulze merit scholarships supported by CBM/Marga Schulze Foundation, girls with vision loss pursuing B.A second and third year, B.Ed, M.A and M. Phil can apply for scholarships and send their application forms to All India Confederation of the Blind on or before 31st August, 2017. To download the application form, visit

<http://www.aicb.org.in/otherResources.html>

- **BrailleMe..... a product designed to access digital information in tactile script**

Surabhi Srivastava from Mumbai is one of the winners of the first Global Competition for Hardware with a Social Purpose for her product 'BrailleMe'. The device which is developed by her company, Innovision, makes it possible for persons with vision loss to access any digital information instantaneously in their own tactile script. It helps users read and write digitally through electronic Braille. The reader itself will connect to a parent device- computer, mobile, etc and allow users to access information through Braille cell output and a Braille keypad on the device itself. Through this device, one can access the internet, MS Office, social media, E-Books and much more.

Source: <http://www.nasscomfoundation.org/get-engaged/nasscom-social-innovation-forum/past-winners/winners-2016/brailleme.html>

- **Movie reading app brings cinema experience to persons with vision loss**

An Australian- first smartphone app will allow persons with vision loss to fully experience movies at the cinema, in a new trial designed to make films more accessible. While filmgoers are usually warned not to get their phones out during a film, with MovieReading they are encouraged to plug in their headphones while the movie is described to them as it plays. "The technology behind the app 'listens' to the regular audio of the film and synchronises with it and then adds the enhanced audio elements on top of the regular soundtrack" Demand.film chief executive David Doepel said "So if you are the

person using it, you hear the ambient cinema sound, usually in magnificent 5.1 sound, and then perhaps in one ear through an earphone you hear the description. It doesn't interfere with a sighted person's experience of the film as no one else hears the descriptive audio except the person using the app"he added.

Source: <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/life/personal-technology/moviereading-app-brings-cinema-experience-to-the-blind/news-story/94f8f298f992f3f211655211007307d3>

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