



## **E-BUZZ ON “ACCESS TO INDEPENDENCE”**

**Information around the world for persons with vision loss**

**December 2017 (19<sup>th</sup> 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 accessible public transport, from leisure and recreation to parental guidance, from advocacy to government policies from the world around us.

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

- **Virgin Atlantic... the first airline to offer entertainment catered to passengers with vision loss**

In 1991, Virgin Atlantic became the first airline to reveal individual screens on the back of each customer seat and it continues to offer a wide range of films, TV programs and games as part of its inflight entertainment. Despite the success of the seat back screens, the touch screen surface and challenging navigational system can generate barriers for passengers who have limited vision. But with the launch of its new initiative, the airline will provide a specialized service for customers who require it. Using pioneering technology developed by Bluebox, the new kit features specially adapted iPads which have audio descriptions for all entertainment features. As per reports, the service will be available on Virgin Atlantic flights in North America, the Caribbean, Africa, China, India and the Middle East. The airline also offers 'familiarisation days', in which aircraft visits are allowed to visitors with vision loss. This helps them to understand the layout of the plane before they begin their actual trip.

Source: <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/transport/virgin-atlantic-flights-inflight-blind-visually-impaired-a3703496.html>

- **Delhi High Court issues notice over difficulty faced by persons with vision loss in identifying new rupee notes**

The Delhi High Court observed that persons with vision loss are finding it difficult to use newly introduced currency notes and issued notices to the Centre and the Reserve Bank of India, PTI reported. The High Court was hearing a plea filed by the non-government organization, All India Confederation of Blind. The petition had said

that persons with vision loss were facing difficulties while identifying, using and making transactions with the new Rs 2,000, Rs 500, Rs 200 and Rs 50 denomination notes. The petitioner also asked the government to replace Rs 10, Rs 5, Rs 2 and Rs 1 coins as they were of a similar structure. Moreover, it added that that the tactile marks present on some notes were hardly identifiable and they would fade with usage. It asked the court to direct the authorities to replace the notes with ones that can be easily identified in a phased and time-bound manner.

Source: <https://scroll.in/latest/860010/visually-impaired-people-have-trouble-using-new-currency-notes-says-delhi-high-court>

- **Blind Motherhood.... A website for parents with vision loss**

After becoming legally blind as an unlikely side effect of her chemotherapy treatment in 2012, Holly Bonner has learnt that parenting doesn't need to be seen to be felt. Bonner, a West Brighton resident has used the experience and wisdom she's gained from her 1- and 3-year-old daughters, to create her website Blind Motherhood. Blind Motherhood's primary focus is to demonstrate that persons with vision loss are more than capable of being effective, independent and responsible parents. Some examples of things available on the site include informative blog posts, easy-to-prepare recipes, a list of guide dog schools, podcasts, technological accessibility tips and a list of available government resources. Bonner has received an overwhelming amount of positive feedback from not only parents with vision loss but also from sighted parents of children with vision loss. Bonner said that her work has shown young girls with vision loss that

they too could one day become mothers. “I’ve had a lot of moms say to me that because of you, I think that I’ll maybe have grandchildren one day”, she said.

Source: [http://www.silive.com/news/index.ssf/2016/10/staten\\_islander\\_shares\\_her\\_sto.html](http://www.silive.com/news/index.ssf/2016/10/staten_islander_shares_her_sto.html)

- **Hyderabad Metro Rail to be disabled-friendly**

The Hyderabad Metro Rail Limited (HMRL) has made arrangements and provided facilities for persons with disabilities to freely board the Metro. Be it wheelchair-bound passengers, persons with vision loss or those with hearing, speech or cognitive disabilities, it is now possible for everyone to get around. “In designing the stations, lifts, fare gates and ticket vending machines, we have made it possible for the disabled to transcend their physical limitations”, said HMRL Managing Director, NVS Reddy. Right from the moment one approaches the Metro station, persons with disabilities can enjoy facilities like a ramp provided at the road level to facilitate wheelchairs up to the lifts. For easy maneuverability and accommodation of wheelchairs, spacious lifts are being provided with hand rails inside. Lift operating buttons will have information in Braille at all levels of the station for convenience of persons with vision loss. A tactile strip being provided from the street level to the edge of the platform guides persons with vision loss in navigating their way by tapping the floor with their white canes. “Wheelchair-bound passengers will not encounter any problem getting into the train as care is being taken in maintaining the gap between the platform and train floor. Even the

blind persons will not run the risk of getting their feet accidentally trapped in the opening between the platform and the train door”, said NVS Reddy.

Source: <http://www.thehansindia.com/posts/index/Telangana/2017-11-17/Metro-Rail-to-be-disabled-friendly/339963>

- **Google’s Chrome OS to soon get dictation as an accessibility feature**

To use Google Docs’ dictation feature, which allows you to transform your speech into words, one had to constantly have a Google Doc open. But according to a code change request, Chrome OS will soon have this functionality built into the system as an accessibility feature. Currently, the only way you can enable this is through extensions. However, with this new feature, dictation will become a built-in feature for Chrome OS. To give an idea of how it works, each invocation triggers a new dictation session, sound icon prompts the user to start dictating and silence triggers dictation completion.

Source: <https://www.chromestory.com/2017/11/enable-dictation-chromebook/>

- **Lead content in Braille print affects children with vision loss, petition tells court**

An advocate with vision loss has urged Kolkata High Court to give an order to replace all lead-made Braille print with plastic ones. In her PIL, she attached a survey that shows students with vision loss using Braille scripts with high lead content are increasingly complaining of

sleeplessness, lack of appetite, gastric ailments and loss of memory. Petitioner, Snigdha Acharya, the daughter of retired High Court Judge , Shankar Acharya, is now studying for her post-graduate diploma in Public Health Care and Medicine Law at the National University of Juridical Sciences. A report by the National Test House shows Braille scripts have 98.11% lead content. This is a major health hazard for persons with vision loss, the PIL states , adding, “The Centre and states are negligent about lead’s harmful effect on blind students.”

Source: <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/kolkata/lead-braille-affecting-kids-pil-tells-court/articleshow/61599469.cms>

- **Soon to hit theatres.... Film on blind cricket!**

Ronnie Screwvala’s motion picture company is set to make a film set in the world of blind cricket. It will tell the story about a character who never ceases to believe in the power of his dreams despite the hurdles life throws his way. The Cricket Association for the Blind in India (CABI) is delighted that a film is being made on the sport. “My greatest thanks to RSVP and Ronnie Screwvala for taking the initiative and making a movie on blind cricket which is inspired by true events. I immensely appreciate the effort and I am positive that this film will help make blind cricket more popular among masses”, G.K. Mahantesh – President, CABI, said in a statement.

Source: <http://zeenews.india.com/bollywood/ronnie-screwvalas-company-to-make-film-on-blind-cricket-2054411.html>

- **International Certification of Accessibility Consultants for the Built Environment launched by GAATES**

The Global Alliance on Accessible Technologies and Environments (GAATES) recognized as an international leader in the field of accessibility is pleased to announce its public launch of the International Certification of Accessibility Consultants. This certification program identifies you as an emerging or current leader with technical knowledge, experience and credibility in the field of accessibility. Achieving this certification is based on a rigorous assessment of skills and experience. If you're interested in the certification program and would like to submit an application for review by their Expert Panel, please email [certification@gaates.org](mailto:certification@gaates.org)

Source: <https://gaates.org/certification/>

- **Monoculars to get driving license in Hyderabad**

A campaign by a city-based scientist and others across the nation has resulted in the Centre issuing orders to all state governments to allow persons with a single eye or vision in a single eye to obtain a driving license. The circular issued by Ministry of Road Transport and Highways to principal secretaries and secretaries of transport departments of all states imposes 2 key conditions for applicants with one eye. The applicant must obtain a certificate from a government Ophthalmologist that the visual acuity in remaining or in the better eye is 6/12 or more and horizontal visual field should be 120 degrees or more. Besides, sufficient time of 6 months has been allowed after the loss of vision in the other eye for the person to adapt to the loss of the same.

Source: <http://www.deccanchronicle.com/nation/in-other-news/041217/hyderabadmonoculars-to-get-driving-licence.html>

- **Google set to remove apps from Play Store that use accessibility services not designed for users with disabilities**

To better help users with disabilities, Android has a set of accessibility services that developers can use to improve their applications. Now, according to an email from Google, unless developers can describe how the app properly uses the accessibility services to help the users with disabilities, it will need to remove all requests for accessibility services or it will be taken off the Play Store. As pointed out by Android Police, Google is most likely cracking down on accessibility services used due to security reasons. While applications like LastPass use the available APIs to identify password fields in other apps, this level of access can be used maliciously. As you can see, this change will most likely affect hundreds if not thousands of applications on the Play Store. Developers have 30 days to address their use of accessibility services; so we will have to wait and see what happens.

Source: <https://9to5google.com/2017/11/12/apps-android-accessibility-services-removed-google-play-store/>

Disclaimer: The information shared in this newsletter is a collection of updates and happenings from various sources.

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