



New Draft Guidelines for Accessibility Standards

Why in News

Recently, the **Ministry of Information and Broadcasting** has issued draft guidelines for new accessibility standards.

- Under these **almost all television channels** are required to ensure that they either **carry captions or sign language** to help the hearing impaired understand the programming.
- Earlier, the Indian Sign Language Research and Training Centre (ISLRTC) and the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) **to make NCERT textbooks accessible to hearing-impaired** students in sign language.

Key Points

▪ About Draft Guidelines:

- **Objective:** The draft is released in process to get the **“Accessibility Standards for Television Programmes for Hearing Impaired”**.
 - These standards will be notified under the **[Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016](#)**, to make television content more inclusive for persons with hearing disabilities.
- **Scope:** All programming or content like music shows, debates, scripted/ unscripted reality shows, etc.; and advertisements and teleshopping content will have to adhere to these standards.
- **Exemptions:**
 - **Live and deferred live content/events** such as sports: live news, events like live music shows, award shows, live reality shows, etc.
 - Channels which have **less than 1% average audience share** for all households over a year.
- **Type of Service:** The service providers or broadcasters will have the right to choose any one or more options from **“Closed Captioning, Subtitles, Open Captioning and/or Sign Language** (not only hand but facial expression also).
 - Open captions always are in view and cannot be turned off, whereas closed captions can be turned on and off by the viewer.
- **Responsibility:** The **creators of the content will be responsible** to create the content for these services and deliver it to the concerned channels and broadcasters.

▪ Earlier Instances to Support Hearing Impaired:

- **Doordarshan has been carrying sign language** interpretation of the address of President of India on the eve of Independence Day and Prime Minister’s address from the ramparts of Red Fort on Independence Day every year.
- Recently, the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting has asked **Private Satellite News TV channels** also to telecast a short programme on Independence Day Celebrations, along with corresponding sign language interpretation, in the afternoon/evening of 15th August.

Constitutional and Legal Framework for Disabled People

- **Article 14:** The State shall not deny to any person equality before the law or the equal protection of the laws within the territory of India.
 - In this context, Persons with Disabilities should have similar and equal rights in the eyes of the Constitution.
- **UN Convention the Right of Persons with Disabilities:** India is a signatory to the [United Nations Convention the Right of Persons with Disabilities](#), which came into force in 2007.
 - The Convention recognizes accessibility as a human right and requires signatories to adopt appropriate measures to ensure access by persons with disabilities.
- **Accessible India Campaign:** The '[Accessible India Campaign](#)' also known as the **Sugamya Bharat Abhiyan** to enable Persons with disabilities to gain universal access, equal opportunity for development.
 - The campaign seeks to enhance accessibility by making significant changes to the infrastructure, information and communication systems.
- **Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016:** The Government of India enacted The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016, which is the principal and comprehensive legislation concerning persons with disabilities.
 - The Act defines the responsibilities of the Central and State governments with regard to the services for persons with disabilities.
 - The Act also recommends creating a **barrier-free environment** by removing all type of discrimination against persons with disabilities where they can share the development benefits which a normal person enjoys .

Source: IE

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