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Seeking a life of dignity for disabled and elderly, NGO audits 25 buildings

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Gurgaon: For people with reduced mobility, this city, like many others in India, is deplorably lacking in accessible infrastructure. Sminu Jindal, who was paralysed from waist down since childhood, hopes to change that.

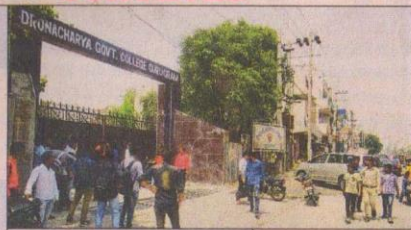
“This is not a disability issue, it’s one that affects many more people,” said Jindal, founder and chairperson of Svayam, an NGO that strives to give the disabled freedom and dignity.

“It’s about reduced mobility, which can be temporary or permanent.” Besides the disabled, others who live with reduced mobility include elderly, pregnant women and the war-wounded.

For three days last week, Svayam carried out audits of

KEY PLACES SURVEYED

- Krishi Bhawan
- Gurgaon Central Cooperative Bank (Civil Lines)
- Tau Devi Lal Stadium
- Passport Seva Kendra (Udyog Vihar)



- Huda Gymkhana Club (Sec 4)
- Sector 14 Huda market
- Dronacharya College
- Main bus stand

25 sites and buildings in Gurgaon. In total, 42 inspections were planned, with the remaining 18 to be done later in May. Though these audits are advisory in nature, the findings will be sent to the PMO for further action.

While mindsets towards those with reduced mobility

need to change, Jindal felt there is already a “revolution in thinking” at the highest levels. “For the first time, a prime minister has become involved in the cause. All agencies need to work together,” Jindal told **TOI**, singling out tourism ministry for praise.

Svayam promotes acces-

sible public ecosystems.

It began with an audit of Delhi and Faridabad, and will carry out audits in Mumbai, Dehradun, Chandigarh, Jaipur and Varanasi from May 9 to June 4. Altogether, 340 sites across eight cities will be audited.

Jindal used figures from the last census, which showed a 13% rise in number of over-65s in India, as evidence of a looming crisis. “People must look at it as a movement for their future. When we’re working on accessibility, we’re working on our future.”

“Senior citizens shouldn’t be confined to one room because there’s no elevator in the building they live in, for example.” Above all, said Jindal, it’s about giving hope to many seeking a life of dignity.