**Special facilities for differently-abled**

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The Railway Budget envisages to create facilities for differently-abled persons to have an easy access to platforms and other areas at stations.

“Indian Railways has always been alive to its social responsibility towards ensuring comfortable journey for differently-abled persons,” said railways minister Dinesh Trivedi.
The minister said besides providing several travel concessions to such persons, the railways has taken initiative to start manufacturing especially designed coaches having earmarked compartments and toilets adapted to the needs of wheel chair borne or differently-abled person. “Each differently-abled friendly compartment provided in specified coaches has a berthing capacity for four passengers, including two attendants along with toilet and other amenities. The railways has so far manufactured about 2,100 specially-designed coaches,” said the minister.
Mr Trivedi added that it will be the railway’s endeavour to have one such coach in each mail/express train.
“Besides, all Garib Rath rakes are provided with AC compartments for differently-abled persons in the power cars,” added Mr Trivedi.
“The announcement on introduction of special coaches for disabled friendly is not a welcome step. We expect the government to have a universal design/coaches which would be accessible for all with furnished accessible washrooms, considering the needs for differently abled people... This step goes in the opposite direction which discriminates the disabled from the rest. This is more vulnerable for the community, as it does not allow mainstreaming and restricts disabled from travelling on general coaches,” said chairperson Sminu Jindal, Svayam, an initiative of Sminu Jindal Charitable Trust.
“Announcement of building escalators, will not come in aid of differently-abled people. We would request the minister to alongside build ramps and elevators which would help all,” she said.