

The Jindal trust chairperson would like help to improve access to public utilities for the physically challenged

# Making it easier for the disabled

IS REPORTER

Sminu Jindal is seized with a passion to remove obstacles in the way of the disabled, be it on roads, airports, schools, hotels or petrol pumps.

The wheelchair-borne chairperson of SJ Charitable Trust, which provides consultancy services to organisations to make their buildings easily accessible to the disabled, says she would like to have NGOs on board too. "In fact, anyone who is willing to walk with us," she says.

The fee is over Rs 1 lakh for private buildings while the government ones get the service for Rs 50,000. The fee, she says,

is intended to make governments and companies take the reports seriously.

But Sminu is disappointed with the government. She says her trust carried out accessibility audits for the New Delhi Municipal Corporation facilities as well as sites under the Archaeological Survey of India. None of the two have implemented her suggestions.

The trust is now talking to HPCL and BPCL, which plan to make all petrol pumps accessible to the disabled. ITC has also asked for a report and so has the NDMC, which wants to make its school buildings disabled-friendly, says Sminu, who is disappointed that most buildings and roads in the country



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are hostile to the disabled.

The trust also sends resource persons to various organisations to sensitise employees on the needs and abilities of persons with disabilities.

It is now looking at Rajasthan and Haryana governments as partners in making buildings and thoroughfares accessible. "Haryana is my native

state and I would love to work with the government there. I am hoping that day comes soon," she says.

Sminu, who became handicapped at the age of 11 when she met with an accident, hopes to reach out to more people through her website, which brings together information on education, rehabilitation, employ-

ment and even matrimony and companionship.

"The idea is to enable each person with disability to access all the information he or she needs," says Jindal, adding, "I want disabled persons to meet and chat and marry through my website."

For more, visit [www.svayam.org](http://www.svayam.org)

09 APRIL '07

27th May 2007.

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## ASI plans more ramps at monuments

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

**New Delhi:** In a bid to make Capital's heritage more disabled-friendly, the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) has started implementation of a plan to build more ramps and wheelchair space for visitors with disabilities. The plan — which has already started off at the Qutab Minar complex and nearing completion — will soon follow at other monuments too.

Archaeological Survey of India director-general C Babu Rajeev said: "We have already started working on implementing our plan to make the Qutab complex more accessible for disabled visitors. After this, we will follow up on other ticketed monuments also."

The planks used at the Qutab complex are based on a list of recommendations made by Non Government Organisation, Svayam.

These planks will be made of wood and not steel as was considered earlier.

"We decided not to go with planks made of steel as those would get very hot in the summer and would also prove slippery for visitors on a wheelchair," said an Archaeological Survey of India official.

NGO Svayam — an initiative of Sminu Jindal Charitable Trust has also made recommendations like making more space between metallic rails to maintain queues, construct instructional signages to international standards and in Braille, chisel the uneven edges of the stone flooring to increase mobility of visitors on a wheelchair etc.

Some monuments like Purana Qila already have facilities to help disabled visitors. Humayun's Tomb, which is also partially friendly for the disabled, is also on the ASI's list to be upgraded in the coming weeks.

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DELHI  
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# Bid to make public places more inclusive

## Access audit at Qutub Minar, Pallika Kendra conducted

Staff Reporter

**NEW DELHI:** It is a small step that aims at making public places in the city more inclusive. Looking at improving accessibility to Qutub Minar and Pallika Kendra -- the headquarters of New the Delhi Municipal Council -- Svayam, a non-government organisation, has conducted an access audit at both these places to ensure that these landmarks make a little room for the differently-abled.

While Qutub Minar, a favourite spot for school children on their annual picnics, is the first monument on its list, Svayam hopes to be able to do an access audit on Red Fort next and then gradually include monuments outside the city.

From simple suggestions like providing benches for people to sit down and rest for a bit, the report also has more comprehensive recommendations like providing a model of the site so as to give the visually-challenged an idea of what the scale of the building is.

"We have studied the accessibility report and find many of the recommendations made useful. We will use them to provide better facilities at Qutub Minar," said Director-General of Archaeological Survey of India C. Babu Rajeev.

The access audit focuses

not only on people with mobility problems, but also hopes to make the site friendly for those who are hearing impaired. One of the suggestions made by Svayam for Qutub Minar is that the staff at the ticketing counter be provided with a sound enhancing system, as there is a lot of noise during the peak tourist season.

### Workshops held

"The access audit didn't take us long. Apart from conducting the audit, we also had workshops with engineers of both NDMC and ASI to help them understand the need for these changes. These workshops helped sensitise them to this issue. We now hope to be able to do another audit once these changes have been made so that we can benefit the end-user," said Sminu Jindal, founder of Svayam.

While the challenges of making Pallika Kendra accessible for the differently-abled was not the same as Qutub Minar, some of the suggestions are similar. Both these places need restrooms, which need to be friendlier to those with disabilities.

Svayam has also suggested that there should be adequate signage in both Hindi and English at the NDMC headquarters. Other recommendations include a tactile path to be laid out from the main gate of the building to the entrance.

09 JUNE '07

Hindustan Times, New Delhi  
JUNE 9, 2007

## THE BOSS AFTER WORK

### Sminu Jindal

Managing Director, Jindal Saw Ltd



Grand-daughter of late O.P. Jindal, the founder of the giant Jindal Group of Industries, Sminu Jindal is Managing Director of Jindal Saw Ltd, one of the largest manufacturers of submerged arc welded (SAW) pipes (used to transport oil and gas), which has among its clients Indian Oil Corporation, Gas Authority of India and Bharat Petroleum. But this alumna of the Sri Ram College of Commerce and Fore School of Management, prefers to play down her lineage.

**Family life means**  
Everything.

**When not in office can be found at**  
Home.

**Favourite authors**

I love fiction. I particularly like Indian authors like Sharat Chandra Chattopadhyaya. But self-help books give me a headache!

**Ideal holiday**

Never gave it a thought, but it would have to include my husband, children and a couple of close friends. It would be a place where there is lots to shop and where my children can keep themselves busy.

**Your passion**

My initiative 'Svayam', which works towards creating an environment where there are no barriers for the physically challenged.

**Gourmet food means**

A large meal! I love steamed dumplings with a nice soup and salad.

**Idols who inspired**

I'm still looking for one.

Raashi Bhatia



09 June '07

## NDMC to revamp public toilet system

**New Delhi:** Keeping the Commonwealth Games in mind, the New Delhi Municipal Corporation (NDMC) is all set to revamp a number of public convenience centres and make them more accessible for people with limited mobility. NDMC has roped in an NGO Svayam to conduct a survey and prepare an audit report

based on the same. A total of 94 public convenience centres have been identified for the first phase of work.

Out of these, Svayam has already surveyed 34 of the centres and will examine the remaining in the coming weeks. Said Sminu Jindal, founder of Svayam: "We wanted to make these public toilets universal-

ly accessible not just for disabled people but even for people with arthritis, senior citizens or pregnant women."

A comprehensive blueprint is being prepared by the NGO on what all changes are required and how the existing centres need to be modified to make it more approachable. TNN

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## No disabled-friendly facilities: Railway Ministry seeks report

TENZING LAMSANG  
NEW DELHI, JUNE 19

THE Railway Ministry has requested NGO Svayam for its report on the lack of disabled-friendly facilities in various trains and at the New Delhi Railway Station.

*Newsline* had, on Tuesday, reported the NGO's study which pointed out the lack of facilities for the disabled—including accessible drinking water, ramps, train schedule signages, toilets and assistance staff—at the station.

Railway Ministry information officer, Harish Kunwar, said, "We came to know of the lack of facilities for the disabled through the *Newsline* report. We have requested the NGO to officially submit its audit for perusal by senior officials."

Another senior Railway Ministry official said: "We are taking this report very seriously and are examining where we need to improve. We are also considering some of the proposals in the audit report."

"The Indian Railways is already constructing new and improved disabled-friendly railway coaches with better access like broader corridors and lower toilets. This report would be studied in that context," he added.

Director of Svayam, Abha Negi, speaking from Canada,

**Newsline had, on Tuesday, reported the NGO Svayam's study which pointed to lack of facilities for the disabled—including accessible drinking water, train schedule signages and assistance staff—at the station**

said, "We were running around for two months meeting various officials so that we could present our report to the Railway Ministry but we had no luck. Since this morning, all the wheels are moving at a unusually fast pace."

"This morning, we got a call from a senior Rail Bhavan official, who praised us for the effort we had put into the report and requested if we could immediately provide them with a copy," she said.

Railway officials have assured the NGO that disabled-friendly facilities would be upgraded at the New Delhi station with more visually handicapped friendly tiles, ramps, better access, Abha added.