

Purple Fest is a movement to bring visibility, dignity, and pride to the lives of persons with disabilities: Shri Subhash Phal Dessai

Media sensitisation workshop on inclusive and intersectional reporting on disability held

Panaji, September 23, 2025

Rising Flame, in collaboration with the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (Government of India), the Office of the State Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities, Goa, the UN in India, and UN Women, organised Spotlight, a media sensitisation workshop on inclusive and intersectional reporting on disability on Monday at the 'We the Peoples Hall', United Nations House, New Delhi as a pre event of International Purple Fest 205 Goa. The workshop brought together 50 journalists, editors, media and communication professionals to focus on disability representations in newsrooms and narratives across the country. Shri Subhash Phal Desai, Minister, Empowerment for Persons with Disabilities, Social welfare, Drinking Water, River and Navigation, spoke about the objective behind organising the Purple Fest stating it is to promote inclusivity, accessibility, and empowerment for persons with disabilities.

The Minister said, "The International Purple Fest, Goa is more than an event – it's a movement to bring visibility, dignity, and pride to the lives of persons with disabilities. We urge the media to join this global movement led by the Government of Goa in the form of International Purple Fest and embrace diversity and inclusion." The minister was speaking at the press interaction. Present were Shri Shombi Sharp, UN Resident Coordinator, India, Shri Taha Haaziq, Secretary, Office of the State Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities, Goa, Ms. Richa Shanker, Deputy Director General, Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment Government of India.

Shri Taha Haaziq, Secretary, Office of the State Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities, spoke about the variety of ways in which Purple Fest is organised across the four days such as Purple Think Tank, Purple Conventions, Purple experience zones. He said: "We strongly believe at International Purple Fest Goa, that there's a very fun side of any human being. And why should a person with disability be left behind or out of this fun? That is why the Purple Fest also explores our creativity, our talents and so on."

Earlier, a learning session, *Disability-inclusive and Intersectional Media Representation and Reporting* led by Rising Flame was held where the workshop explored how language and framing of stories impacts attitudes of larger society. The interactive session opened up conversation around framing stories to portray the diverse experiences of persons with disabilities and to build a culture of accurate and respectful reporting.

Founder and executive director of Rising Flame, Nidhi Goyal who co-facilitated the session said: "Too often, the media paints us people with disabilities as either heroes or objects of pity. We need to go beyond both. There is a need to amplify disabled voices and building nuanced, human-centred stories. Since media plays a critical role in shaping public understanding and influencing policy, journalists can ensure disability is covered with accuracy, dignity, and a rights-based lens."

In the second session *Senior Journalists Share Experiences on Reporting Gender and Disability* led by UN Women, there was panel moderator, Sudeshna Mukherjee, Head of Communications, UN Women India with some experienced journalists and communication professionals as panellists: Ms. Uzmi Athar, Chief Correspondent, PTI, Mr. Parvinder Singh, Head of Communications, World Food Programme in India, Ms. Pooja Pande, former Co-Chief Executive Officer, Chambal Media, writer and Ms. Bhanupriya Rao, Founder of BehanBox. Panellists addressed some important facets of reporting on disability such as, disability is not just a beat and there is a need to focus on it as central and important as it is done for other things like health etc.

Ms. Pooja Pande, former Co-Chief Executive Officer, Chambal Media, writer spoke about the need to move away from the binaries of narratives. She said, "These binaries of inspiring, feel-good narratives, or this pity narratives. Let it be about humanity, so even if we're talking about inspiring stories, we need to ask the questions, like focus on disabled entrepreneurs just like I would cover a woman entrepreneur on the ground."

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