

# Driving in the change

Harish Kumar, who had congenital defect in his right hand, has not only obtained a driving licence, but also started a one-of-its-kind driving school for disabled in city

PICS: MANISH MISTRY



Harish Kumar's dream is to open around 25 such schools across India

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*'The only disability in life is a lack of good attitude'*

**T**hese were chief minister Narendra Modi's words to Harish Kumar who did not let his disability to hamper his efforts in getting behind the wheel in 2013.

The 44-year-old, whose right hand below elbow has not developed since birth, has taken a step further. Not wanting others like him to undergo the same difficulties that he faced while learning to drive and obtain a licence, he has opened a unique driving school only for the physically challenged.

To his credit, Harish Kumar has completed a solo all-India motor expedition of 15,963 km across 28 states and seven Union Territories in 29 days, making it the fastest such expedition by a physically challenged person nationally as mentioned in the *Limca Books of Records*.

The accolade brought him recognition and appreciation. Inspired by his feat, a lot of disabled persons approached him to teach them driving. Stirred by the desire to do something for people like him, the MSc, Mtech who worked for a corporate world shifted gears. Harish Kumar started an NGO 'Ability on Wheels' to help the specially abled. Subsequently, he initiated the process of a driving school for the disabled.

## WHAT PROPELLED HIM

When the 44-year-old showed a desire to learn driving, no driving school was ready to admit him. "I went about pleading with friends to teach me. I persisted and somehow I learnt to drive. Thereafter it took me three months of relentless pursuit to get a driving licence." After seeing the need and the wish of disabled persons, Harish thought of doing something for them.

He met Transport Commissioner Kamal Dayani in January to inquire about his idea of starting such a school. Getting a positive response, he set in motion the procedure to start the school.

RTO Harshwardan Mody said, "I had received an application regarding driving school for disabled after modifying a car to suit the needs of physically challenged. The procedure was started for licence and school."

Harish got a licence on May 28 and started the school the next day.

Manoj Kumar, a disabled person from Harpur in Uttar Pradesh, who unsuccessfully tried to get a licence for two years, contacted Harish Kumar for help. He mailed him how to go



His modified Maruti Alto car

## DISABLED WHO CAN GET A LICENCE

People with three kinds of disability can learn driving and get licence from the RTO:

- » If the person does not have one hand
- » If a person does not have one leg
- » The person who does not have two legs but has two hands is eligible.

Those who are not mentally stable, deaf and mute or visually impaired are not eligible for a licence in India.

about the procedure and rendered all help.

Harish Kumar started his driving school at SoBo centre in Bopal on May 29. Since then around 15 persons from Ahmedabad, Baroda and from outside the state have shown interest in joining the school.

The disabled has to first approach Civil Hospital and get a disability certificate and then apply for learning licence and appear for an examination. Once they clear it, they can join the school.

For now, he has modified a Maruti Alto automatic vehicle. For a person who does not have one leg or both legs, he has provided hand control accelerator and brake. For the person who does not have right leg, then he can use the extra accelerator provided on the leg and then the brake.

Kavita Modi (38), who is into business, had approached different driving schools, but nobody was ready to teach her as she was disabled. "I approached Harish Kumar and got a positive response. Since then I have SMSed my friends and informed them about this school. For now I have started the procedure to enrol in the school."

Harish Kumar's dream is to open around 25 such schools across India. "If the government helps me then I can drive ahead with my dream as I am not economically strong."

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