



# The Union Minister For Science & Technology And Earth Sciences Dr. Harsh Vardhan released Braille Atlas for Visually Impaired

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The Union Minister for Science & Technology and Earth Sciences Dr. Harsh Vardhan released the Special Edition of "Atlas for Visually Impaired (India)" in English Braille today in New Delhi. This Braille Atlas has been prepared by National Atlas and Thematic Mapping Organisation (NATMO) under Department of Science & Technology.

The Minister expressed happiness at the production of these Atlases. He said these atlases will be distributed to various schools across the country for educating the students with visual challenges.

Dr. Harsh Vardhan said that all departments of Government will work to implement this. Efforts are being made to make these atlases more cost effective than the current price of Rs.600/- per atlas with 20 maps now. Silk screen printing used to prepare these atlases is unique to India, he added.

In the Braille Atlas, maps are raised and embossed with simple lines and point symbols to facilitate its users to realize the location and area coverage easily distinguishable in terms of shapes and textures. The legend and reference is placed on the map in Braille script to navigate the map. About 20 maps on different themes of physical, socio-economic and cultural aspects such as river system, natural vegetation, Metropolitan cities, Roads and Railways, Food crops and cash crops have been incorporated in the atlas with write-ups on every map as ready reference. This Atlas has been bestowed with National award for S&T intervention in empowering the physically challenged by the Prime Minister on 3rd January, 2017 in Indian Science Congress held in Tirupati.

NATMO has recently walked ahead to prepare Braille atlases for visually impaired persons. NATMO's long effort from metallic tactile maps to silk-screen printing technology to prepare a full volume of atlas is perhaps unique in the World. NATMO's aim is to transmit scientific information in the form of maps and atlases in a cost-effective manner, as more than 50 lakh visually challenged citizens of our country are mainly from low-income group. Till date their knowledge is constrained within books and literatures. Enriched with this experience, they will be able to understand the Indian geographical contours and will be empowered with wealth of knowledge.

National Atlas and Thematic Mapping Organisation (NATMO) is the premier agency of applied Geo-Spatial technology and pioneer in Thematic Mapping and Atlas Cartography under Department of Science & Technology (Ministry of Science & Technology) engaged in preparing different thematic maps and atlases and other documents on national, state, district, block level and many other monograms. The contribution made by NATMO in developing the thematic maps/ data is being regularly used by the decision makers in the entire country at districts and sub-divisions levels for implementing the developmental schemes as well as by the researchers, students and common people.

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