

## Project Drishti - a unique initiative by RIL and NAB

*Project Drishti crosses 5,000 nationwide corneal graft surgeries for the underprivileged and the largest corneal grafting drive undertaken by a single corporate in India*

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Project *Drishti* - a nation-wide corneal grafting drive to bring light into the lives of visually challenged from the underprivileged segment of society - has restored the gift of sight to over 5,000 Indians.

A unique initiative between Reliance Industries Limited (RIL) and National Association of Blind (NAB), Project *Drishti* has undertaken 5,000 keratoplasty surgeries in less than four years since it was started - all free of cost. It is now the largest corneal grafting surgery project enabled by a single corporate entity in India.

Project *Drishti*, under the leadership of Smt Nita Ambani, President, Dhirubhai Ambani Foundation is working zealously to bring light into the lives of millions who have so far lived in darkness. The objective of the project is to give sight to the sightless from the underprivileged segment of the society at no cost to them.

Smt Nita M. Ambani, President, Dhirubhai Ambani Foundation says, 'We are committed in our endeavor to bring light into the lives of visually challenged brethren.'

'In more ways than one, we can make this a century with better vision than ever. We need to see life a little differently even after we have passed on. Life would undergo a change of appearance if you donate your eyes because beauty also lies in the eye of the giver', Smt Ambani said.

The challenges for corneal grafting surgeries are Herculean, more so for the underprivileged segment of the society. Industry estimates indicate that annually, about 13,000 to 15,000 individuals donate eye balls, which means around 30,000 eye balls get donated.

Of this, only 35 - 40 per cent is fit for corneal grafting purposes, i.e. 12,000 to 13,000 eyeballs are available for corneal grafting. Further the success rate of a corneal graft surgery is 70 to 80 per cent, which brings down the actual number available to around 10,000 eyeballs.

The acute scarcity of good corneas results in a long waiting list for people whose world is black. And, it is an assured stark black if the visually impaired person is from the underprivileged segment.

In its endeavor to ensure that the visually impaired from the most under-privileged segment of the society reap the benefit from this initiative, Project *Drishti*, in association with National Association For the Blind - extends support through specialized eye-hospitals spread across India. NAB is a non-profit institution which has been serving the blind in India for over five decades. The *Drishti* project has conducted corneal grafting surgeries in over 16 cities India and efforts are on to take the initiative to far-flung *moffusil* areas of the country. In addition to its drive of corneal grafting drive, Project *Drishti* has actively participated in several blindness prevention activities and also in creating awareness about the compelling need for eye donation.

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**For more information, Please contact:**

**Manu Dagar**

PR Consultant - ImageCraftz

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