DIVYANGJANS IN INDIA

Context

December 3 is marked by the UN as **International Day of Persons with Disabilities** in a bid to promote a more inclusive and accessible world for the differently-abled and to raise awareness for their rights. In India, the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment observed the day with essay and painting competitions among other events.

Background

About 2.2% of India's population lives with some kind of physical or mental disability, as per the National Statistics Office report on disability released last year.

The list of disabilities was expanded to 21 from 7 when the Rights of People with Disabilities was introduced in 2016.

Accordingly, the 2019 report included questions to identify people with temporary loss of an ability as well as neurological and blood disorders in addition to the earlier definition, that included mental retardation and permanent inability to move, speak, hear and see. Significantly, the revised definition recognises deformities and injuries of acid attack victims as disabilities, entitling them to various relief measures.

Rural men had the highest prevalence of disability in India, according to the NSO report.

A higher proportion of men were disabled in India compared with women, and disability was more prevalent in rural areas than in urban areas.

Inability to move without assistance was the most common disability. More men experienced locomotor disability than women.

Initiatives taken for their upliftment

National Policy for Disabled in 2006 to address various concerns regarding physical, educational and economic rehabilitation of persons with disabilities.

Ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), which came into force on 3rd May, 2008.

In 2015, the Government launched the National Action Plan (NAP) for skill development of persons with disabilities. The NAP envisages skilling of the persons with disabilities on various trades so as to enhance their employability both in the government and private sector and also to enhance the scope of their self-employment.

Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016: It replaces Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation Act, 1995.

Government has been authorized to notify any other category of specified disability.

It increases the quantum of reservation for people suffering from disabilities from 3% to 4% in government jobs and from 3% to 5% in higher education institutes.

Every child with benchmark disability between the age group of 6 and 18 years shall have the right to free education.

Government funded educational institutions as well as the government recognized institutions will have to provide inclusive education.

Stress has been given to ensure accessibility in public buildings in a prescribed time frame.

The Chief Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities and the State Commissioners will act as regulatory bodies and Grievance Redressal agencies, monitoring implementation of the Act.

A separate National and State Fund be created to provide financial support to the persons with disabilities.

Schemes introduced for their upliftment

Scheme for Implementation of Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 (SIPDA)

To provide barrier free environment for the persons with disabilities.

Skill Development Programme for PwDs.

Accessible India Campaign (Sugamya Bharat Abhiyan)

To support/setup Composite Rehabilitation Centres and District Disability Rehabilitation Centres.

Unique Disability Identification Project: building a holistic end-to-end integrated system for Issuance of Universal ID & Disability Certificates for Person with Disabilities.

Accessible India Campaign

It has the following three important components:

Part A: Built Environment Accessibility

Part B: Transportation System Accessibility

Part C: Information and Communication Eco-System Accessibility

Virtual ADIP Camp

For free distribution of assistive aids and devices under the ADIP scheme was organized at Talwandi Bhai Block of Firozpur District in Punjab.

Pre-Matric Scholarship Scheme

Provides for financial assistance to the SwDs studying 9th and 10th classes

Rashtriya Vayoshri Yojana

For providing physical aids and assisted-living devices for Senior citizens belonging to BPL category. This is a Central Sector Scheme implemented by Artificial Limbs Manufacturing Corporation.

Swavlamban Health Insurance Scheme

Launched under the power of New India Assurance Company limited with the association with Ministry of Social Justice and Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities to provide with low cost and affordable health insurance.

Sugamaya Pustakalaya

An online platform that makes accessible content available to print-disabled people was also launched.

Deendayal Disabled Rehabilitation Scheme

To create an enabling environment to ensure equal opportunities, equity, social justice & empowerment of persons with disabilities.

To encourage voluntary action for ensuring effective implementation of the People with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities and Protection of Rights) Act of 1995.

Assistance to Disabled Persons for Purchase / Fitting of Aids and Appliances

To provide latest and modern aids and assistive devices to the Divyangjan to promote their physical, social and psychological rehabilitation and to enhance their economic potential. ALIMCO is the implementing agency.

Sources: *Indian Express, Yojana, Kurukshetra*