Persons with Disabilities

Why in News

Recently, the **draft norms for ensuring accessibility** for the differently abled at airports has been released by the Ministry of Civil Aviation.

- The draft follows the **Rights of Person with Disabilities Rules, 2017**, under which the **Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment** is required to frame harmonised guidelines for accessibility standards for persons with disabilities.
- The draft details **various infrastructural requirements** that an airport must provide to facilitate differently abled.

Key Points

- **About:**

  - **Any restriction or lack of ability to perform an activity** in a manner or within the range considered normal for human beings, resulting from impairment is termed as a disability.
  - Disability is an important public health problem especially in developing countries like India.

    - In order to sensitise the matter of disability, **3rd December has been marked as the** International Day of Persons with Disabilities by the **United Nations**.
  - **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.
- **Issues Related to Persons with Disability:**

  - **Discrimination**:

    - Continuous discrimination **denies them equal access** to education, employment, healthcare and other opportunities.
    - The **stigma attached to persons** with disabilities, compounded by a lack of understanding of their rights, makes it difficult for them to attain their valued "functionings''.

      - **Women and girls with disabilities** are at a higher risk of experiencing sexual and other forms of **gender-based violence**.
  - **Health:**

    - A **large number of disabilities are preventable**, including those arising from medical issues during birth, maternal conditions, **malnutrition**, as well as accidents and injuries.
    - However, there is a **lack of awareness, lack of care, and lack of good and accessible medical facilities.** Further, there is a lack of accessibility, availability, and utilization of rehabilitation services.
  - **Education:**

- Lack of availability of **special schools**, access to schools, trained teachers, and educational materials for the disabled.
  - **Employment:**
    - Even though many disabled adults are capable of productive work, **disabled adults have far lower employment rates** than the general population.
  - **Accessibility:**
    - Physical accessibility in buildings, transportation, access to services etc still remain a major challenge.
  - **Inadequate data and statistics:**
    - The lack of rigorous and comparable data and statistics further hinders inclusion of persons with disabilities.
- **Constitutional Provisions:**
  - **Article 41 of the** Directive Principles of State Policy (DPSP) states that State shall make effective provision for securing right to work, to education and to public assistance in cases of unemployment, old age, sickness and disablement, within the limits of its economic capacity and development.
  - The subject of '**relief of the disabled and unemployable**' is specified in the **state list** of the Seventh schedule of the constitution.
- **Related Initiatives**:
  - **Unique Disability Identification (UDID) Portal**
  - **Accessible India Campaign**
  - **DeenDayal Disabled Rehabilitation Scheme**
  - **Assistance to Disabled Persons for Purchase/fitting of Aids and Appliances (ADIP)**
  - **National Fellowship for Students with Disabilities**

Way Forward

- To address this growing fissure between the accessible and non-accessible world, the **international community will have to close some of the gaps** and blunt some of the edges by building accessibility across all sectors.
- Such efforts must **engage people to promote education and awareness on** including persons with disabilities; implementing accessibility laws and regulations; improving physical accessibility and universal design; reducing stigma; and developing the tools for individuals and communities to **engage meaningfully with persons with disabilities.**
- Ultimately, one of the key ways to achieve this is to **begin including and involving persons with disabilities in decision and policy making,** for **Covid-19** recovery and beyond, which can ensure representation on the matters that govern their lives.

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