Minister of Social Justice and Empowerment has virtually inaugurated an Assistance to Disabled Persons Camp for free distribution of assistive aids and devices to Divyangjan or Divyang. These are Hindi word meaning the ‘one with a divine body’. The Prime Minister decided that persons with disabilities should no longer be referred to as disabled persons or viklang (someone with non-functional body parts).

Facts:
The camp was organized by the **Artificial Limbs Manufacturing Corporation of India** (ALIMCO), Kanpur. ALIMCO is a not-for-profit Central Public Sector Undertaking (PSU) established in 1972 and it works under the aegis of the Department of Empowerment of Person with Disability (DEPwD).

**Assistance to Disabled Persons Scheme:** It is in operation since 1981.

**Definition:** The scheme follows the definitions of various types of disabilities as given in the **Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) (PWD) Act 1995.**

PWD Act was replaced by the **Right of Persons with Disabilities Act 2016.**

**Act Provisions**

Rights and entitlements
Responsibility has been cast upon the appropriate governments to take effective measures to ensure that the persons with disabilities enjoy their rights equally with others.

Additional benefits such as reservation in higher education (not less than 5%), government jobs (not less than 4%), reservation in allocation of land, poverty alleviation schemes (5% allotment) etc. have been provided for persons with benchmark disabilities and those with high support needs.

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 to the children with disabilities.

For strengthening the Prime Minister's Accessible India Campaign stress has been given to ensure accessibility in public buildings (both Government and private) in a prescribed time-frame.

Guardianship

The Act provides for grant of guardianship by District Court under which there will be joint decision – making between the guardian and the persons with disabilities.

Establishment of Authorities

Broad based Central & State Advisory Boards on Disability are to be set up to serve as apex policy making bodies at the Central and State level.

Office of Chief Commissioner of Persons with Disabilities has been strengthened who will now be assisted by 2 Commissioners and an Advisory Committee comprising of not more than 11 members drawn from experts in various disabilities.

Similarly, the office of State Commissioners of Disabilities has been strengthened who will be assisted by an Advisory Committee comprising of not more than 5 members drawn from experts in various disabilities.

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

District level committees will be constituted by the State Governments to address local concerns of PwDs. Details of their constitution and the functions of such committees would be prescribed by the State Governments in the rules.

Creation of National and State Fund will be created to provide financial support to the persons with disabilities. The existing National Fund for Persons with disabled persons will be utilized for this purpose.
Disabilities and the Trust Fund for Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities will be subsumed with the National Fund.

Penalties for offences

- The Act provides for penalties for offences committed against persons with disabilities and also violation of the provisions of the new law.
- Any person who violates provisions of the Act, or any rule or regulation made under it, shall be punishable with imprisonment up to six months and/or a fine of Rs 10,000, or both. For any subsequent violation, imprisonment of up to two years and/or a fine of Rs 50,000 to Rs five lakh can be awarded.
- Whoever intentionally insults or intimidates a person with disability, or sexually exploits a woman or child with disability, shall be punishable with imprisonment between six months to five years and fine.
- Special Courts will be designated in each district to handle cases concerning violation of rights of PwDs.

Objective: To assist the needy disabled persons in procuring durable, sophisticated and scientifically manufactured, modern, standard aids and appliances that can promote their physical, social and psychological rehabilitation by reducing the effects of disabilities and enhance their economic potential.

Grants: Grants-in-aid are released to various implementing agencies (Artificial Limbs Manufacturing Corporation of India, National Institutes, Composite Regional Centres, District Disability Rehabilitation Centres, State Handicapped Development Corporations, NGOs, etc.) for purchase and distribution of aids and assistive devices.

Assistance: Aids/appliances which do not cost more than Rs. 10,000 are covered under the Scheme for single disability. However, in some cases the limit would be raised to Rs.12,000. In the case of multiple disabilities, the limit will apply to individual items separately in case more than one aid/appliance is required.

Full cost of aid/appliance is provided if the income is up to Rs. 15,000 per month and 50% of the cost of aid/appliance is provided if the income is between Rs. 15,001 to Rs. 20,000 per month.

Government Initiatives:
UPSC "PT" DNA (Daily News Analysis)

Right of Persons with Disabilities Act 2016: "Person with disability" means a person with long term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which, in interaction with barriers, hinders his full and effective participation in society equally with others.

Accessible India Campaign: Creation of Accessible Environment for PwDs: A nation-wide flagship campaign for achieving universal accessibility that will enable PwDs to gain access for equal opportunity and live independently and participate fully in all aspects of life in an inclusive society.

DeenDayal Disabled Rehabilitation Scheme: Under the scheme, financial assistance is provided to NGOs for providing various services to PwDs, like special schools, vocational training centres, community-based rehabilitation, pre-school and early intervention etc.

National Fellowship for Students with Disabilities: It aims to increase opportunities for students with disabilities for pursuing higher education and grants 200 fellowships per year to students with disability.

Unique Disability Identification Project: It aims to create a national database for PwDs and issuing Unique Disability Identity (UDID) Card along with disability certificate. Once the project covers all persons with disabilities, UDID Cards will be made mandatory for availing various government benefits.

Assistance to Disabled Persons for Purchase/fitting of Aids and Appliances: It aims at helping the disabled persons by bringing suitable, durable, scientifically-manufactured, modern, standard aids and appliances within their reach.

International Day of Persons with Disabilities: It is celebrated worldwide on 3rd December and was proclaimed in 1992 by United Nations General Assembly resolution 47/3. It aims to promote the rights and well-being of persons with disabilities in all spheres of society and development and to increase awareness of the situation of persons with disabilities in every aspect of political, social, economic and cultural life.

Initiatives for Mental Health: National Mental Health Programme, which was launched in 1982 to improve the status of mental health in India.

KIRAN: Mental Health Rehabilitation Helpline for addressing mental health
issues, coordinated by the National Institute for the Empowerment of Persons with Multiple Disabilities (NIEPMD), Tamil Nadu and National Institute of Mental Health Rehabilitation (NIMHR), Madhya Pradesh.