Access to Persons with Disabilities

What is the issue?

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- Recently, the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPwD) drafted the rules of the new law i.e Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 and made available it to the public for comments.
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- But they are not published in an accessible format to Persons with Disabilities.
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What are the features of the act?

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- **It** covers **21 categories** of disabilities compared to 7 in the 1995 legislation.
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- It includes Speech and Language Disability and Specific Learning Disability, Blood disorders (Thalassemia, Hemophilia and Sickle Cell disease), Acid attack victims, Dwarfism and Muscular dystrophy.
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- The central government can add three more types of disabilities, if required.
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- **Gender perspective** - The bill specifically deals with gender sensitivity in certain chapters like Health, Social Security, and others instead of having a general purpose chapter on gender specific issues.
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- **Private sector** - It provides a definite period for all private sectors to make their organisations disability friendly.
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- **Disability entitlements** - It ensures all India’s validity for disability entitlements by the proposal for a “**universal identity card for the**

disabled.
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- It specifies a two-year jail term and a maximum fine of Rs 5 lakh for discriminating against disabled persons.
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- It also provides **Right to Free Legal Aid** to ensure a better access to justice.
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- **Accessibility -** It mandated the respective governments to ensure that all their **public documents are in accessible formats**.
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What is Sugamya Bharat Abhiyan?

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- India has also launched the Accessible India Campaign (Sugamya Bharat Abhiyan).
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- The campaign focuses not just on accessibility to physical infrastructure, but also on Information and Communication Technologies.
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What is the underlying problem?

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- People with disabilities miss out on information to do with their own lives because of lack of accessibility.
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- Both the new legislation and the campaign are focussed on addressing the problem.
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- In spite of this, the new rules to the legislation are not made accessible to Person with Disabilities.
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- This makes it clearly evident that the attitudinal barriers are here to stay.
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- Formulating an ambitious campaign will be ineffective without the attitudinal change in the government.
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- Therefore publishing the rules without making them accessible should soon be rectified.
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Source: The Hindu

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