Making Sports Accessible for All

Why in news?

The Tokyo 2020 Paralympics was a watershed moment for Indian sports as a Paralympic gold medal was won by a female Indian athlete for the first time.

What is the significance of sports ecosystem?

> *Tokyo Paralympics was the 16th Summer Paralympic Games, held in Tokyo, Japan in 2021. Team China topped the final medal tally while India was placed at **24th position** out of a total of 162 nations.*

- Sports are at the heart of the UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in its contribution towards achieving educational, health and equality outcomes.
- Sports are a creative tool that can be used to reach across divisions to promote inclusion and equality.
- When sports become inclusive, they have the potential to transform not just the lives of those playing but also of the wider community by encouraging the values of fair play.

What are the barriers in accessing sports?

- Practical barriers
  - Lack of money
  - Lack of transport
  - Personal safety
  - Funding
  - Access to facilities
- Personal barriers
  - Body image
  - Expensive clothing and equipment
  - Lack of self-confidence
  - Parental and adult influence
- Social and cultural barriers
  - Attitudes and prejudices about sexuality
  - Attitudes and prejudices about disability
  - Attitudes and prejudices about ethnicity
  - Sexual harassment and abuse
  - Invisibility- media representations and lack of role models in sport

What are the current challenges?

- **Impact of COVID**- COVID-19 challenged the inclusive legacy of the 2020 Paralympics

threatening the wider benefits that sports can generate.
- As lockdowns and social distancing measures were imposed, fewer people were practising and this intensified physical inactivity and the deterioration of mental health.
- **Budgetary allocations**- Budget allocations for physical education and sport remain low.
- **Discrimination**- The sports landscape is more unfavourable for women and girls with disabilities due to discriminations based on gender and disability.

What efforts have been taken to promote an inclusive sports ecosystem?

- **Scheme of Sports & Games for the Disabled**- It is a Central Sector Scheme being introduced by the Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports in 2009-10.
- The objective of the scheme is broad-basing participative sports among the disabled.
- It has the following components
    - Grant for sports coaching and purchase of consumables & non-consumable sports equipment for Schools
    - Grant for Training of Coaches
    - Grant for holding District, State & National level competitions for the disabled.
- **The Khelo India Scheme**- It was revamped in 2017 to encourage sports through target and inclusive approach to cover all the category of population at a large.
- The "Sports for women" component ensures more participation of women in sports and also emphasis on funding.
- It also has a component for "Promotion of sports among persons with diability".
- **Fit for Life initiative**- This is UNESCO's flagship initiative to activate smart investments in impactful sport policies, school curricula and grassroots participation to scale up solutions tackling physical inactivity, mental health issues, social exclusion, and inequalities.
- Alongside complementary ongoing initiatives such as the Fit India campaign and Khelo India, it is hoped that there will be greater collaboration for healthier, more inclusive and equitable communities.

References

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