

Still no sign of the language of equity and inclusion

(The Hindu, 29/05/24)



In the 2011 Census, there were five million hearing-impaired people in India. The National Association of the Deaf counts 18 million.

What are the challenges faced by Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DHH) individuals in India?

- **Limited Sign Language Recognition:** Indian Sign Language (ISL) is not officially recognized, hindering education and communication.
- **Focus on Oralism in Education:** Education prioritizes spoken language over sign language, isolating DHH students and hindering development. Only 5% of deaf children find themselves in school
- **Employment Challenges:** DHH individuals struggle to find jobs due to a lack of accessibility and discriminatory practices.
- **Inaccessible Public Services:** Public announcements, transportation, and helplines lack sign language interpretation or captions.
- **Healthcare Inequities:** Hospitals lack interpreters, and mental healthcare access is limited due to a lack of trained professionals.

What is the way ahead?

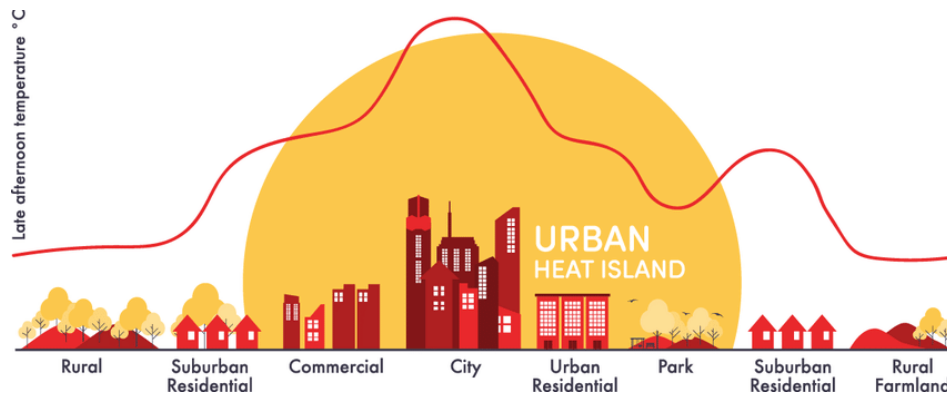
- Officially recognizing ISL and integrating it into education systems.
- Training healthcare professionals in sign language for better communication.
- Increasing accessibility measures in public services and media channels.
- Diversifying the healthcare workforce to include DHH professionals

Can you answer the following question?

Despite the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act (RPWD) 2016, Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DHH) people in India continue to face significant challenges. Examine these challenges and suggest practical measures to ensure their effective inclusion in Indian society.

More concrete, more heat: Why our cities are hotter than ever

(Indian Express, 29/05/24)



India is scorching under a brutal summer, with heatwaves stretching on for weeks. But a new report reveals a surprising culprit behind the unbearable heat – it's not just rising air temperatures.

What are the factors contributing to extreme heat stress in Indian cities?

- **Lack of Urban Greenery:** Trees and vegetation provide shade and cool the air through transpiration (releasing water vapor). A decline in green spaces in cities due to deforestation and urban sprawl reduces this natural cooling effect.
- **Urban Heat Island:** Increased concrete surfaces and reduced green spaces trap heat in cities, causing them to stay hot even at night.
- **Urban Canyon Effect:** Tall buildings in cities can trap heat between them, creating narrow canyons that channel and intensify the sun's rays, further increasing temperatures at street level.
- **"Heat Sink" Materials:** Extensive use of construction materials like asphalt and concrete absorb and retain heat efficiently, radiating it back into the environment and raising overall temperatures.
- **"Urban Metabolism":** Cities are constantly generating heat through human activities – transportation, industrial processes, and energy use all contribute to a higher baseline temperature.
- **Pollution and Air Quality:** Air pollution acts like a blanket, trapping heat and preventing it from escaping at night. This can exacerbate the urban heat island effect and make nighttime temperatures even more oppressive.
- **Vulnerable Populations:** Heatwaves pose a serious health risk for the elderly, babies, pregnant women, and those living in slums or working outdoors.

What are the solutions Beyond Just Heat Action Plans?

- **Prioritize Green Spaces:** Increasing green areas and water bodies can help cool down cities naturally. Large-scale tree planting programs, rooftop gardens, and vertical gardens can increase shade cover and promote evapotranspiration for natural cooling.
- **City-Specific Strategies:** Heat management plans tailored to each city's unique layout and climate are more effective. Sustainable solutions like Ahmedabad's Cool Roofs program can significantly reduce heat stress

- **"Cool Pavements"**: Replacing traditional asphalt and concrete with lighter-colored, reflective materials reduces heat absorption and lowers surface temperatures
- **Heat Awareness Campaigns**: Educating the public about heat stress symptoms, preventive measures, and available resources can empower individuals to protect themselves
- **Green Building Incentives**: Offering tax breaks or subsidies for construction projects that incorporate green building practices can encourage wider adoption of energy efficiency, proper ventilation, and use of heat-reflective materials
- **Urban Cooling Systems**: Exploring innovative solutions like district cooling systems or strategically placed misting stations can provide localized cooling in high-traffic areas

Can you answer the following question?

Heatwaves have become a regular occurrence in Indian cities, posing a significant threat to public health. In this context, examine the factors contributing to extreme heat in Indian cities and suggest a multi-pronged approach for mitigating this growing challenge.