Syllabus subtopic: Welfare Schemes for Vulnerable Sections of the population by the Centre and States and the Performance of these Schemes

Prelims and Mains focus: about the scheme and its objectives; performance of various departments under the scheme

News: Four years after the Accessible India Campaign was launched, officials said at a recent review meeting that the number of buildings of the Central Public Works Department (CPWD) across the country, and websites of the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) were not known.

Figures across various departments

- During the review by Social Justice and Empowerment Minister on December 19, 2019, a Department of Empowerment of PwD official said the “total buildings either under maintenance or owned by CPWD are not known”, minutes of the meeting recorded. All these buildings, along with other projects being implemented by other Ministries, are supposed to be made accessible by March 2020.

- Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (under which the CPWD operates): 787 out of 889 buildings had been made accessible so far, while approval for 13 buildings had been received from various Ministries and work would be started. For remaining 89 buildings, approval of respective Ministries is still awaited.

- Government websites: the target is of making at least 50% of the sites accessible. However, the quantum of websites i.e. total no. of government websites is not known. The Social Justice and Empowerment Minister directed the MeitY to find out the total number of the Central and State government websites.

- Transportation:

  1. Airports: While there had been progress on making airports accessible, all aspects of air travel, including aircraft and buses used to ferry passengers
from terminals, needed to be compatible. All 35 international airports and 55 domestic airports under the Airports Authority of India had been made accessible by providing ramps, and had accessible toilets and provision for audio and Braille commands in lifts.

2. Railways: 7,000 wheelchairs have been provided at major stations and 22 stations had online booking of wheelchair facility.

3. Roads: The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways informed that only 3.6% of buses had been fully accessible. There has been slow pace in making buses and bus terminals accessible.

About Accessible India Campaign

It is the nationwide flagship campaign of the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPwD), Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment to make public offices, transport and websites accessible to persons with disabilities (PwD),

- **Aim:** to make a barrier free and conducive environment for Divyangjans all over the country. It was launched by PM Modi on International Day of Persons with Disabilities on 3rd December, 2015.

- The program comes with an index to measure the design of disabled-friendly buildings and human resource policies.

- The initiative also in line with the Article 9 of the (UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities) to which India is a signatory since 2007.

- The scheme also comes under Persons with Disabilities Act, 1995 under section 44, 45, 46 for equal Opportunities and protection of rights which provides non-discrimination in Transport to Persons with Disabilities.
The campaign has been divided into three verticals:

1. Built Environment
2. Transport
3. Information & Communication Technology (ICT) ecosystem.

• **The Built Environment Accessibility component** of Accessible India Campaign entails following targets:
  
i. Completing accessibility audit of at least 25-50 most important government buildings in 50 cities and making them fully accessible by the end of this year  
ii. Making 50% of all the government buildings of NCT and all the State capitals fully accessible by December 2018  
iii. Completing accessibility audit of 50% of government buildings and making them fully accessible in 10 most important cities/towns of States not covered in targets (i) and (ii) by December 2019.

• **Transport accessibility component** of Accessible India Campaign **aims** to make all international airports fully accessible immediately and domestic airports by March 2018. Out of 32 international airports 25 have been provided with accessibility features namely, ramps, accessible toilets, lifts with braille symbols and auditory signals.

• **Accessibility of Information and Communication System** is another crucial pillar of Accessible India Campaign. The target set under this vertical is to make at least 50% of Central and State Government websites accessible by March 2017.