**On World Disability Day, India Launches Accessibility Programme**

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NEW DELHI:  Finance Minister Arun Jaitley on Thursday launched the Accessible India programme that aims to make hundreds of government buildings, railway stations and airports accessible to people with physical disabilities by next year.

With Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Tamil Nadu, to survey the damage from the devastating rains and flood, Mr Jaitely read out a message from the Prime Minister.

"I assure you I'm with you in spirit and in mind. You are true inspirations and examples to follow. This is a virtual and physical campaign to make our environment more accessible. Our aim is to work towards a society that is fully inclusive," he said.

Coinciding with the World Disability Day, the campaign unveiled today aims to make 2,500 government buildings in 50 cities accessible for the physically challenged by next year. That figure will be extended to 50 per cent of all government buildings in Delhi NCR and state capitals by 2018.

All international and domestic airports will be made barrier free for the differently-abled by July 2016 and March 2018, respectively. At least 75 Railway stations will be added to the accessible list by next July and 3000 websites by March 2017.

For those who fight the barriers of accessibility day in and day out, the campaign is the first step.

Communicating in sign language, Zorin Singha, who has a hearing disability said he's hopeful the campaign will make a difference to the lives of many like him with issues of accessibility being addressed.

Sminu Jindal, who uses a wheelchair and runs NGO Swayam working on mobility for the differently abled said, "The fact that the PM has put his support behind this campaign gives us a lot of hope."

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