

Accessible India Campaign: No good response from States to make websites accessible to differently-abled

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Jan 20, 2018, 09.49 AM IST

New DELHI: Two years after the launch of Accessible India Campaign for universal accessibility, most states have not shown good response to the programme to make government websites accessible to the differently abled.

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Minister of state Vijay Sampla kicked up a controversy as he addressed the conference. Speaking on the necessity of government intervention, Sampla said, "I had gone to a programme in Punjab and I got a complex. They (differently abled) had come in their BMWs and I had gone in my Innova. They have made their cars accessible as per their requirements. There is a need to encourage them a little."

Reacting to the comment, Sminu Jindal, founder chairperson of non-governmental organisation Svayam said, "The statement reflects greatly the general perception of people and exactly why accessibility takes a back seat. When we provide accessible environment, people of all ages, class, caste and ability prosper."

This has prompted the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPwD) to initiate a project with ERNET (Education and Research Network, an autonomous society of the communications and information technology ministry) under Digital India programme to make all 9,000 government websites accessible. The project involves first a consent from the state government to start the project and then identification of commonly visited websites to make them accessible. In the first phase, the state governments have identified 917 websites to be made accessible. So far, 104 have been made accessible and have gone live. Data shared by DEPwD at the day-long National Conference on Improving Accessibility, held in Delhi on Monday, reveals a grim picture. The response of only three states - Chhattisgarh, Meghalaya and Haryana - to the project has been "very good", according to the dat, while Trinamool Congress government in West Bengal and BJP government in Assam have been "non responsive" to the initiative.

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The progress, as per the data shared, in other BJP-ruled states has also been slow. These include Goa and Madhya Pradesh, besides Tamil Nadu and Congress-ruled

Karnataka, which is set to go to the polls this year. The project is "picking up" pace in four other states including Odisha, Jammu and Kashmir and BJP-ruled Maharashtra and Gujarat. Speaking at the conference, secretary (DEPwD) Shakuntala D Gamlin said, "We have just started on the first phase of making websites accessible. We hope to reach all 9,000 websites."

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/accessible-india-campaign-no-good-response-from-states-to-make-websites-accessible-to-differently-abled/articleshow/62577894.cms>