Shri Thaawarchand Gehlot virtually launches "Sugamya Bharat App" and Handbook "Access - the Photo Digest"

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Union Minister for Social Justice and Empowerment Shri Thaawarchand Gehlot virtually launched "Sugamya Bharat App" and a handbook entitled "Access – The Photo Digest" through video conference in New Delhi today. Shri Rattan Lal Kataria, Minister of State for Social Justice & Empowerment, Smt. Shakuntala D. Gamlin, Secretary, DEPwD and Smt. Tarika Roy, JS, DEPwD were also present. The App and the handbook have been developed by the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPwD) under Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment. The Mobile App can be downloaded from Play Store by Android users. The iOS version of the App will be available by 15th March 2021.

Addressing on the occasion, Shri Thaawarchand Gehlot said that Sugamya Bharat APP — a Crowd sourcing Mobile Application is a means for sensitising and enhancing accessibility in the 3 pillars of the Accessible India Campaign i.e. built environment, transportation sector and ICT ecosystem in India. The app provides five main features, 4 of which are directly related to enhancing accessibility, while the fifth is a special feature meant only for Divyangjan for COVID related issues. The accessibility related features are:the registration of complaints of inaccessibility across the 3 broad pillars of the Sugamya Bharat Abhiyaan; positive feedbackof examples and best practices worth emulating being shared by people as jan-bhagidhari; Departmental updates; and guidelines and circulars related to accessibility.

He opined that in order to take accessibility to the public domain by involving the people, the Prime Minister envisioned a Mobile Application wherein the issues related to accessibility being faced by Divyangjan and others can be crowd sourced through Jan-Bhagidhari. This crowd sourcing will serve two-fold purpose of generating sensitisation and awareness about the need for accessibility and also bring in a perceptible change in accessible features being provided in built-up spaces, the transportation sector and other services. Implementation of accessibility related activities across the country would help towards the vision of creating an universally accessible and inclusive India under the Accessible India Campaign.

Shri Gehlot said that the Sugamya Bharat App is a simple to use Mobile App with an easy registration process, requiring only 3 mandatory fields, namely, Name, Mobile number and Email-id. Registered users can raise issues related to accessibility being faced. The App has been provided with several user-friendly features like easy drop-down menus, videos in Hindi and English, along with sign language interpretation have been added demonstrating the process of registration and uploading complaints with photographs. The App is made accessible for ease of use for persons with disabilities also with features such as font size adjustment, color contrasting option, text to speech, and having an integrated screen reader in Hindi and English. It is available in 10 regional languages, namely, Hindi, English, Marathi, Tamil, Odiya, Kannada, Telugu, Gujarati, Punjabi, and Malayalam. The App also has provision of easy photo uploads with geo

tagging option of the premise where accessibility intervention is required. The App has provision for providing notifications to the users at the time of registration, regular status updates as well as at the time of resolution and closure of the complaint.

He said that the handbook entitled "Access - The Photo Digest" is a collection of photographs from across different States and UTs. This Book is envisaged as a tool and guide to sensitise stakeholders about 10 basic features of accessibility and related good-bad practices in easy to understand pictorial form. The electronic version of this handbook will also be available on the App and the website of the Department.

In his address Shri Rattan Lal Kataria said that the Sugamya Bharat APP is envisaged not only as a tool to help improve accessibility of the public infrastructure and services across India but also to act as a nudge campaign to sensitise people about the importance of *Sugamyata* in all walks of life. This Mobile App is an endeavour and a step towards achieving accessibility as mandated in Sections 40-46 of the RPwD Act, 2016.

Smt. Shakuntala D. Gamlin, Secretary, DEPwD in her address informed that the App will be monitored through a Project Monitoring Unit (PMU) under the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPwD). The PMU will forward the complaints received through the App to Appropriate Authorities across India. These include District Magistrates/Collectors for State Government owned buildings or executive heads of Urban Local Bodies (ULB) for any other buildings, including private falling under their jurisdiction. Accessibility complaints related to premises or services belonging to Central Governmentwill be forwarded to the nodal officers nominated for this purpose by concerned Ministries/Departments. In case of, the complaint not being actioned, the matter will be escalated to next higher authority.

On the occasion, video messages by experts; namely-Shri Pranav Desai, Founder, Voice of Specially Abled People, USA; Shri Santosh Kumar Rungta, General Secretary, National Federation of the Blind; Shri A.S. Narayanan, President, National Association of Deaf and Shri Arman Ali, Executive Director, National Centre for Promotion of Employment for Disabled People were also presented. A video on views of Divyangjan on the Sugamya Bharat App was also shown.

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