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We still do not have a single website of any public represented constituency

Dear Mr Pilot,

Namaste and welcome to the position of higher responsibility. I would like to go back to 2005 and 2006, when you were the only MP in the country whom DEF invited to preside over the proceedings of India's and South Asia's only award that focuses on "Digital Content & Social Inclusion" - The Manthan Award. Followed by that, DEF also worked with you to demonstrate India's first and only constituency portal for Dausa. Unfortunately, things are still as worse even 4 years down the line as they were then.

We still do not have even a single official or unofficial website of any public represented constituency. We have 542 MPs and there is no constituency portal. We have 4018 MLAs and not a single portal representing their constituencies. We have approximately 271000 Sarpanches in the country, but all Panchayats' corner available on Panchayati Raj website has zero content.

The issue is alarming and dangerous, here is why:

- If you look at all the media, other than website or internet, there is no other media which is permanent and where people can access and publish the content anytime anywhere.
- In the times where RTI is an Act and all public represented offices and officers have to put all the information open and available, web is the only

medium which can be utilized for this purpose for effective relevance.

- Most of the ministries and departments are doing that but what about the same trend not followed by Sarpanches, MLAs and MPs who are elected by people to represent their area, their problems and issues and their needs? How are they spending the MPLAD fund? What questions and queries are they posing in the assembly and parliament?
- Intentionally or unintentionally, the entire e-government focus has been more on administrative governance and not on elective or public representative governance and thus all those areas and their representatives elected by people are at large and hardly accountable for their promises and responsibilities, which can only be possible if the elected representatives use medium like web and Internet for transparency between them and their people.
- Incidentally, if one looks at the MPLAD fund document, there is no provisioning of spending MPLAD fund on any electronic initiative, but mostly infrastructurally; unfortunately, having a compulsory website for each constituency is far from being considered infrastructural and necessary governance and public grievance redressal medium.
- India is one of the poorest countries

in the world as far as its presence on the web is concerned; which means in a knowledge driven economy, India is poor in creating digital content.

What can be done?

Our suggestion is, and DIT is best placed to take the leadership:

1. Drive to find a way that each and every constituency has a website and the allocation of fund to keep it updated. RESULT: Within no time we will have 271 000 Panchayats, 4011 Assembly constituencies and 542 Parliamentary constituencies on the web and India would have a global visibility about all its big and small locations and their functioning.
2. To make it mandatory to have allocation of fund for digital content creation under all panchayat, MPLAD funds.
3. Exploit and deliver all citizen services through oral medium, such as TV, Radio, Telephone, Mobiles; these together reach more than 900 million people with perhaps 25 per cent overlap. Using oral medium would directly enable to reach the hinterland of India.
4. Make it mandatory for all the government departments, not only to have websites, but also follow minimum standard of content, design, usability and also get regularly updated. More than 60 per cent of district websites (managed by NIC) and other government websites are stale, dated and ugly.

It must be understood that if the country has to be digitally visible, it is the government which has to be proactive, because it is she who owns, create maximum content and deliver maximum services.

There is no other solution for becoming a leading country in the 21st century than giving digital bottom up.

Osama Manzar

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Can Nokia make mobile enough affordable to the last man on the street?

These photos were taken in the main market of Kalimpong, West Bengal, India. A laborer is carrying a Nokia advertisement board to its location in the next street. When asked whether he knows Nokia or has ever used a mobile phone, the answer was NO!

Photos & Text: Osama Manzar

