

BUDGET 2021: LANGUAGE TRANSLATION MISSION TO LOCAL LANGUAGE CONTENT DEVELOPMENT

Relevant for: Geography | Topic: Important Schemes & Programmes of the Government

NEW DELHI: India plans to set up a National Language Translation Mission, finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced while presenting the Union Budget for 2021-22. The announcement comes in the backdrop of growing demand for accessing online services in local Indian languages.

"We will undertake a new initiative – National Language Translation Mission (NTLM). This will enable the wealth of governance-and-policy related knowledge on the Internet being made available in major Indian languages," Sitharman said.

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Implication

A national level mission focusing on local language translation will provide big boost to regional language initiatives. It will also encourage agencies to translate science and technology related content, currently available mostly in English language, in Indian languages. This will enhance access to digital content to wider demographic of Indian users.

In 2020, during the peak covid-19 months, the government had tied up with Reverie Technologies and had deployed their language translation technology Anuvadak to translate and publish the MyGov Covid-19 page in 10 Indian languages.

Context

More and more Indians from tier 2 and tier 3 cities are using online services since the pandemic hit. As a result, several consumer facing businesses and government agencies started offering services in local Indian languages. For instance, Google rolled out new language-centric features across its various platforms such as Search, Maps and Lens. Axis Bank deployed a multi-lingual voice bot named AXAA to handle customer queries and requests. It supported over 10 Indian languages with over 160 dialects.

2020 also saw increase in investments in start-ups offering services in local languages. According to Venture Intelligence, local language startup ecosystem in India raised \$217 million (approx 1600 crore) until October 2020.

Vernacular.ai through Series A funding raised \$5.1 million (approx 37 crore) led by Kalaari Capital and Exfinity Ventures in May.

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