

**SPEECH BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA, SHRI PRANAB  
MUKHERJEE AT THE LAUNCH OF NATIONAL MISSION ON  
LIBRARIES**

Rashtrapati Bhavan Auditorium, New Delhi: 03-02-2014

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

1. It is indeed a pleasure for me to be present amongst you at the launch of the National Mission on Libraries and the Government of India Scheme: “Up-gradation of Libraries providing services to the public”. I compliment the Ministry of Culture and all stakeholders, on this initiative which marks yet another significant step forward towards our goal of creating a Knowledge Society.

2. Libraries are social institutions which are repositories of knowledge and information. Their goal is the improvement of society by helping the individual to understand himself and the world of which he is a part. Libraries provide easy access of knowledge to all. A public library is often called “the people’s university” because it is available to all sections of society – regardless of age, gender or skill levels. Thus, through democratization of access to knowledge, libraries contribute in promoting inclusive and sustained development of the people.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

3. In order to meet the existing and emerging challenges, the need for reform in the Library and Information service sector has been now widely acknowledged. I am happy that in this regard the Ministry of Culture, has taken steps to revamp, re – energize and reorient the Library and Information Service Sector by conceiving and promoting the National Mission on Libraries. Set up in pursuance of the recommendations of the National Knowledge Commission, this is an important step towards the objective of providing access to knowledge to all which is one of our basic national priorities.

4. The creation of a National Virtual Library of India is one of the major component schemes of the National Mission on Libraries. This is truly a step in the right direction. With the aim of equitable and universal access to knowledge resources, the National Virtual Library of India would provide digital resources by digitizing the relevant reading material in different languages, which would be shared at all levels. I understand that it will acquire the digitized information available with various Government Departments and other Non – Government Organizations, build a comprehensive data base for this information and present it as a user-friendly service including multilingual services. I am happy to know that the target users of NVLI will not only be students, researchers, doctors and professionals but also the educationally, socially, economically and physically disadvantaged groups. Thus, it would empower people with information in order to create a knowledge society and also ensure preservation of digital content for posterity.

5. Digital libraries open up the possibility of far more flexible and coherent multimedia collections that are both fully searchable and browsable in multiple dimensions. As each generation becomes more in tune with the Internet, their desire to retrieve information as quickly and easily as possible has increased. Finding information by simply searching the Internet is considered much easier and faster than reading an entire book. I am confident that this initiative of National Mission on Libraries will largely facilitate the internet savvy people in making maximum use of library resources.

6. I am sure that the endeavour of the National Mission on Libraries towards setting up of model libraries will set a benchmark for the development of Libraries. I understand that these model libraries would be facilitated with subscription of E-Journals/E-Book services through Web VPN Services developed by National Informatics Centre. These would also be provided with reading resources to meet the local needs. It is appreciable that appropriate facilities would be created to meet the needs of Senior Citizens, Specially abled persons and children.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

7. For the creation of a true knowledge society, the availability of efficient knowledge services for citizens is critical. Effective knowledge creation and knowledge deployment can lead to societal transformation and wealth generation. Information and knowledge should be disseminated not only in an efficient and cost effective manner but also in formats that are easily accessible to the masses. This will contribute to improvements in the living standards of the underprivileged population of the society. It is essential to bridge the digital divide and the use of ICT can be instrumental in doing so. We need to realize the full potential of ICT in decentralized governance and in better delivery of services, particularly those relating to education.

8. I understand that in order to provide efficient and effective library services through a thorough analysis of available materials and human resources in the Library & Information Science sector, the National Mission on Libraries intends to undertake a Quantitative and Qualitative Survey of libraries. I am happy to note that descriptive statistics about the public and other libraries will be acquired and a study will also be undertaken of the impact of libraries on the quality of life and economic gains of the people.

9. Capacity building is a necessary investment in people, organizations and services to enhance operating efficiency, expertise and skills of personnel towards the achievement of organizational excellence. I am happy to learn that the National Mission on Libraries will conduct a holistic professional and personal development programme for Library professionals through capacity building. The purpose of Capacity Building is to develop on-line training modules, tutorials and e-learning module for libraries and to contribute towards overall development of the library personnel. It's scope will cover ICT based basic and advance level library applications on improvement of managerial and communication skills of library personnel. The National Mission on Libraries which is dedicated to building a world class national resource base will enable us to know our country and ourselves better through the published heritage and also provide an effective gateway to National and International sources of information.

10. However, one must remember that the true aim of education is not merely the acquisition of information and knowledge but inculcating a holistic outlook leading towards self improvement and a desire to serve the nation. Swami Vivekananda once observed and I quote *“All knowledge, that the world has ever received comes from the mind; the infinite library of the Universe, is in our own mind.”* Knowledge is a true enabler of human empowerment. It can liberate us from the shackles of ignorance and help us rise above narrow considerations of caste, creed and region. Sharing of knowledge can help in taking the society forward towards enlightenment and can become an important tool for national progress, human empowerment and social change. It is essential to imbibe the spirit of social readiness to serve humanity. True knowledge involves the inculcation of a positive outlook and leads to the development of sound character in an individual.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

11. I am sure that the project of National Mission on Libraries will contribute substantially to quickening the pace of social and economic development of the people. I extend my best wishes for the effective implementation of the project as also of the new scheme of “Up-gradation of Libraries providing services to the public.” I hope that they will promote the creation of an equitable knowledge society in our country. I am sure the National Mission of Libraries will promote enlightenment and understanding and go a long way in making the masses active participants in the affairs of the nation. May the light of knowledge liberate our minds and souls and may we move forward towards the future with a sense of pride as a strong and self – reliant nation.

**Thank you.**

**Jai Hind.**