



PM's Address at the launch of PN Panicker Reading Day – Reading Month Celebration

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It gives me great pleasure to be here on the occasion of the inauguration of **reading month celebration**. I thank and congratulate the P.N. Panicker foundation for organising this. There can be no joy greater than reading and no strength greater than knowledge.

Friends.

Kerala has been a torch-bearer and inspiration to the whole nation in the field of literacy.

The first 100 percent literate city and first 100 percent literate district have been from Kerala. Kerala was also the first state to attain 100 percent primary education. Some of the oldest colleges, schools and libraries of the country are also situated in Kerala.

This could not have been achieved by Government alone. Citizens and social organizations have played an active role in this remarkable achievement. Kerala has set an example in people's participation in this regard. I admire the work of people like late Shri P.N. Panicker and his foundation. Shri P.N. Panicker was also the driving spirit behind the library network in Kerala. He did this through Kerala Grandhasala Sangham set up by him in 1945 with 47 rural libraries.

I believe that reading and knowledge should not be limited only to work related aspects. It should help develop habits of social responsibility, service to the nation and service to humanity. It should cure the evils in society and nation. It should spread the idea of peace along with respect for unity and integrity of the nation.

It is said that one literate woman can educate two families. Kerala has set an example worthy of emulation in this regard.

I learn that PN Panicker Foundation together with a number of Government agencies, private sector entities and civil society organisations, is leading an initiative of reading.

Their target is to reach 300 million under-privileged people by 2022. The main objective of this mission is to promote reading as a means to grow and prosper.

Reading can help broaden one's thinking. A well-read population will help India excel globally.

With the same spirit, I had started a similar movement by name of VANCHE GUJARAT when I was Chief Minister of the State. It means "Gujarat Reads". I had visited a public library to motivate people to read. The movement targeted the young generation, in particular. I also requested citizens to think about building a 'Granth-Mandir' - a temple of books - in their village. This could be started with 50 or 100 books.

I appealed to people to give a book instead of bouquet as a greeting. Such a move can make a big difference.

Friends!

From the time of the Upanishads persons with knowledge have been respected through the ages. We are now in the information age. Even today, knowledge is the best guiding light.

I am told that as a pilot project of Digital Libraries, Panicker Foundation is working with 18 public libraries in the state in collaboration with Indian Public Library Movement, New Delhi.

I would like to see such a reading and library movement in the entire country. The movement should not be limited to make people literate. It should try to achieve the real goal of bringing social and economic change. The foundation of good knowledge should be followed by a super-structure of a better society.

I am happy to note that the State Government has announced 19th June as the reading day. Obviously, a lot of effort will converge to make this a popular activity.

The Government of India has also provided support to the activities of the foundation. I am told that about 1.20 crore rupees have been given to the foundation in the last two years.

I am also happy to see that the foundation is now focusing on digital literacy. This is the need of the hour.

Friends!

I believe in people's power. It has the capacity to make a better society and nation.

I urge every young person in the audience to take a pledge of reading. And enable everyone to do so.

Together, we can once again make India a land of wisdom and knowledge. Thank You!

AKT/SH

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