

Address of

Shri. Kapil Sibal

Hon'ble Minister of Human Resource Development

Launch of

“Saakshar Bharat Mission”

on

International Literacy Day”

Vigyan Bhavan, New Delhi

at

11:07 am

on

8th September, 2009

Hon'ble Prime Minister of India Dr. Manmohan Singh, Hon'ble Lok Sabha Speaker Smt. Meira Kumar, Minister of State for Human Resource Development Smt. D. Purandeswari, Secretary (School Education & Literacy) Smt. Anju Vaish, distinguished dignitaries, my friends from the media, Ladies and Gentlemen;

Today is International Literacy Day. Today, I propose to be candid and forthright; address the concerns of generations who lost the opportunity to be literate and live in challenging circumstances.

Their numbers are not small. Census 2001 revealed that 30 crore Indians were illiterate. By 2011 this number may not be less than 18 – 20 crores. They predominantly belong to the disadvantaged groups. Clearly an unacceptably large number of our citizens are not enjoying the fruits of socio-economic development because of their literacy status. In these circumstances, we need to explicitly recognize the Adult's Right to Literacy and the Rights Perspective of literacy.

It is with this conviction that we have conceived a new Mission Saakshar Bharat, which the Hon Prime Minister would be launching in the next few minutes. The Mission's goal will be to create a literate environment that bolsters and sustains a **Literate Society** and provides ample opportunities for continuous improvement in the levels of adult literacy. It will be a national response to development of quality human resource to meet the demands of a fast changing Bharat as well as challenges of globalization.

Though importance of self-reliance in three Rs – Reading, Writing and Arithmetic cannot be overstated, the MISSION will equally focus on empowerment, transformation and application of literacy skills. Continuing Education Programme will be specially designed to sustain and further augment literacy levels of neo literates.

Our overall objective is to raise the literacy levels to 80% from the existing level of 64%. More importantly, we seek to reduce the current gender gap of 21% to 10 %. To accomplish this, the programme will cover 70 million adults, of which 60 million will be women. Gender will not be seen in isolation but in conjunction with other social categories like caste, ethnicity, religion, disability, etc. as female literacy rates are particularly low among STs, SCs and Minorities. Therefore nearly 50% of the mission's clientele will be from these disadvantaged groups.

Gender perspective will permeate all components of the programme, including the approach, strategies, planning, management structures, teaching-learning materials and monitoring and evaluation. Special priority will be given to women belonging to SC, ST, Minority and other disadvantaged groups.

Since illiteracy is far more widespread in rural areas as compared to urban India, and for the reason that urban areas are more well endowed with educational infrastructure leading to better opportunities, the Mission would concentrate on rural areas, specially in districts that have low female literacy rates. In urban

areas literacy will be promoted innovatively using new actors including NGOs and social groups.

This mission will not be a mere governmental programme. I consider it to be a national enterprise in which Government, Central and States, their organizations and agencies, NGOs, civil society, private sector, individuals and their collectives will all constitute a grand alliance to accomplish the mission. To gain from international experiences, an international network will be established to work closely with UNESCO, UNICEF, and other international bodies and arrive at bilateral and multilateral arrangements for mutually beneficial partnerships.

Because of several developments over the years, specially on account of National Literacy Mission and Sarva Shiksha Abhyan, and work of NGOs at the grass roots level, the demand for adult education has become not only explicit but also extremely diverse. There are a large number of illiterates who require basic literacy. On the other hand, a significant number of neo-literates, specially the young adults, seek equivalency to the formal system of education that could open for them new and better vistas of livelihood. Some ask for a combination of literacy and skill development. There are still others who demand opportunities for continuing education. To meet this multiplicity in demand, the Mission will offer a comprehensive range of programmes, including functional literacy, basic education, equivalency, skill development and continuing education programmes. Given the diversity of

contexts and needs, these programmes will be an integrated continuum rather than sequential.

We have put a very high premium on Quality Assurance of the Programme. For the first time, a Core Curriculum Framework will be developed in respect of basic literacy, vocational and continuing education programmes. The core curriculum will reflect national values like national integration, secularism, democracy, scientific temper, communal harmony, women's equality, environment etc. It will also address the demands of the learners and take into account their diverse circumstances, cultural backgrounds, life experiences, linguistic diversity and motivational levels.

Teaching adults is an art that requires a specialized set of skills. Quality instructors along with quality teaching – learning materials are, therefore, a pre-requisite for the success of the programme. Maintaining high quality of literacy educators presupposes that they are at least Matriculate (who has successfully completed Secondary level of education). To the extent possible, only matriculate or more qualified individuals will be involved in teaching. A network of training institutes such as DIETs, NGOs, Teacher and other Training Institutions will be developed for training the literacy educators.

Literacy educators are not paid. Their motivational and commitment levels are, therefore, not sustainable. Since high motivational level is critical, they will be motivated by public

recognition of their contribution at different levels besides other incentives and rewards.

We want evidence based learning. A trustworthy framework will be developed to assess learning outcomes. Only on a satisfactory outcome will a learner be declared literate. Assistance of local school teachers will be taken to assess the learners.

Information and Communication Technology is fast emerging as an effective tool to improve access as well as quality of adult education. Already successful experiments have been made to teach using radio and television. Locally produced interactive radio instruction and community radio can promote exchange between learners and programme providers. Much deeper penetration of radio and television has further enhanced their potential as a channel for promoting literacy. The Mission will, therefore, extensively use ICT and other contemporary technologies.

The growing learning needs of ever increasing number of neo-literates cannot be met unless a wide range of materials relating to their needs and interests are provided. Policies related to book publishing, the media – print as well as broadcast, and public libraries will be aligned with the requirements of literacy promotion. Publication of materials in vernacular languages aimed at adults with basic literacy will also be promoted.

In compliance with 73rd Constitutional amendment, Panchayati Raj institutions will be the fulcrum of adult literacy programme. A

delivery mechanism, based on the principles of decentralization and bottom up approach with Gram Panchayats as the hub will be set up.

The programme activities will be planned and implemented by the community and Panchayats at the grassroots level. The national and state governments will only play the role of facilitator and resource provider. All management and supervisory structures, right from the national up to the village level will be instituted accordingly. Adequate representation of women in these structures, especially in decision-making roles will be ensured.

Adequate resource support will be provided to planning and implementing agencies through special purpose vehicles like State resource centers and other bodies with required expertise.

A web based Management Information System (MIS) will be put in place for real time monitoring, which would be critical for optimizing the outreach and impact of the Mission. Each individual learner will be digitally tagged and tracked for his/her progress in learning. Gram Panchyats will be made responsible for furnishing data at the block levels, where it will be entered on the central MIS system. Thereafter the data will be in public domain. This will ensure transparency and accountability.

Enormous resources, financial as well as human, are to be deployed in the Mission. It is but obvious and imperative that high quality evaluations are carried out to facilitate detailed analysis,

including cost benefit analysis and future planning. Elaborate procedures for concurrent, summative and impact evaluation will be laid down. Literacy data will also be supplemented through field research. Reputed agencies with an impeccable track record, expertise and experience will be commissioned to carry out evaluations. It will also be subjected to social audit.

Many a government programmes are starved to death by irregular supply of funds. We are working on an innovative model of Just-in-Time online release of funds up to the last level as well as real time book keeping and accounting that will continuously remain in the public gaze. We are hopeful that this model will become a national benchmark.

The Mission entails a mammoth mobilization of resources, physical, human, financial and technological. 70 million learners, nearly 10 million voluntary teachers and trainers, 3 million literacy managers and administrators will be involved in this mission. 70 lakh literacy centers and 1.70 lakh continuing education centers will be set up over 1.70 lakh villages. 210 million books and 70 million learners' kits will be distributed. Over \$1 billion will be invested. This is no mean a task. But we are determined to make it a success. India of 21st century has no other option except, SAAKSHAR BHARAT.

JAI HIND