



JANASANYOG, ASSAM
CHIEF MINISTER'S PUBLIC RELATIONS CELL, DISPUR

PRESS RELEASE

No. 514/2019

Vice President M. Venkaiah Naidu inaugurates 21st North East Book Fair

Dispur, November 1: Vice President M. Venkaiah Naidu inaugurated the 21st North East Book Fair by lighting the ceremonial lamp at Assam Engineering Institute playground here today. The bookfair which has been organised by Assam Publishers and Book Sellers Association witnessed the participation of around 76 publishers from across the country and elsewhere.

Speaking on the occasion, Vice President Naidu exhorted on the need for starting a library movement and advocated that every village should have a library. He said that books open the minds of the readers. They enhance the analytical skills and stimulate the creativity of the readers. He also advocated that book fairs should be organised in every district because they help in creating intelligent, resourceful and compassionate minds.

He said the library movement that flourished in different parts of the nation has played a critical role in the socio-cultural renaissance of India. In addition to spreading literacy and education, public libraries also played a part in safeguarding democracy, and promoting peace, culture and brotherhood.

From Andhra Pradesh to Punjab to Maharashtra to Kerala, the library movement swept the length and breadth of the country, bringing the light of learning and knowledge to the darkest corners of the nation. He also said that this legacy of the library movement should be kept alive.

Hailing the organiser, Naidu said that the book fair being held in the city, is a befitting tribute to Assam's love for language, literature and culture and he is confident that the book lovers of the region will collectively make this fair a resounding success. He also said that India's tryst with books and literature is almost as old as the 5000-year-old civilization itself. The Harappan people knew how to write; unfortunately, their script was not been deciphered. Sanskrit dominated, first in its Vedic and later in its classical form in Indian literature. From the Vedas, which are the most ancient forms of literature in India to other great epics, Ramayana and Mahabharata, to the scientific texts like Charakasamhita, and Aryabhatiya, India has a repository of an astounding wealth of the written word, Naidu added.

The Vice President said that India represents the largest democracy with a seamless picture of diversity in unity, perhaps unparalleled anywhere in the world. From ancient Indian literature to contemporary forms, India has been and still is home to hundreds of talented writers and gifted poets and said that this legacy of literary brilliance will be kept alive by generations of writers to come.

He also said that books are informative, illuminative and inspiring and they are the best companions, counsellors and change agents. Books help widen the readers' horizons. The

more one reads books, the more he or she understands the world and discovers life beyond what we already know.

He said, “We need more good books to enrich our lives and we should be a nation that reads. It is with great concern that I note a decline in the interest in reading, especially among the young people of our country. With the advent of internet, children now prefer to search for information online rather than rely on books”.

Reading books, especially stories, is no longer the norm. Children prefer watching videos online. One major reason is the diminishing attention spans in a fast-paced world. Unfortunately, a lot of content available online is of cursory or superficial nature and does not promote deep reflections and introspection.

The Vice President said that one of the ways to tackle the problem is to inculcate the habit of reading from a very young age. They must be encouraged to look at reading as a fun activity rather than a chore. The parents must also serve as role models to their children and read books themselves so that the children may follow.

He also emphasised on the importance of mother tongue and stated that speaking in mother tongue is one's right. He also said that mother tongue is one's sight and book reading is one's foresight. On the occasion, the Vice President presented Vaishnav Sachi Chandra Borbaruah Award to Managing Director of Sadin-Pratidin Group, Jayanta Baruah.

Assam Governor Prof. Jagdish Mukhi while speaking on the occasion lauded Assam Publishers and Book Sellers Association for organising North East Book Fair since 1998. He also said that NE book fair has earned its reputation as a mega book fair of the region. He also said that the book fair is popularly known as ‘People Book Fair’ because of the spontaneous public support it received from all sections of the people.

He also said that book fairs have a great role to spread reading habits among all sections of people and among all age groups. Book fairs are also good platform for the regional publishing industry to promote their books. Publishing books by the local entrepreneurs also help in solving unemployment problems as several local youth get absorbed in these industries. Though the emergence of digital technology has taken its toll on the printed books, organizing book fairs and huge turn outs of book lovers have somewhat reversed this development.

Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal while speaking on the occasion said that book fairs are the important elements in inculcating reading habits in young minds in a very interesting way. He said that book fairs are the agents to popularise the books which delve on the culture, literature, heritage and ethnic tribes of the state. Assam's poignant literature and art forms are all interwoven into its social fabric and permeate all barriers of caste, creed and religion, as North East Book is a testimony to this.

Chief Minister Sonowal while expressing his gratitude to Vice President M. Venkaiah Naidu said that his consent to inaugurate the 21st North East Book Fair has added charm to the book fair which stimulates intellectual enrichment of the visitors. Terming the Vice President as a scholar, Sonowal said that his presence in the book fair will definitely go a long way in igniting the young minds and help them to read books as their habits. He however, said that though there are several libraries in the state, number of footfalls in most

of the libraries are not that encouraging. He therefore, urged upon the teachers and parents to motivate their wards to read books. He also emphasised on a revolution for the public libraries to take on the responsibility to help the young minds to imbibe the reading habits. He also advised the young minds to read books to be powerful because books can only extend their horizon towards their life journey.

Education Minister Siddhartha Bhattacharya, former MP Ramen Deka, former President of Asom Sahitya Sabha Dr.Dhruba Jyoti Bora, Director National Book Trust Neera Jain, MD Sadin-Pratidin Group Jayanta Baruah, President of the Federation of All India Book Sellers and Publishers Association S.C. Sethi, President of All Assam Publishers and Book Sellers Association Imran Ahmed and a host of other dignitaries were present on the occasion.

SD/ November 1, 2019.