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Department of School Education signs MoU with the National Book Trust under Department of Higher Education to develop an institutional framework for Rashtriya e-Pustakalaya

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The Department of School Education, Ministry of Education, Government of India, signed an MoU with the National Book Trust under the aegis of Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Education in New Delhi today to create an institutional framework for the Digital Library Platform, Rashtriya e-Pustakalaya. Secretary, Department of Higher Education, Shri K. Sanjay Murthy; Secretary, Department of School Education & Literacy (DoSE&L), Shri Sanjay Kumar; Joint Secretary, Smt. Archana Sharma Awasthi and senior officials of the Ministry were present at the event.

Shri K. Sanjay Murthy, in his address, underscored the importance of non-academic books in the lives of children as it help them in choosing their discipline of studies in future. He also urged the National Book Trust to invite faculty members of the academic institutes to write good books that can be included in the Rashtriya e-Pustakalaya.

While addressing the event, Shri Sanjay Kumar emphasized on the importance of developing the habit of reading books. He said that the Rashtriya e-Pustakalaya will be available round-the-clock, irrespective of the geographic location of the readers, making the books more accessible to them.

He also added that the problem of 'last mile' presence of a library for many states will be solved with Rashtriya e-Pustakalaya. He also emphasised on the role of the Content Enrichment Committee that will decide on the books to be included in the platform of Rashtriya e-Pustakalaya. In the coming 2-3 years, there will be over 10000 books in more than 100 languages, he hoped.

Smt. Awasthi highlighted the significance of the inclusion of non-academic titles in the Rashtriya e-Pustakalaya. She also informed that over 1000 books in 23 languages, including English, have already been added to the e-Pustakalaya.

A first-of-its-kind digital library, Rashtriya e-Pustakalya, will seek to instil a lifelong love of reading among Indian children and youth by offering over 1,000 non-academic books to children and adolescents published by over 40 reputed publishers in more than 22 languages besides English. It will be aimed at facilitating the availability of quality books across geographies, languages, genres, and levels and providing device-agnostic accessibility for

children and adolescents in the country. The books will be categorized by four age groups, as per NEP 2020, for readers aged 3-8, 8-11, 11-14, and 14-18 years.

The Rashtriya e-Pustakalaya app will be available for download on both Android and iOS devices. Other salient features of the Rashtriya e-Pustakalaya will include the availability of books in multiple genres, such as adventure and mystery, humour, literature and fiction, classics, non-fiction and self-help, history, biographies, comics, picture books, science, poetry, etc. Further, the books will foster cultural awareness, patriotism, and empathy with an intent to realise Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam.

The Rashtriya e-Pustakalaya project will be a big step in bridging the digital divide and creating an inclusive atmosphere for everybody. The books will thus be available to read anytime and anywhere. By signing this MoU, DoSEL and the National Book Trust, India, will commit to collaborating to improve the educational environment.

The signing of the MoU will usher in a cooperative endeavour that will hold the potential to transform the availability of quality non-academic reading materials throughout the country to propagate healthy reading habits in the youth of the country.

A panel discussion was also held on the topic "Re-discovering Reading Habits in Bharatiya Youth", wherein experts from the Indian publishing world shared their insightful thoughts with the audience comprising Ministry of Education officials, school principals, publishers, scholars, members of the media, and others.

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