

**Press Information Bureau
Government of India**

**Union HRD Minister Smt Smriti Zubin Irani launches a new initiative ‘Vidyanjali’ to
involve volunteers into co-scholastic activities of schools**

**New Delhi
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Inspired from Honourable Prime Minister’s vision to inculcate reading habits among children and create a reading culture at school and community level, Union Minister for Human Resource Development, Smt. Smriti Zubin Irani dedicated ‘**Vidyanjali**’- a school volunteer programme to the nation at New Delhi, today.

In her inaugural address Smt. Smriti Zubin Irani said that Vidyanjali is a step forward in creating an ecosystem, wherein education will be attached with imbibing knowledge and improving learning output. The Union Minister added that there is an ingrained sense of participation and willingness within the people of this country to contribute towards nation building. We are hoping to leverage the same through this programme. Numerous researches have reflected that community engagement with schools has led to improvement in the quality of learning and education. This programme will instil fresh enthusiasm in school children to take up reading and will re-energise the teaching-learning process at schools. She also emphasised upon the significance of providing timely remedial support to improve the learning outcomes of school children, thereby reducing the number of school drop outs

The programme is designed to involve volunteers from different walks of life to strengthen the co-scholastic activities in government schools. Vidyanjali, which is being implemented under the overall aegis of the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, will enhance the community involvement in Government run elementary schools and effectively engage children in reading, creative writing, public speaking, play acting, preparing story books etc..

The Indian Diaspora in Indonesia was also connected to the live proceedings through the Indian embassy at Jakarta and they shared their heartfelt appreciation for the initiative with the Hon’ble Minister, along with their views and suggestions.

Giving a nod to their ideas, Hon’ble Minister assured to widen the scope of Vidyanjali to include performing arts and life skills. She also urged the MyGov team to create a module under Vidyanjali wherein NRI community or others, who want to contribute by providing additional teaching-learning aids like books etc. and other resources, can do so in conjunction with state and district administration.

The volunteers can register for free by visiting the MyGov.in or through the mobile app, which has been developed by MyGov and were launched today. The programme is unique in that it gives the freedom to the volunteers to design their activities in consultation with the school.

The programme will be open for participation by all Indian citizens including retired Professionals, retired government officials, working professionals and homemakers; and also persons from the Indian Diaspora.

The programme will be piloted across 21 States which committed to do so in the conference of State Ministers of Education held on 8th February, 2016. These States are Assam, Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Chattisgarh, Delhi, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Gujarat, Goa, Jammu and Kashmir, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Manipur, Odisha, Punjab, Rajasthan, Telengana, Tripura, Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh.

Many of the eminent personalities extended their support to the initiative and encourage people to participate in the programme. Shri Shivraj Singh Chouhan, Chief Minister, Madhya Pradesh; Smt. Vasundhara Raje, Chief Minister, Rajasthan, Shri Devendra Fadnavis, Chief Minister, Maharashtra; Shri Raman Singh, Chief Minister, Chhattisgarh; Shri Kedar Kashyap, Minister for Education, Chhattisgarh; Shri Kalikho Pul, Chief Minister, Arunachal Pradesh; Shri Kiren Rijju, MoS, Ministry of Home Affairs; Col. Rajyavardhan Rathore, MoS, I&B; Smt. Mehbooba Mufti, CM, Jammu & Kashmir; Shri Babul Supriyo, MoS, MoUD; Dr. Kiran Bedi, Lieutenant Governor, Puducherry; Shri. R. Kamalakannan, Minister for Education, Puducherry; Smt. Twinkle Khanna, Shri Anil Kumble, Shri Ruskin Bond, Smt. Moloya Goswami, Actress, Shri Bhaichung Bhutia, Sports Person; General Dalbir Singh, Chief of Army Staff; Shri Ramesh Aravind, Film Personality, they all volunteered in schools in their respective states and conducted a live reading session, co-scholastic activities thereby reaching out to school children and encouraging volunteers to participate.

Dignitaries present on the launch were Prof. (Dr.) Ram Shankar Katheria, Hon'ble Minister of State, Ministry of Human Resource Development; Dr. Subash Chandra Khuntia Secretary, Department of School Education & Literacy; Ms. Henriette Ahrens, UNICEF Deputy representative for Programmes; Mr. Onno Ruhl Country Director, World Bank; Dr. Daljit Singh Cheema, Minister for Education, Punjab; Shri Naeem Akhtar, Minister for Education, J&K; and Smt. Rina Ray Additional Secretary, Department of School Education & Literacy.

GG/RT/RK/Vidyanjali