PROMOTING BOOK PRODUCTION: ROLE OF THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

1972 has been declared by Unesco as the International Book Year (IBY). It is, therefore, appropriate now to take stock of the situation and see what has been the role of the Government of India in the recent past in the field of books which are now and will, it may be expected, continue to be the single most powerful tool in the dissemination of information and knowledge.

Primary and Secondary Education are the responsibility of the State Governments. Universities in India are autonomous and are at liberty to choose their own tools for education. Thus the Constitution of India lays little responsibility on the Central Government for the production or promotion of books. But, as an enlightened Government, fully conscious of its inherent responsibilities to provide for the development of the means of knowledge and self-improvement, particularly in a secular society based on democracy and enfolding within itself a multiplicity of languages and cultural forms, the Government of India have not been a mere spectator in the field of books—but have evinced throughout and even more so, during the recent past, an active interest and have initiated a number of measures designed to meet the situation.

School Books

Almost all the books used for school education in India are indigenous. Many are nationalized text-books. At present there is no State Government but has nationalized school text-books to some extent or the other. The extent of nationalization however varies. Some States have nationalized the preparation of manuscripts only and many have also nationalized the printing of these. Distribution still remains largely through existing commercial channels. However, of about 13,000 text-

This paper has been contributed by the author in his personal capacity and does not represent the views of the Government.
facilities within the States. The Government of India have proposals to set up three off-set presses for printing text-books, one each at Chandigarh, Bhubaneswar and Mysore. These presses are being gifted by the Federal Republic of Germany. The first to go into action will be the one to be located in Chandigarh, in 1972. Each of the three presses will have an equal capacity and will produce 4 million copies of 96 pages each of size A-5 (143 mm x 210 mm) every year working in one shift. The three presses will amongst themselves cover all Indian languages.

Children's Literature

An Annual Prize Competition for children's literature in all Indian languages was introduced in 1954 and financial assistance was extended to the Children's Book Trust, New Delhi, for setting up its own press. The Trust has already brought out a number of excellent books, tastefully illustrated, at moderate prices. It also brings out a children's magazine. NCERT is also engaged in bringing out supplementary reading materials for school children. Recently, National Book Trust, India, has been entrusted by Government with the operation of a massive scheme for the production of supplementary reading materials for children in all the languages of India, known as "Nehru Bal Pustakalya". The scheme envisages a common set of 100 books on various topics to be brought out in all the major Indian languages. It is expected that at least 100,000 copies will be produced of each title in the various languages. Irrespective of the language and the size of the language edition, each book will be priced uniformly at Rs. 1.50. State Governments will get a special rebate in respect of bulk purchases. Many titles have already been published.

University Level Books from Abroad

Standard educational materials from abroad were found to be beyond the resources of most Indian students. Keeping in view the fact that the production of standard indigenous materials was bound to take time, the Government of India entered into agreements with the Governments of U.K., U.S.A. and U.S.S.R., to make standard educational materials from those countries available to Indian students at low prices. Under these joint programmes, the educational materials approved by the Government of India are produced by the Governments of U.K., U.S.A. and U.S.S.R. in their respective countries and marketed in India through normal commercial channels. The books from U.K. cost approximately one-third of the original edition. Over 400 titles from U.K. and about 180 from U.S.S.R. have thus been made available so far. In regard to books from U.S.A., the U.S. Government extend a subsidy to Indian publishers to bring out Indian reprints of approved American works. The Indian reprints are priced approximately at one-fifth or one-sixth of the original price of the American edition. Over 1,100 books have been published under this programme. The Joint Indo-American Programme also covers the extension of subsidy to indigenous works and for Indian-language translations of standard American works, as well as certain research programmes which may be mutually agreed upon in regard to the production and promotion of books.

Under the Indo-Soviet Programme and the Cultural Exchange Programme between the two countries, provision has been made for the training of Indian students knowing the Russian language, in the techniques of translating from Russian into English or the Indian languages. Three such candidates completed their training in 1971 and three more are currently under training. These scholars will be entrusted with the translation of selected Soviet books in the Russian language into English or the Indian languages for publication for the use of Indian students.

To mark IBY, it has also been agreed by the two countries that in certain fields Indian authors will collaborate with Soviet authors to bring out original standard educational materials for adoption by Indian Universities.

It may in passing be noted that the schemes operated by the Government of India in collaboration with the Governments of U.K., U.S.A. and U.S.S.R. have been criticised in certain quarters on the ground that these low-priced books would stifle Indian authorship, influence students in favour of these countries and also bias the teaching personnel. It appears to this writer that these fears are baseless. The foreign titles to be produced under the scheme are determined by the Government of India in consultation with eminent local educationists or authoritative bodies.
such as the University Grants Commission. Only books which are considered necessary and desirable for the Indian students are approved for inclusion in the programme. The approval of these books does not automatically mean that any university has to adopt these books as prescribed text-books. The academic autonomy of universities to choose any books they need is left unhampered. To the extent that these books are low priced, it should be said that these books have met a genuine need of Indian students by making available to them standard and up-to-date books.

University Level Books in Indian Languages

The policy of Government has been to move surely and steadily towards promoting indigenous books for use at all stages of university education also. A grant of Rs. 10 million has been promised to practically each State Government for the purpose of bringing out books in Indian languages for meeting the educational requirements at the University level. Though the programme lays an emphasis on the creation of original books in the concerned Indian languages, yet translations and adaptations of foreign books to the extent necessary are not excluded. Each State has set up a Board to look after this work. A National Coordination Committee has been set up by the Central Government for coordinating the programmes followed in the States. For the five Hindi speaking States, a separate Coordination Committee has been constituted.

Manuscripts, received from any source, considered useful for any course of study, could also be accepted by the States for publication. Outstanding scholars have also been requested to contribute to the book production programme and thus help in bringing out quality books. Books are to be written keeping in view the syllabus of not one university but the syllabii of a number of universities. To induce eminent teachers of universities to write books or to translate foreign books, the rates of remuneration have been liberalized.

Under the above programme 863 titles have already been published, of which 675 are originals. About 472 titles are under preparation.

For the development of books in Urdu, one of the major Indian languages used by people all over the country, a Central Board has been set up under the Chairmanship of the Union Education Minister. Besides, university level text-books and reference books, the Board decided that books on popular science, children's literature, reference works, encyclopaedias and basic books for teaching at all levels should be prepared and published. The Board has already selected 612 titles for translation or original writing.

The books produced under the above schemes will be priced reasonably. It is expected that the price will not exceed two and a half times the cost of production. Where it is a translation, it is also expected that the price will not exceed the price of the original English edition.

Copyright Clearance Centre

To facilitate the work of obtaining clearances from foreign copyright owners in regard to books selected by State Governments for translation into Indian languages, the Government of India set up a Centre in the Ministry of Education and Social Welfare to centralize such negotiations. This has also made it easier for the copyright owners by avoiding a multiplicity of sources of Indian requests for licences. Once the licences are cleared, contracts are entered into by the Commission of Scientific and Technical Terminology. A number of licences have been obtained at extremely reasonable rates.

International Copyright

India has taken a leading part in the revision of the Berne Convention and the Universal Copyright Convention so as to accommodate within them special relaxations in favour of developing countries. The revised texts are currently under study and an amendment to the domestic Copyright Act, 1957 (14 of 1957) is in the offing.

Fellowships for Book Writing

In addition to the above, a number of fellowships have been offered by the University Grants Commission to enable a proportion of outstanding students in Sciences, Humanities and Social Science subjects, who have completed their Master's Degree, to associate themselves with distinguished university professors for the purpose of undertaking the
preparation quality books at the university level. The books can be written in English or any of the Indian languages. Each fellow will be awarded Rs. 500.00 per mensem plus an annual contingent grant of not more than Rs. 2,000.00 per annum.

Core Book Programme

This programme, operated by the Central Government, is designed to fill up lacunae in the field of text-books, reference books and supplementary materials for higher education. A programme for some books in the field of Medicine and Surgery is already on hand.

Subsidy for Indigenous Books

To give a fillip to indigenous books, it was decided that standard Indian books should also be eligible for subsidy. Accordingly, a provision of about Rs. 3 crores has been made in the current Plan period for such subsidy and the operation of the scheme has been entrusted to the National Book Trust, India. The scheme covers original books as well as adaptations of foreign books by Indian authors. Manuscripts of new books or the reprinting of books already published could be suggested by the author or the concerned publisher. The books are got assessed by the Trust in consultation with academic experts and the books considered useful are eligible for subsidy. 20 titles have already been brought out under the scheme and a number of other books are under various stages of being subsidized. A special feature of this scheme, designed to benefit the author is that royalty is linked not to the subsidized sale price but to a notional price based on two and a half times the actual production cost.

During 1971-72, USAID made available a grant of Rs. 15 million from the PL 480 Funds for the programme for books on science and technology, under the Joint Indo-American Standard Works Programme. As indicated earlier this amount was to include original writings as well as translations of standard American works. A sum of Rs. 22.25 lakhs has been diverted out of this amount for the purpose of subsidizing original Indian books as well as translations of standard American books. The operation of this scheme also has been entrusted to the National Book Trust.

Survey of University Level Books

To ascertain what books are already available in India in Indian languages, the Federation of Publishers and Booksellers Associations in India was assisted financially to carry out a survey and bring out a catalogue of the university level text-books in English and in Indian languages published in India during the period 1965-70. The Federation has completed the survey and has prepared a catalogue of the books made available to them by the concerned Indian publishers. Two copies of each of the books listed in the catalogue were also obtained by the Federation from the concerned publishers. One of these copies has been left with the Federation, as an exhibition set to be displayed in the respective language areas. The other set was used by the Government of India for an exhibition under the aegis of the University Grants Commission in New Delhi. The catalogue of books compiled by the Federation is under print. Proposals are also under consideration for keeping this catalogue up to date by the issue of annual or half-yearly supplements.

National Educational Resources Centre

The set of the Indian language text-books collected by the Federation and exhibited by the University Grants Commission is being constituted into a text-book library. The library will be named "National Educational Resources Centre" and will be located in the Curzon Road Barracks in Kasturba Gandhi Marg, New Delhi. The Centre is expected to get into operation soon. The Centre will house all the indigenous text-books already collected by the Federation and such new publications as may be made available to it by the Federation or by the individual publishers. It will also house the standard educational literature brought out under the collaboration schemes of the Governments of U.K., U.S.A. and U.S.S.R. The Centre will make these books available for reference to university students, teachers and also text-book writers. Text-book publishers also would be welcome to use the facilities available in the Centre to survey the existing field of books and to plan fresh publications.
Survey of Books on Science and Technology

Shri U. S. Mohan Rao, a retired Director of Publications Division of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting was commissioned to survey the production, printing and distribution arrangements for books on Science and Technology and his report, submitted in May, 1971, is currently under consideration of the Government of India.

Central Institute of Indian Languages, Mysore

A Central Institute of Indian Languages was set up by Central Government in Mysore in 1969 with the specific purpose of conducting basic research in Indian languages and to serve as a nucleus to bring together all the research and literary output in the country. The work of the Institute is expected to play a crucial role in the development of Indian languages and also the production of indigenous educational materials in various languages. The Institute will also offer intensive and extensive courses in translation.

Books for General Reading

The needs of the general reading public not undergoing any formal courses in education have also received the attention of Government over a number of years. The National Book Trust set up in 1957, and the Sahitya Akademi set up in 1954 cater mainly to their needs. Both bodies are fully financed by Government.

The primary object of the National Book Trust is to bring out in English as well as in Indian languages worthwhile materials for the general reading public. Designed to meet the general educational and cultural requirements of the people, the Trust publishes such books as may not be attractive to commercial publishers. Currently the Trust is engaged in bringing out a series of books under the titles "India - The Land and People" and "National Biography".

To foster national integration and to build up a core of common books for the appreciation of Indian culture as a whole, it has been decided that up to 10 most outstanding books from each Indian language should be translated into and brought out in all the other Indian languages. This programme operated by the National Book Trust, has been named as "Aadan Pradaan".

In the field of literary activities, Sahitya Akademi produces informative material regarding literary activity in the Indian languages and also arranges for translation and publication of Indian as well as foreign classics, both old and modern, into Indian languages to meet the cultural and literary needs of a multilingual society. The Akademi also awards prizes to outstanding books produced each year in the various Indian languages.

In addition a number of other governmental or Government sponsored agencies like National Museum, Lalit Kala Akademi, Sangeet Natak Akademi, Institute of Advanced Studies, Simla, Archaeological Survey of India, Indian Council for Cultural Relations, Council of Scientific and Industrial Research, Publications Division etc., bring out special publications or monographs in their fields.

Under schemes operated for the development of Indian languages, the Government of India extend financial assistance to voluntary organizations to bring out worthwhile publications like translations of books, encyclopaedias, dictionaries, etc.

Partly to provide Hindi publishers with some financial assistance and partly with a view to spreading Hindi in Non-Hindi areas, the Ministry of Education and Social Welfare also buy multiple copies of Hindi publications and journals, considered meritorious, for free supply to institutions located in non-Hindi areas.

Neo-Literates

The needs for reading materials by neo-literates are covered under the various schemes operated for social education. Every year, a competition is run by Government for awarding prizes to the best manuscript in each language in this field.

Books for the Blind

The Government of India maintain a workshop and Braille press for books in this field.

Fostering Book Mindedness

The essential function of fostering book mindedness has been entrusted to the National Book Trust, India. The Trust organizes
exhibitions and book fairs, arranges seminars, symposia, workshops and training courses on problems connected with the writing, translation, publication and distribution of books. Every year the Trust organizes a National Book Fair in which private publishers also cooperate and in addition the Trust arranges regional fairs. The Trust also arranges a Book Week throughout the country every year in cooperation with the Federation of Publishers and Booksellers Associations in India. During these Fairs, meetings with authors are arranged and a special book discount is offered to the public.

World Book Fair

The National Fair for 1972 has been converted into a World Book Fair, (March 18 to April 2, 1972, in New Delhi) to commemorate the IBY and during the Fair, an International Seminar on "Books for the Millions" is also scheduled. Unesco have offered a grant to meet expenditure on a few foreign invitees. During this period, an all-India Writers Camp will also be organized.

National Book Development Board

To foster the growth of books in India, the Government of India set up a National Book Development Board in 1967 consisting of representatives of Government as well as of authors, publishers, printers and booksellers. The Board has met six times so far and has made various recommendations of great importance.

Tax Concessions

Arising out of one of the recommendations of the Board the Government have provided certain income tax concessions to book publishers. 20% of the profit made from book publishing are excluded from the gross profit for the computation of the income tax payable. The Printing Industry also enjoys certain developmental rebates for new machinery.

Training Courses

The Central Government have sponsored or played host to or financially assisted a number of seminars on book production and book selling. Full advantage has also been availed of the places offered to India by Unesco or Unesco sponsored agencies for training in book publishing. It has been decided to assist the Federation of Publishers and Booksellers Associations in India to organize in 1971-72 two training courses, during the World Book Fair, one for book publishers and the other for booksellers. Unesco have also agreed to assist in this by providing foreign experts and equipment. These courses will then be standardized and used for organizing similar courses in Indian languages later on. It is also expected that in 1972-73, the University of Delhi may introduce book/journal publishing as an optional subject for the first Degree Course to impart some professional orientation to a hitherto purely academic course.

Film on Books

Partly to commemorate the IBY and partly to interest and inform the public about books and book production techniques, a documentary film by the Films Division of the Central Government is under preparation. The film can also be used for the training courses in book publishing. The Film is expected to be released during the World Book Fair.

Promoting Indian Books Abroad

With a view to promoting the understanding of Indian culture abroad, financial assistance has been extended for Indian participation in book fairs or exhibitions abroad. National Book Trust has participated in a number of such exhibitions, including the Frankfurt Fair, not only on its own behalf but also on behalf of a number of other Indian publishers who could not participate individually. The Government sponsored a visit of Indian publishers, with an exhibition of select Indian books, to Mauritius, Tanzania, Zambia and Kenya in February-March 1971. In January 1972, an Indian Printers and Publishers Mission was sponsored with a rupee grant from USAID, under the Indo-American Standard Works Programme, to visit U.S.A. for about a fortnight, to commemorate the IBY and to establish contacts with the American industry. The Mission set up an exhibition of Indian books and printing in U.S.A. and also held a seminar on cultural and intellectual exchanges between the two countries. The Federation of Publishers was also assisted financially to purchase and mail to select foreign institutions and booksellers the two international issues of the leading Indian book journal "Indian Book Industry".
**Director of Publishers**

Under the Joint Indo-American Standard Works Programme, a USAID grant has been made available to the Federation of Publishers and Booksellers Associations in India for compiling a Directory of Indian Publishers and Booksellers, together with other ancillary agencies. The Directory will be ready by the end of 1972 as part of IBY activities.

**Comprehensive Book Survey**

Arising out of the recommendations of the National Book Development Board, it has been decided to launch a comprehensive survey of the book industry in India. The details are being worked out.

**Statistics**

According to figures compiled by the National Library, Calcutta, 16,827 titles were published in India in 1967-68. According to Unesco Statistical Year Book, 1969, the estimated world production during 1968 was 4,87,000 titles, of which India contributed 11,413 titles. The number of Indian publications, according to Unesco figures, is lower than the figures compiled by National Library, as according to Unesco classification, publications less than 49 pages do not count as books. The size of the edition of each title is not known. Perhaps an average may be taken as 3,000 copies per title. This would give, according to Unesco figure, about 34 million copies for a population of 546,955,945 (provisional) of 1971 census. Even if only the literate population is taken into account, it would be seen that the number of books per head is still woefully low. There is much yet to be done in regard to promoting reading habits and ensuring adequate supply outlets for books. The success of some imaginative publishers in the field of low priced mass market paper-backs and 'Home Library' Clubs would indicate that there is scope for improvement, if means could be found to surmount the obstacles like transporting books particularly to rural readers.

**Libraries**

Readers of this article are bound to be well aware of the steps taken by the Central Government in the field of promoting libraries. Apart from maintaining the National Library, the Central Government are financing the Central Reference Library at Calcutta to bring out the Indian National Bibliography. In addition, the Central Government extend financial assistance to the Delhi Public Library, and the Town Hall Library, Bombay, apart from a large number of private libraries all over the country.

**An Appeal to Librarians**

As this paper is written for a library journal, it may not be inappropriate to reiterate, what is already well known to librarians, that it is mainly in their hands to promote reading habits and to interest people in books. Libraries are not go-downs of books and perhaps the success of a librarian ought to be judged not on the holdings of his library but on the increasing number of readers he is able to attract to the library. As their contribution to IBY, librarians might well like to consider how each library can convert itself into a service, not only for the few members who are already in, but for the vast many who are out. Costly book-mobiles may not be necessary for this but humbler modes of transport and voluntary rural outlets created by Panchayats could perhaps be used. Librarians might also like to consider to what extent they undertake on request or in anticipation, reference queries or short bibliographies likely to benefit or interest their possible clientele. Each book may have its reader but the role of the librarian as a catalyst is vital.

**Conclusion**

The foregoing will show that the Central Government have been alive to the book situation in the country and are constantly engaged in bettering the situation. But all their efforts are limited, like one taking a horse to drink. Ultimately, a vigorous book industry, private or public, can develop only when people take to reading for self-improvement. This is a role in which teachers and librarians have a large part to play.