

ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA ON THE OCCASION OF
INAUGURATION OF CYBER PARK AND GENDER PARK,
INAUGURATION OF DIGITAL EMPOWERMENT CAMPAIGN, AND
THE LAUNCH OF 'KANIVU' SCHEME'

Kozhikode, Kerala: Feb 27, 2016

1. It is my pleasure to be here at this function in Kozhikode where unique initiatives, namely: (i) a Cyber Park in the labour cooperative sector; (ii) the digital empowerment campaign of the IT Department, (iii) Gender Park; and (iv) the 'Kanivu' scheme of the social justice department, are being inaugurated. I am thankful to the state government for inviting me here and take this opportunity to convey my good wishes for the progress and prosperity of the people of Kerala.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

2. The progress made by Kerala over the last few decades has been commendable. Today, it proudly stands at the forefront in social development particularly in the fields of education, health and women empowerment. The people of Kerala enjoy a quality of life that compares favourably with many developed countries in the world. This remarkable advancement has been possible due to the combined efforts of the government, various social organizations and, most importantly, because of the hard work, the spirit of openness and enterprise of the people of Kerala.
3. Kerala has gradually evolved into a more equitable society. It has the highest literacy rate in the country. Kerala is also a pioneer in e-literacy having launched two breakthrough projects as early as 2002. The Akshaya Project was launched with the objective of making at least one person in every family e-literate. The IT@school project aimed at providing basic computer knowledge to every high school student.

4. Kerala established its first State Data Centre in 2005 to deliver governmental services through e-governance. This was further strengthened with a second centre in 2011. It is heartening to note that Kerala has now over six hundred e-governance applications covering almost all departments, delivering e-services to its citizens. They are also being made available on the mobile platform now. All districts of the state have been covered under the e-District project. About thirty thousand digital certificates are delivered digitally to the citizens daily by the Revenue Department alone. The dynamic technology landscape due to the growth of internet and smart-phone penetration, combined with the proactive measures of the Government has rapidly transformed Kerala into a knowledge-powered economy. The state has a mobile tele-density of 95 percent and an internet access covering over sixty percent of the population. With broadband connectivity in every gram panchayat, Kerala has emerged as a truly 'Digital State'.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

5. I am happy to know that the Kerala Government has initiated a digital literacy campaign leveraging its strong digital infrastructure. Started as a pilot project in Thiruvananthapuram district and implemented with the help of Student Police Cadets, this initiative aims at the digital empowerment of citizens from all walks of life. It will enable ordinary citizens to effectively use the internet to avail government and private services in a secure manner. Once extended to the entire state, the campaign will cover about three million citizens in the age group of thirty to sixty years. With this path-breaking initiative, Kerala is on track towards becoming a fully digital society by 2020.
6. I am glad that on this occasion, a Cyber Park which is the first IT Park in the Malabar region is also being inaugurated. This IT Park also has the distinction of being the first in its class to be developed in the country by a labour cooperative society, the Uralungal Labour Contract Co-operative Society (ULCCS). This society, formed in 1925 by the eminent social reformer Guru Vagbhadananda, has played a vital role in the socio-economic development of the region. It has helped in improving the living standards of the economically-weaker sections by providing them job opportunities. This IT Park – called the UL Cyber Park – will help generate employment in knowledge-based sectors. I am told that the first phase which covers an area of 0.5 million square feet will provide a base to five thousand professionals, besides creating indirect employment for over

twenty thousand people in the region. I am confident that this Park will go a long way in positioning Kerala along with the other leading Indian states in the IT sector.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

7. A sustained path of socio-economic development in this region is incumbent on greater participation of women in economic activities. There have been several programmes aimed at encouraging women to take part in developmental and decision-making processes. Kerala is a pioneer in gender equity measures and is a leading state in several women-centric parameters. Yet, it was felt that a more gender-focussed approach is necessary, where all genders have equal access to development opportunities, resources and benefits, and possess equal voice in key decision-making areas.
8. In this context, the novel concept of 'Gender Park' initiated by the Department of Social Justice is significant. This unique Park will act as a convergence centre for gender-related education, entrepreneurship training and capacity development activities. It will provide a strong impetus to gender-inclusive growth.
9. To my mind, knowledge creation through relevant multi-disciplinary research and learning processes envisaged in the Park will have to be linked with policymaking. I am told that this Park will not only provide a platform to non-governmental organizations, academia and civil society to undertake gender-related research activity, but also test and replicate new interventions in the field of women empowerment. Already, the Gender Park is testing innovative programmes such as the *She Taxi* and *Sandesh One*, which are bringing women into economic spaces not ventured by them before. The research and knowledge base emanating from the Gender Park will have long-term benefits. I am even more hopeful after learning that the Centre will eventually transform into a university focused on gender equality, women's empowerment and development.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

10. Kerala has a long tradition of care and compassion. The 'Kanivu' scheme is yet another initiative in this regard. In spite of Kerala having a robust social safety net, a large segment of the population find it difficult to cope with the problems of destitution, chronic or life threatening diseases, disabilities and sudden poverty. The Government is committed to ensure

that no one in the state languishes for want of food, medical treatment or care.

11. Through the 'Kanivu' initiative, the Government will reach out to the bed-ridden people and persons with acute mental disorders who are virtually living in isolation. Having earmarked Rs. 100 crore towards this project, the state will shoulder the responsibility of providing food, medicine and care to such needy people through community participation. I am happy to note that all the social security and social care initiatives of the state government will now come under the umbrella of '*Kanivinte Keralam*' or 'Compassionate Kerala'.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

12. Much needs to be done with the active participation of the people. Kerala has achieved considerable success in strengthening local governments and decentralized development. It has taken steps to ensure the participation of all sections of people in planning, decision-making, generating resources and ensuring transparency and accountability. Democracy is inherent in the thought and culture of Kerala. Parliamentary democracy thrives in Kerala on the solid foundation of an educated and well-informed electorate that accepts a diversity of views. Here, a multi-religious and multi-ethnic society has co-existed in harmony for centuries, fostering a culture of inclusiveness and tolerance. Kerala truly symbolizes the concept of Unity in Diversity, the very idea that defines India.
13. I once again extend my warm greetings to the people of Kerala and wish them a bright and prosperous future. I wish all these projects inaugurated today, a great success and I am confident they will contribute significantly to improving the quality of life of the people and their welfare.

Thank you.

Jai Hind.
