

1<sup>st</sup> September 2006

Dear Mr. Prime Minister,

Your suggestion at the first meeting with the National Knowledge Commission that access to translated material is vital for increasing access to knowledge in many critical areas and broadening and strengthening people's participation in education and continuous learning, led the National Knowledge Commission (NKC) to focus on translation as one of the key thrust areas of knowledge economy in India.

We recognize that there is an urgent need for expansion of quantity and improvement of quality of translation of different types (human, machine-aided, instant, etc.) and in different domains (literary, scientific, technical, business, etc.) that would provide greater access to knowledge across the country. The current facilities available are inadequate and less than socially required. There is latent unrecognised demand which is not being met because of incomplete and asymmetric information. Inadequacy of information compounded by the lack of coordination between potential users, also leads to market failures. Further there is inadequate dissemination of good quality translations which would provide a benchmark and create incentives for most private activity in this area. Therefore, this requires some amount of public intervention, not as a permanent feature, but as a set of measures to kick-start a process of encouraging private initiative such that the large commercially viable provision of high quality translation in different areas becomes feasible. The direct and indirect employment generation potential of translation activities is very high, and could absorb a substantial part of educated unemployed youth.

Based on this the NKC formed a working group led by Dr. Jayati Ghosh to bring together many people and agencies involved in translation, publishing and dissemination activities.\* They included representatives of some of the relevant government bodies, academics, language experts, publishers, teachers and others associated with translation activities in India. They met several times for workshops and consultations.

As a result of their work and discussions at the NKC we recommend the following:

1. **Provide impetus for developing translation as an industry** in the country. Going by the experiences of other countries, in a country like India with its many languages, as well as the huge potential for foreign language translation, the entire translation industry has the potential eventually to employ between 200,000 and half a million people.

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\* A list of participants is attached.

2. **Establish a store-house of information** on all aspects of translation involving Indian languages, and to make this available by creating, maintaining and constantly updating information on translations published, training programmes, translation tools/instruments and new initiatives, and facilities such as a ‘National Register for Translators’.
3. **Promote printed as well as virtual publication** of works on translation studies. Further provide a clearing house for all translation activities, both in theoretical and applied subjects, in as many Indian languages as possible.
4. **Create and maintain various tools for translation**, including digital tools like Thesauri, Bilingual Dictionaries and software for translation. In addition, promote machine translation, leveraging emerging technologies to provide rapid and large volume of translation at a relatively low cost.
5. **Provide quality training** and education for translators. Some ways this could be done include short term training programmes, course packages for translators that could be incorporated in the language teaching programmes, and fellowship programmes and research projects to encourage quality students. There is also need for guidance in the methodology of translation and undertake activities to enrich teaching and training activities in translation studies.
6. **Translate pedagogic materials** at all levels (including primary onwards to tertiary education) specifically in natural and social sciences.
7. **Project Indian languages and literatures within South Asia and outside** through high-quality translation.
8. **Set up a national web portal** on translation as a one stop shop for all information on translation and to provide a forum for dialogue by creating a bulletin board for people to post questions and answers.
9. **Organize annual National Conferences** on translation to take stock of activities and initiatives in the field, attended by experts, industry and practitioners in the field.
10. **Promote book launches, festivals, fellowships and prizes etc.** and encourage collaborative translation work, as well as long-term multi-translator projects, and organise workshops for translators to interact and exchange views and experiences.

The NKC feels that in order to achieve these goals as rapidly and efficiently as possible, the Government of India may establish a National Translation Mission (NTM), which would take up these tasks in a systematic way. A proposal about the NTM is enclosed. In brief, the NTM would be a relatively small body in terms of its own infrastructure and be flexible in organisation, but would have a budget sufficient to enable it to carry out targeted funding in identified areas. It would not function in a centralised way but will require involvement at many different levels, including state and local levels, and co-ordination with many different agencies. Since the immediate requirements may be different from future needs not only in terms of translation activities but also the nature of

interventions required, the NTM should be flexible and responsive to current and future market conditions and social realities.

It is envisaged that a National Translation Mission performing these activities could be set up during the XIth Plan, with a proposed budget of Rs. 250 crore for the entire Plan period (around Rs. 80 crore for organisational costs, manpower and scholarships, and around Rs. 170 crore for all other activities, which would involve funding other collaborating institutions or parties). Depending upon the experience during the 11<sup>th</sup> Plan period, the extent of this support could be enhanced subsequently. In addition, the NTM would require some one-time support for creating and developing the necessary infrastructure.

Such a proposal has been sent to the Planning Commission for its consideration, and has broadly met with approval from the Planning Commission, which has made some further suggestions on the organisation and structure of the NTM.<sup>†</sup> These suggestions have been incorporated into the detailed proposal which is provided here. However, if the proposal is to be developed more formally for integration into the XIth Plan with appropriate budgetary support, it may be useful to set up a Working Group which would work with the relevant Government Ministries and existing organisations to provide more specificity to the proposal. A possible list of members of such a Working Group is included in the proposal.

Translation activities should be seen in tandem with the plan to increase access to English language training across the population, and the promotion of English in school education at the primary level. Both of these are different aspects of the goal of increasing access to knowledge. A separate note on issues relating to language and increasing access to English is being prepared by the NKC.

We hope that you will consider this proposal favourably for incorporation into the XIth Plan.

Thank you and warm personal regards,

Sam Pitroda,  
Chairman,  
The National Knowledge Commission

CC: Shri Arjun Singh, Minister for Human Resource Development  
Shri Montek Singh Ahluwalia, Deputy Chairman, Planning Commission

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<sup>†</sup> A copy of the letters received from the Planning Commission and response from the NKC to the points made is also attached with the proposal.

**List of people consulted by the NKC in relation to translation and the  
National Translation Mission**

1. Mr. K.P.R.Nair  
Konark Publishers

2. Mr. Keshav Desairaju  
Joint Secretary  
Department of Secondary and Higher Education  
Ministry of HRD

3. Dr. M. Sridhar  
Dept of English  
University of Hyderabad

4. Prof. Alok Bhalla  
Dept of English  
Central Institute of English and Foreign Languages (C.I.E.F.L)

5. Dr. D S Navin  
National Book Trust

6. Prof. G. Uma Maheshwar Rao,  
Centre for Applied Linguistics & Translation Studies,  
CALTS, University of Hyderabad

7. Prof. Vanamala Viswanath  
Dept. of English  
Jnanabharathi  
Bangalore University

8. Dr. Neeti Badwe  
Professor of German  
Department of Foreign Languages  
University of Poona

9. Prof. Harish Trivedi  
Department of English  
Delhi University

10. Prof. Pushpak Bhattacharya,  
Professor of Computer Science  
Department of Computer Science & Engineering, Indian Institute of Technology  
Mumbai

11. Mr. Benny Kurian  
National Book Trust

12. Ms Kamini Mahadevan  
Pearson Education India

13. Dr. Sujata Roy  
Joint Director  
Hindi Medium Implementation Committee  
University of Delhi

14. Mr. Abhijit Dutta  
Globalisation Specialist  
IBM Global Services India Pvt. Ltd.

15. Ms Geeta Dharmarajan  
KATHA

16. Ms Mini Krishnan  
Oxford University Press

17. Prof. Udaya Narayana Singh  
Director, Central Institute of Indian Languages

18. Ms Radhika Menon  
Tulika

19. Dr. S N Ojha  
Visva-Bharati Computer Centre  
Santiniketan

20. Mr. Rubin D'Cruz  
National Book Trust

21. Prof. Bijay Kumar,  
Chairman  
CSTT (Commission for Scientific and  
Technical Terminology)

22. Mr. N V Sathyanarayana  
Chairman and Managing Director  
Informatics (India) Ltd

23. Dr. Shalini R.Urs  
Executive Director  
iSIM - International School of Information Management, University of Mysore

24. Dr. Sukrita P. Kumar

25. Dr. Apoorvanand

26. Dr. Sanjay Sharma  
Dept. of History  
Delhi University

27. Abhay Dube  
Editor, English Language Programme  
Centre for the Study of Developing Societies

28. Ravi Kant  
Editor, Deevan-E-Sarai, Sarai Programme  
Centre for the Study of Developing Societies

29. Arvind Mohan  
Ex-Associate Editor,  
Hindustan Times

30. Dr Hemant Darbari  
Centre for Development of Advanced Computing

31. Mahmood Farooqui  
Centre for the Study of Developing Societies