

OPENING CEREMONY OF
THE NATION'S LIBRARY



FEBRUARY 20, 2020



Esteemed Mr. President, My Dear Brother Mirziyoyev and Esteemed First Lady,

Eminent Participants,

Dear Youth,

Distinguished Guests,

I salute you with all my heartfelt emotions, affection and respect.

I am very happy to be with you for the inauguration of the Nation's Library.

I especially thank my dear brother President Shavkat Mirziyoyev of Uzbekistan and his esteemed wife for sharing our happiness.

To us, Uzbekistan is the most important of our springs of life which feed our world of knowledge, wisdom and culture and where scholars that shape our vision for civilization grow up.

Such scholars as al-Biruni, Mirza Ulugh Beg, Avicenna, al-Khwarizmi and Ali Qushji; and our spiritual leaders such as Imam al-Bukhari, Imam Māturīdī, Imām al-Termezī and Baha-ud-Din Naqshband are the gifts of Māwarān-nahr to us.

For instance, Ulugh Beg, besides having governed the state for 36 years, had lit a fire of knowledge, which is still burning, with the observatory he had built.

This knowledge-loving ruler, who had turned his palace into an academy, so to speak, and who had brought together the famous scholars of his time, had the hadith, which says, "it is obligatory for every Muslim, male or female, to seek knowledge," inscribed on the entrance of the Bukhara Madrasah.

The star catalogue which we refer to as the Zij-i Sultani was considered to be the most excellent piece until the telescope was invented.

And, this very climate of knowledge has equally fed and enriched Tashkent and Ankara, Samarkand and Konya, Bukhara and Bursa, and Khiva and Edirne for ages.

I believe, on this meaningful day, we are giving a very important message to the world about our shared civilization by inaugurating the Nation's Library with Mr. President.

After His Excellency became the Head of State of Uzbekistan, our ancestral lands, we have ushered in a new era in our relations within 3 years, a very short span of time, by working with the spirit of "UNITY IN ACTION".

By founding the High Level Strategic Cooperation Council, we have deepened our cooperation in every area, from economy and trade to culture and tourism.

And, yesterday we held the first meeting of our Council.

We will, inshallah, further strengthen the Turkish-Uzbek brotherhood from now on in accordance with the historical, cultural and social heritage our countries share.

Dear friends...

It is narrated that once upon a time one of the Abbasid caliphs invites one of the greatest scholars of the era to his palace to benefit from his conversation.

The messenger goes to the house of the scholar to deliver the invitation and finds the scholar sitting in the middle of numerous volumes of books.

Watching this beautiful scene for a while, the messenger extends the caliph's invitation.



But the scholar says, "TELL THE EMIR OF THE MUSLIMS THAT AT THE MOMENT I AM CHATTING WITH A GROUP OF PEOPLE OF WISDOM AND KNOWLEDGE. I WILL HONOR THE INVITATION AS SOON AS I AM DONE WITH THEM."

The caliph, in a reproachful manner, asks the scholar, who appears before him the next day:

"OUR INVITATION ARRIVED YESTERDAY AND YET YOU CAME TODAY...

YOU WERE CHATTING WITH A GROUP OF PEOPLE OF WISDOM AND KNOWLEDGE...

I WONDER WHO YOUR FRIENDS PREVENTING YOU FROM COMING TO US ARE. WHO ARE THEY?"

THE SCHOLAR RESPONDS IN ONE WORD: "BOOKS!"

Well... Each book is a scholar.

If you have hundreds of books, it means that you are a friend of hundreds of scholars and that you benefit from their knowledge.

And it is kind of living the life of heaven in the world and tasting the fruits of the heaven.

Because, we are the members of a civilization that considers every scholar to be a tree of heaven, whose shadow should be benefitted from, and books as the fruits of that tree.

Our ancestors preferred a library, whose shelves were filled with books, to the most precious treasures.

Whichever city you go to in Turkey, you will see libraries that defy the centuries while enlightening their environs like a lamp.

Some of those libraries are modest like Ziyabey Library in Sivas, and some are majestic like Beyazit Library in Istanbul.

Each piece on their shelves is like a jewel whose value increases as time passes by.

Saadi's Gulistan continues to scent the air with the smell of roses and Rumi's Masnavi continues to relieve hearts there.

You can never end the journey you set out on with Evliya Çelebi's Seyahâtnâme (The Book of Travels) or finish al-Ghazali's Ihya (The Revival of Religious Sciences).

Our libraries are full with the most prominent works, from medicine to astronomy and from engineering to social sciences, of our ancestors, who spent their lives by thinking, writing and struggling for the sake of knowledge.

If we deprive these unique jewels of being read or analyzed, we will turn them into orphans left alone abroad.

We are the followers of a religion, whose first order is "IQRA" that means "READ", and which preaches that those who know are not equal to those who do not know.

We are the Ummah of a Prophet who orders, "Seek knowledge from the cradle to the grave," and prefers to sit among a "circle of knowledge" to a "circle of dhikr".

Throughout history, wherever there was a struggle to build a civilization and to bring prosperity, there was also the struggle to construct a library.

And, wherever there was a genocide, war and destruction of civilization, the first target was the libraries as well.

Whereas the Mongol armies under the command of Hulagu burned down libraries, Timur built such a peaceful city as Samarkand and made it the capital of science by setting up libraries.



Likewise, at the center were libraries both when Andalusia started to be described and when it stopped to be described as the shining star of the Islamic civilization.

Today as well, similar massacres of cultures are taking place as libraries are unfortunately being targeted.

DAESH and other terrorist organizations razed to the ground the most important monuments of the Islamic culture and civilization by bombing libraries which were home to thousands of rare books in Iraq and Syria.

Our civilization, however, had been at the center of scientific advances throughout centuries.

Our ancestors, who didn't shy away from going to the remotest corners of the world in pursuit of knowledge and devoted their lives to scientific researches, bequeathed us this civilization of affection and knowledge which we are proud to inherit.

This civilization is best symbolized by the complexes it built across a vast geography stretching from the Adriatic's shores to the Great Wall of China.

With their madrasas, mosques and centers of arts and libraries, these complexes have survived to date as the symbols of knowledge, wisdom, affection and grace.

These complexes, which housed the richest libraries of their times, turned the cities, at whose center they were located, into cultural and economic centers of attraction.

Without doubt, libraries are the humanity's collective memory.

Libraries are the only places where you can find humanity's heritage in its entirety extending from Babylonia and Egypt to Assyria, Ancient Greece and Rome.

At a time when Europe was confined to medieval darkness, such Islamic cities as Baghdad, Cairo, Damascus, Cordoba, Bukhara, Merv, Samarkand, Konya, Mardin and Erzurum were radiating light to the world with their madrasas and libraries.

In competition against Bayt al-Hikmah, established in the early 800s, was built Dār al-Hikmah.

It is these libraries that conserved and transferred to next generations thousands of volumes of books that date back all the way to Ancient Greece and India.

Later on, during those dark days when people were atrociously massacred and cities razed to the ground, our libraries and books were also subjected to a genocide, so-to-speak, by being set on fire and thrown away into rivers.

All the looting and plundering notwithstanding, our libraries have always preserved their value and prestige.

It was our libraries that even introduced the ancient Greek texts to the West.

However, so prevalent was bigotry in the Europe of that age that these works had to wait until after Renaissance in order to be of use.

Esteemed guests...

We envisioned a library befitting our civilization and country as a part of this complex, which we designed during my premiership as the administrative center of our state.

I believe we have managed to ensure that the Presidential Complex now befits our civilization with its Mosque, Convention and Culture Center, Exhibition Hall, and Library.



We have already put into service other premises of the Presidential Complex.

Now that we are today inaugurating The Nation's Library, we bring to completion the Presidential Complex.

During the period it was still under construction, our library was already enriched with books from inside our country and abroad in 134 different languages and 4 million printed works from a wide range of disciplines.

It reached a quite important level with 550 thousand e-books as well as 120 million articles and reports.

We will, inshallah, further expand the scope of this book mobilization and attain a capacity of over 5 million as soon as possible.

I hereby would like to congratulate all the bibliophiles who have donated books.

Such important names as Abdlbaki Glpınarlı, Cemil Meri, Cinuen Tanrıkorur, Hasan Celal Gzel, Mehmet Őevket Eygi and Őefik Can will, inshallah, live on here through the collections they have donated.

I invite all our people of science and of opinion and arts, especially those who have a private collection of rare books, to donate to this library so that their works and names live on.

Even if we know we won't live long enough to sit in their shadows, these seeds we plant today are continuous alms in our names.

I extend my gratitude to anyone who contributed to putting this monument at our civilization's and people's service and who exerted efforts in any phase of its, including the architectural project, construction, equipment and management.

Esteemed friends...

With this library, we are building bridges to the past and constructing crossroads between geographies.

We want our youth and researchers

To walk among shelves that contain millions of books...

To swim in an ocean of wisdom under the dome we call Cihannüma...

To probe into human body with Avicenna and into human soul with al-Farabi...

To roam the corridors of thought with Aristotle...

To listen to wisdom with al-Ghazali...

Around the dome of our grand reading hall, these verses of the Surah al-'Alaq are inscribed: "He Who taught (the use of) the Pen, taught man that which he knew not."

In light of these verses from the Holy Quran, our youth shall get to know their essence as Yunus says "Knowledge should mean a full grasp of knowledge: Knowledge means to know yourself..."

Our people of wisdom shall derive inspiration from this verse and produce new works...

Diwan poet Latifi says the elixir of immortality, which Alexander sought in the dark but could not find, runs in the dark ink of a book.

Latifi views books as "KENZ-İ LA-YEFNA" in other words, an endless treasure, and describes them as "GÜL-İ SAD-BERG-İ FASL-I NEV-BAHARDIR" which means a unique rose with a hundred petals which blossoms in the spring.

Inshallah our youth will strengthen their bond with books, a true friend, in this building.



We have watched together the video that shared details about our library.

The Nation's Library will serve as a proper complex.

We have designed this place not only as a building that houses bookshelves, but also as a center of wisdom and culture that brings together people of wisdom.

World renowned authors – both native and foreign - will hold meetings here.

We have built a place where works and studies will be conducted around book culture, and gatherings of knowledge will be held.

All services, including tea-coffee, simit and cake, will be offered for free and around the clock to all our guests who come here to research, read, write or study.

By swiping their new identity cards, our guests can directly enter the library.

One of the Try & Do Technology Workshops, which we founded with the aim of contributing to the development of our youth in technology, will be in service within the library.

I believe this library will make Istanbul envious.

However, the people of Istanbul should not be sad...

We will soon inaugurate that spectacular library we built within the Rami Barracks.

Esteemed friends...

Today, we are also launching two major exhibitions at our prized library.

One of them is the Hatt-ı Hümayun (Sultans' Handwriting) Exhibition, held by the State Archives.

At this exhibition, we will display some original documents, which our nation will see for the first time.

We as Turkey have such an archive that tens of countries have to dive into the ocean of millions of documents here in order to write their own history.

Sultans' handwriting, which is merely a handful of water compared to the ocean here, will be displayed at the exhibition which will be open for three months.

Our youth will personally see Suleiman the Magnificent's handwriting and the original text of the *Gülhane Hatt-ı Hümayunu* (Edict of *Gülhane*), which they know by heart from their lessons.

We will also witness the excellent taste of Sultan Mahmud II which shows how far a sultan, a statesman can go in arts.

Another important exhibition here is the "Trace of Ink" exhibition, organized by the Manuscript Institution of Turkey.

Among the manuscripts of Quran, the mother of all books, the famous *mus'hafs* penned by Sheikh Hamdullah, Hafiz Osman, Hasan Riza and particularly Karahisari who is known as the "calligrapher who made writing proud", will meet for the first time at such a comprehensive exhibition.

Sacred texts such as the Bible, the Torah and the Psalms in Syriac, Greek, Arabic and Armenian languages will be displayed at the exhibition, which I hope many international visitors will come to see.

Also, there are a number of manuscripts on religious and positive sciences, including *Kalila and Demna*, *Kitab-ı Bahriye* (Book of Navigation), *Evliya Çelebi's Seyahatname* (The Book of Travels) and an 800-year-old Chess Book.

I especially recommend our youth to come and see first-hand the originals of these books, the names of which they learn from textbooks.



Our children should get to know the exceptional works of our world of culture and civilization, the book art which is the pearl of a civilization that has an impeccable mind, heart and taste.

One of the most important manuscripts displayed at the exhibition is the *Dīwān Lughāt Al-Turk* (The Compendium of the Turkic Dialects).

This book, which is our first dictionary and the memory of the Turkish language, reminds us of, in addition to its author Mahmud al-Kashgari, a man whom I would like to remember here.

Ali Amiri, the founder of the National Library in Istanbul's Fatih District, was a librarian who devoted all he had to books.

He came across the *Dīwān Lughāt Al-Turk* at a second-hand bookstore, bought it and put it in his library, immortalizing the book.

Just like Ali Amiri, we remember with grace major book enthusiasts such as İbnül Emin Mahmut Kemal İnal, known as the "walking library", and İsmail Saib Sencer, the retired director of Bayezid State Library, "a library within a library".

We once again promise to preserve and uphold the legacies of these people who served our libraries and archives.

I thank the State Archives, the Manuscript Institution of Turkey and the Ministry of Culture for these two fine exhibitions. I congratulate those who contributed to them.

I once again wish the Nation's Library will yield auspicious outcomes for our city, our country and the entire world.

I especially thank my Dear Friend, President Mirziyoyev of Uzbekistan, and the Esteemed First Lady for sharing our excitement.

I salute you all with love and respect.