



English rendering of the text of PM's Inaugural Address (via Video Conference) at the National Conference of Central and State/UT Ministers and Secretaries of Tourism, Culture and Sports

Posted On: 20 JAN 2017 10:20PM by PIB Delhi

Some of you may have come to Kutch for the first time and those who came here earlier, may not have thought of travelling thus far to this desert land close to the Pakistan border. However, today you got the chance to visit this place. Visiting desert will be a new experience for those who have come from the valleys of the Himalayas. People those who have spent their lifetime amid the greenery of the North East, the experience of visiting the desert will be new for them also and I am sure that this visit will leave a positive impact on this deliberation camp of yours.

It's extremely important in the government that we sit together and understand our work and its roadmap. We need to evaluate the way the world is changing, where we stand in that changing world, where we want to reach and where we could reach. Unfortunately, the governments have developed a habit of working in the silos. At times there are silos within a department such that what is happening on one table is known to the people on other tables.

There is no coordination between different departments and because of this, if a department conceives a program another department conceives a diametrically opposite program. Surprisingly, sometimes two departments of the government fight a case in a court of law by paying the fees. This is not a healthy situation and, it must be changed and the way to change it is to collectively sit together to discuss our role, the role our departments should play under a broad vision and what results we can produce, it would be better if we discuss all these things. There are some departments that are like minded in nature despite being a separate entity. They have some understanding with each other.

Primarily people from four departments have come together here. In a way they have some relation with each other therefore it will be good if we share our experiences by sitting together. They should listen to the experts. We should try to understand how we have tried to find solutions to the difficulties faced by us, about the experiments conducted by us. In these three days, if you talk to each other freely during the breaks, at the time of having meals, while moving around and also in tents, may be it will for the first time for some to stay in a tent; may be some of you would be feeling hot but it gets cold after the sunset; there is a joy in living through these hardships; so after the sessions please share experiences of your states with your colleagues, please ask other states about their experiences. In a way it will be very valuable for us and we can use this thing in our policies, in our developmental journey.

There are certain things that we are required to do beyond the boundaries of our departments, beyond the scope of centre-states. Today, the people of those four departments who have gathered here, in a way their nature of work is such that if the same thing is to be decided by people sitting in Kashmir or by the people sitting in Kanyakumari then the central theme of that decision will be common. It is possible that depending upon the availability of resources there could be some differences. For example, which government in India wouldn't want that our youth participate in sports. I mean that all the Indian states want this thing. If all the states want this thing, can they come together to deliberate on this demographic dividend that is available to us. Today, we tell the world forcefully that we have 800 million youth below the age of 35. India is a young country. 65% people are below the age of 35. Is it not the responsibility of all governments, be it the centre or the states, to think that the country which has plenty of youth capital, what they can do for the country and the world? How should we channelise the power of our youth? What policies should be framed by our governments, what roadmap should be developed so that our youth power can be optimally utilized for the country and the world? We all should start thinking in this direction otherwise even in the previous century we should have seriously thought about these things but even now if we start thinking then these things can take us to very pleasant results. How our human resource should be developed? How our youth power should be identified in the world? How do we want to mould our youth power, how we want to shape them, how we want to go about this? We get happiness whenever we win some award in an international sports competition, and if we don't win then feel that must think about this thing for the next time.

All of us have had student life. We used to think when examinations were drawing near that we will start studying immediately after school- college opens the next year. The first session passes gradually. We again decide in the vacation that I will start study as soon as school opens. Then gradually the exam time comes and we think that this time I will study till late night. If we fall asleep during the night then we think that tomorrow we will wake up early morning for study. We ask our mothers to wake us up early for study. We ourselves keep changing our timetable and keep adjusting ourselves. Keep trying to find ways. Is it not necessary that for sports tournaments we create an institutional arrangement that keeps providing our sportspersons the opportunity to participate in the tournaments? It could be at tehsil level, district level, it could be inter school-college, players will not develop till the time we have regular sporting tournaments. Mere creating infrastructure is not enough, if there is a family which is very conscious, there may be one or two players that will follow the system and they can develop themselves by disciplined lifestyle but till the time we create the environment in the country we can't get good people.

In case of cricket this environment is there to some extent.

People play cricket in every street, every locality and small games keeps getting organized. Players emerge from those games and a very large mechanism has developed but we have so much talent in the games other than cricket as well, we have capable people and talent is also important in international sports in addition to physical fitness. One has to prepare himself/herself as per those rules and regulation. We can take a decision after thoroughly reflecting on these issues, can formulate a scheme and you will see you will get the results in the equal measure.

World over sports is a government run program. It is directly linked to commonman, corporate houses are associated with them. Individual states can identify themselves with particular sports and take advantage of it. Have we ever mapped within our states that there must be one or two districts those will be doing well in football. There will be one or two districts those will be doing well in football or archery. Till the time we map the potential at district level, what kind of infrastructure is available, for which sports we have good coaches and how to develop youth in those sports and if we don't emphasise on these things then it is possible that every kind of sports will be played in every part of the country but we will not be able to get good results from that, that is why we need to change our strategy.

How our youth power can be utilized in nation building? Have we ever thought in that direction? Good quality debate, good leadership quality, their ability to try to figure out the problem of their villages, how we can utilize our youths. Today there is a digital movement going on this country. Youth has a tendency to grasp these things very fast. All of our system that are linked to youth, our organization, government mechanism, can we engage them in this work? You must have seen the Clean India Mission. In some states, in some cities, the youth organisations have given so much strength, so much reputation to the Clean India Program that it has provided a big opportunity to channelise, to mobilize their creativity.

You must have seen that in past some time that local artists and youths have decorated several railway stations. Those old stations got linked with today's people. Railways has not spent any money. They brought their color with them, they have got the talent and they gave a new identity to their railway stations, their villages and if the passengers come then they leave only after seeing the entire station. How should we deploy our youth power in creative work? How to utilize their prowess? We should continuously think in that direction, should keep inventing new-newer schemes for that purpose.

We have institutions like NSS, NCC. Despite that why our youth should lag behind in adventurous things. Why should they not have a desire to lead an adventurous life? Why shouldn't they spend some of their time, vacation time in those areas? Sometimes we see that there is a mentality in our country that only white collar jobs are good rest everything is worthless. When our boys go to the other countries then they don't hesitate in working in hotels during Saturday and Sunday because they see the work culture of that place. How can we develop this feeling, this value, this tradition in our youth to have respect for the manual labour, this thinking that manual labour is not a bad thing, it's not a bad thing fetch your own glass of water? Can our small organizations that are active in this area, can they bring about this change, we need to work in that direction. Our cultural legacy is priceless. We can influence the world we have this kind of cultural legacy. But we could not present it before the world in the way it should have been presented because we have lost confidence in ourselves. How can there be a country in the world that does not take pride in its ancestor, in its traditions, culture and legacy. If we don't take pride ourselves then what will show to the world? There should a feeling of pride for whatever we have, this should be part of our education, part of our youth culture and there should be a constant endeavor to present our cultural heritage as an unique heritage. It will not work if we think that this is the work of some artist groups. This should be part of our society. If we move forward by making it as a part of our society then certainly it will produce results and we should try in that direction.

The countries that have developed tourism, had to develop systems for artificial recreation where the facilities for entertainment were in place, people came from outside, they stayed, the technology was used. We are such people that have thousands of years old things and a sizeable number of people in the world have interest in such things. But it will be possible only when we talk to the world about our cultural heritage with great pride. With the kind of pride with which we talk about Taj Mahal, with the same kind of pride, you take our music, you take our musical instruments, we take the tradition of our instruments, we can take the rhythm of our music, these are wonders for the world. I mean, how we can talk about our heritages, our food, our cuisine, can anyone imagine how many kind of cuisines we have in India? We, we are born in India, if we start having a new food from a new state then our entire life is not enough for it. This is the kind of diversity we have. Have we ever familiarized the world with these diversities? Our country is not like that if there is a Pizza Hut in one corner of the country then there will be similar Pizza Hut two thousand kilometers away; if Pizza is prepared by using a process, then in the corner the same process will be used; if some ingredient are used in one place then the same ingredient will be used in the other place as well. In our country, if you start from South then you start with rice but as you move northward the rice will give way to wheat. These are the diversities that we can present to the world but we have not cared for those things that we have with us. Why not there should be a separate identity for each state?

Till the time we don't develop a unique identity for states, even within states there are regions that can have unique identity. If you visit Himachal, if you go towards Solan then you will come across to sign boards that read that Solan is a Mushroom city. When I was active in Himachal then it was my experience that they have popularized Solan as a Mushroom city. If you visit Surat then the people of Surat have popularized the city as Silk City. We do not make a conscious effort for special and careful branding of our legacies, our areas, our cities. You people are present here, if you discuss then it is possible that some issues will emerge out of it.

Today, tourism is a fast growing sector in the world. It's growth rate is the fastest. The middle class of the world, upper middle class of the world is growing constantly. These people are ready to spend their money outside their countries. A country like India, can we look at the tourism as a target group for our country? What the world needs, what is available in which part of our country, have we ever analysed the psychology of tourist from fifty countries of the world? If there is an European tourist among them then they would like to see these things. Those things are available in this part of our country and we should attract the tourists from Europe, we should connect the two. Neither we have mapped the places in our country that potential, nor have we analysed the liking of global tourists. We have seen that every segment in the world have its own choices and till the time they see the things they like; bird-watchers, if there is anyone in the world that spends the most then these are bird-watchers. Wherever they visit, they will stay there for complete month with their cameras, they will follow every single bird. These are the people who spend heavily. Have we mapped these things?

If you want to see this kind of birds then please visit this state, this region during this season. The bird-watchers clubs of the world know what is for bird-watchers in which corner of India. Have we linked the two? And once you come to know that there are 400 places in India that can be developed as a good destination for bird-watchers then what kind of infrastructure is needed for them? What kind of facilities are required? Do we make effort for this kind of targeted development? If we make effort in the direction of targeted development then we can get big results by spending small amount, we can develop this kind of system.

You people must have seen, those who have just arrived might not have seen, but those who would have come yesterday or today morning they must have seen that what a massive tourist destination can be created in the middle of the desert. It is one of the reasons behind organizing this workshop in the desert of Kachcha to show that if we make efforts then how can we take our things to people. Even the people living in Kachcha were not aware that they have such a big white desert. When this Kachch Ranotsav was started then it in itself becomes a big thing, the business worth 50 to 100 crore rupees is being generated in one district alone, handicraft sells. You see that how the global tourists can be attracted by creating a system. Today, you yourself see this.

We have seen that in our tourist destinations there is no arrangement, no system for determining the language of the sign boards. If more tourists from Russia come to visit Goa then the businessmen of Goa desire to learn the Russian language and you must have seen that the small traders of Goa are able to learn the basic conversation in Russian language. Why? Because maximum number of tourists is coming from Russia and they thought it was imperative for them. But do we try? If more tourists from Europe visit Kullu-Manali then are there sign boards in European languages? We have not done it carefully. And a result of that we are not able to create tourist friendly environment. And due to this thing we are not able to reap due benefits.

You people are sitting in Kutch, Dholavira is some 200-250 kilometers from that place, it's a five thousand year old ancient city, it's of the Mohenjo Daro period. If you have a program to visit Dholavira then you will see that even five thousand years ago there were signage in that city that if you will find these things if you go into this direction, you will find that place after 500 meters, and you will find this if you go left, all these signage are there. It means that even in that period five thousand years ago a lot of people from outside would have been visiting Dholavira that's why signage were required. And Dholavira is considered the first place in the world with signage system. Have we ever thought that there can be some common things for signage in our tourist destinations? Due to which if someone comes from outside then he will know that this is written and it must mean this thing. I will get this thing here.

I have given a small example to develop our tourism in a scientific manner that how should we develop our tourism, even our literature is in which language, if more English speaking people are coming to my tourist destination and if my entire literature is in Hindi or in my local language then I will not be able to market despite huge amount. Our websites, we want to develop our websites for tourist destinations but most of the time they are in our own languages and do we develop our websites in their language if we want to tap the global market. And I don't believe that this requires a lot of money.

Once we decide that we need to encourage tourism then you will see that it will happen. Sometimes it's a cause of big concern that why tourists don't come? Someone said because of lack of infrastructure. Why tourists don't come if there is no infrastructure? It's such a tricky question that you need to have courage to get out of this dilemma.

People from HRD ministry are also sitting here. Can state governments decide this thing? Suppose the states decide this thing that if the students of a class are required for tourism once a year then they will visit different places of their villages. If they reach this age group then they will go to Tehsil, if they reach this standard then they will visit the district, in that standard they will visit the state and if we set up this kind of things for them then they would gradually come to know that what is there in their village, in their Tehsil, in their district. By the time they reach to the 10th standard he would know all these things. We don't do these things, in our country if the student is in the fifth class but his teacher has not seen Udaipur then the teacher will take the students to Udaipur. He will not see what is there in the village.

There should be this understanding between our tourism ministry and our HRD ministry. Suppose that we decide that there are 10 destinations in our states that should be developed as tourist destination. All of you should collectively decide. You know that there is no hotel, no restaurant and no arrangement for food in those 10 places but it's a good destination. Have you ever thought that you will first mobilize the resources of your own state? We should decide that all of our universities if they want to arrange a visit for students as a tourist then they must cover these 10 destinations within the state, will have to stay for two nights. That expenditure will be there as a tourist but in a way it will be a kind of investment.

Suppose that every day 10 buses of college students ply on a road and the people of that village see that people have started coming; now we should open the shops for selling roasted grams, snacks, start the work of providing water if it is required. All this will develop gradually. But we should start sending our tourists before developing a destination. And every state of India should select 5 destination, I'm not asking for more, just 5 destinations and they should aim to develop them to the international level and in the first two-three years it doesn't matter if someone comes or not but at least students from the state should start visiting the place then the place will start developing automatically and tourists will start visiting that destination.

This desert of Kutch where you people are sitting, initially people from Gujarat itself started to visit it, at best people from Mumbai started to come but today online bookings are made a year in advance. Initially we have to make efforts like this then only the required infrastructure for the tourist destination is being determined and thereafter we should think of human resource. This is our misfortune that there is no course for the skill development of a guide, there is no course for development of human resource for the tourist destinations or religious places visited by the tourists.

Why not prepare the youth of that city to work as guide, why not arrange special training for them? Why not there be competition among them? Why not there be a costume, uniform for them and guide should be in that uniform and why not he should have an identity card? Unless we bring this kind of professionalism we cannot develop our tourism sector.

India will have to focus on two kind tourism for development; one the traditional tourist; every son has this desire to take his parents for taking a dip in the river Ganges; every son has desire to take his parents to on a pilgrim of Char Dham; every son has this desire to take his parents on a pilgrim to Lord Shiva's place, to Lord Ganesha's place, this is naturally there. This kind of tourists will go on pilgrim in any case, they will go if there is arrangement or even if it is difficult.

These 1.25 billion countrymen are a big market in themselves. Have we ever addressed them? And these 1.25 billion people those who naturally want to visit the holy places and if we scientifically develop infrastructure there then it can also become a reason for attraction of global tourists.

The other category of tourists is those who will come from abroad, who they want to visit our destinations. They will have interest in beach tourism, in adventure tourism, in sports tourism, they might want to visit snow clad mountains of Himalayas or they might be interested in visiting Taj Mahal or Qutub Minar, they are of a different category. As long as we don't think in the direction to provide facilities to our tourists till then we can't strengthen our tourism sector.

All of you are sitting here. A program is perhaps going to be discussed there - 'Ek Bharat, Shreshtha Bharat'. Officers from HRD Ministry are also present there. We need give special attention to the programs like 'Ek Bharat, Shreshtha Bharat' to take our country forward. What happened! We told people either this or that. In such a large country this kind of thing doesn't work. In our country if a boy knows the French Language then we mention this thing with pride that our neighbour's son knows French; one of our children knows Spanish but we do not develop this kind of atmosphere in our country that a boy from Haryana should learn Telugu, a student from Gujarat should have a desire to learn Malayalam and if knows Malayalam then he should take pride in it.

We don't take pride in our country's heritage. The country which has more than 100 languages, more than 1,700 dialects, how rich that country is? Have we ever thought to connect our young generation with our this heritage? Sometimes we are aware what is there in the other country, but we are not aware about what is there in our states or our country. India is such a large country, we should thoroughly familiarize our future generations with our country, should connect them thoroughly and for that purpose this program of 'Ek Bharat, Shreshtha Bharat' was launched. In the initial stage two states enter in to an MoU with each other and the effort is how those two states can develop their relations. We do it with other states of the world, other cities of the world but we don't do it within our own country. For example, as Haryana has done it with Telangana. Why not youth from Haryana should visit Telangana as a tourist throughout the year? Why not youth from Telangana should visit Haryana as a tourist throughout the year? The traditional sports of Haryana, the traditional sports Telangana, why not arrange sporting events of each other's games in the other state? Why not organize Telugu Film Festival in Haryana? Why not organize Haryana's Film Festival in Telugu (Telangana)? Why not organize the Telugu Play Festival in Haryana? Why not organize Haryana Film Festival in Telangana? We can easily teach 100 sentences of Telugu to the children of Haryana, the 100 sentences of basic conversation. We can teach the children of Telangana 100 words Haryanvi or Hindi.

You see, in our country, every 8th or 10th person in a state can speak the language of some other state without much effort. If someone comes, and he sees that the person of Tamil Nadu has come then he would start by saying 'Vanakkam'. He immediately starts like this. That is why this my request to states is to come forward for this program - Ek Bharat, Shreshtha Bharat (One India, Excellent India). Be it HRD Ministry or be it Yuvak Seva and Sanskritik Brihuti, or be culture department or tourism department, these departments can play very important role catalytic agents.

You, you see that our ministry of external affairs has started a quiz competition for overseas Indians spread throughout the world. The second-third generation of overseas Indians only that their ancestors were from India but they don't know what is India. So they started an online quiz competition the last year. Last year, the five thousand kids who are from the families of Indian origin and are based in the different countries of the world, but they were not born here nor they ever came to India; these kids participated in this competition and tried to gather information about India and a very good program to award them was conducted on the second October.

Can we organize an online quiz competition for different states of our country? If Gujarat has entered into an MoU with Chhattisgarh then the kids of Chhattisgarh should answer the five thousand questions about Gujarat in the quiz competition, and kids of Gujarat should answer the five thousand questions about Chhattisgarh like how many districts are there, how many caste are there, what kind of languages, food and attire is there, which thing is where. You will see a massive integration will take place naturally. And if a kid gradually participates in 10 such competitions then how many things he would know about the country. I would like all the states to develop a separate quiz bank about, it should have, 2, 5 or 7 thousand questions and answers in it, and if possible the questions should be linked with relevant photographs, they should prepare an online platform and they should enter into MoUs with others and also conduct speech competition between their kids.

These days, we have asked the police contingents for 15th August and 26 January that if there is a parade on the 26th January then the police contingent from a state should visit the other state. The other state will be conducting parade, it will have its own police contingent for the parade. These are the things that bring us closer. These things can be done easily and we are emphasizing on them. We should make effort to make Ek Bharat, Shreshtha Bharat program a success. And India is full of so much diversity, it is such a large country, it is such a diverse country that if we want to gain knowledge about our country then one life is not enough for this task and we will be happy to learn about every new thing.

As I have asked about one thing in this program - Ek Bharat, Shresthta Bharat, suppose if Haryana is with Telangana then can five songs of Telugu language be memorized? Can singing of five songs be learnt? Can people of Telangana learn to sing five songs of Haryana? And this will be fun, this will be pleasure for them and they will not have to make any extra effort. In a natural way we should learn the diversity of the country and it will strengthen the tourism.

It's a work to re-energize our youth power. It's an opportunity to take India to new heights by integrating it. We can see this thing here even if this is a small thing but it can bring about big changes. So you people are going to deliberate here for three days, you have come from the distant places, I hope that you people, particularly the members of council of ministers; they will certainly deliberate and provide the benefit of their experience, their vision to all the states. And when you people visit the desert in the evening, this land is very close to my heart, I'd like to give one advice to you people, you must go deep inside the desert, as far as permitted by the security forces, however, if it is possible then you should move away your colleagues and stand alone for 10 minutes at some distance, completely alone, you should experience that vast area, the blue sky, that white landscape; this is a very rare experience in life. However, if you just keep chatting with friends then you can't experience this thing. For 15-20 minutes, all of you should spontaneously move away from each other by 20-25 steps, you all will experience a new thing and later you will inevitably share your experience with others. This is such a remote location that 10 years ago if someone wanted to visit it then it used to take 3-4 hours in the desert, today you must have reached within 50-60 minutes.

You have seen how dramatically things change after an earthquake. And this is the last village of India where you people are sitting. There is no inhabitation beyond that and you people are deliberating about India's future in the last corner of this village. You are discussing how to develop India's tourism sector. You are going to finish this discussion by making a resolve to inspire the

young generation of the country.

I'm confident that your deliberation will play a very positive role in near future in the policy making. I convey my best wishes to you people on this occasion. I'm going to keep a close watch on the things discussed by you in the next two-three days as this topic is very close to my heart.

And there is a great potential in this sector and we need to develop it. So I'm going to take full advantage of your hard work, I want to get the maximum benefit out of it, I believe that you would certainly do this thing to provide maximum benefit to me. You people keep doing things for the benefit of the country but your experience will enhance my knowledge therefore I'll wait for it.

I'm also waiting for that elixir that will come out of your deliberations during the next three days. My best wishes to all of you. I congratulate Vijay Rupani Ji and his team because there is so much tourist rush in his area and arranging this conference, providing tents etc for this event, in the middle of all these things is bit difficult economically, but he is managing it, but due to this thing the people from all over the country have come here, they will also give publicity to your festival Ranotsava. It's very much possible that due to this thing more and more people may start coming from their area, in a way that also is an investment for you. So I congratulate the government of Gujarat.

Thank you.

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(Release ID: 1501088) Visitor Counter : 119

