



Text of PM's Opening Remarks at the Video Conference with Heads of Government from South Asian Nations, to mark the launch of the South Asia Satellite

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His Excellency President Ashraf Ghani of Afghanistan,
Her Excellency Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina of Bangladesh,
His Excellency Prime Minister Tshering Tobgay of Bhutan,
His Excellency President Abdulla Yameen of Maldives,
His Excellency Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal of Nepal,
His Excellency President Maithripala Sirisena

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Namaskar!

Excellencies,

Today is a historic day for South Asia. A day without precedence. Two years ago, India made a promise.

A promise to extend the advanced space technology for the cause of growth and prosperity of our brothers and sisters in South Asia.

The successful launch of the South Asia Satellite marks the fulfilment of that. With this launch we have started a journey to build the most advanced frontier of our partnership.

With its position high in the sky, this symbol of South Asian cooperation would meet the aspirations of economic progress of more than one-and-a-half billion people in our region. And, extend our close links into Outer Space.

Excellencies

I am immensely grateful to my fellow leaders from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal, Maldives and Sri Lanka for joining me today to celebrate this launch.

I also deeply appreciate the strong and valuable support extended by your governments, without which this project would not have been possible. Our coming together is a sign of our unshakeable resolve to place the needs of our peoples in the forefront.

It shows that our collective choices for our citizens will bring us together for: cooperation, not conflict; development, not destruction; and prosperity not poverty.

Excellencies

This is first of its kind project in South Asia. And, through this, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and India will together achieve:

effective communication;
better governance
better banking and
better education in remote areas;
more predictable weather forecasting and efficient resource mapping;
linking people with top end medical services through tele-medicine and
a quick response to natural disasters.

Space technology will touch the lives of our people in the region.

The satellite would provide services specific to individual countries as per their own needs and priorities, as also common services.

In achieving this goal, I congratulate the space science fraternity of India, and in particular the Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO).

The ISRO team has led from the front in developing the South Asia Satellite as per the regions' requirements, and flawlessly launching it.

Excellencies

As Goverments, our most important task is to secure growth, development and peace for our people and communities.

And, I am convinced that when we join hands and mutually share the fruits of knowledge, technology and growth, we can speed up our development and prosperity.

I thank you all for your presence. And, congratulate you once again in our shared success!

Thank you; Thank you very much.

AKT/AK

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