



English rendering of the text of PM's address at "Bhumi Pujan" for redevelopment of Gandhinagar Railway Station Complex, Gujarat on 09 January, 2017

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Dear brothers and sisters,

In our country, Railways is inseparable from common man. It has been a support for the poorest of the poor. Unfortunately, the Railways has been left to its destiny. In the last 30 years, when there were coalition governments in Delhi, the coalition partners only supported the government when they were allocated the Railway ministry. In a way, the Railway ministry was used as a dole for formation of coalition governments. It's a bitter truth. As a result of it whosoever from any political party held the Railway Ministry was least bothered about Railways. I don't have to say what his concerns have been.

This government has accorded priority to Railways, railways should be expanded; should be developed, should become modern and how it could bring about qualitative change in the life of the common man? If you have followed the working of Railways in the last two and a half years then you would be aware that the railway budget has been doubled, it's not a small thing. Such a huge fund has been allocated for the Railways because it is being used by the poorest of the poor. Earlier the doubling of track of a few kilometers was done in a day, now we have been doing two or three times more than that. Earlier the gauge conversion from meter gauge to broad gauge, from narrow gauge to broad gauge, this work was accorded the last priority, now it has been given the primacy. We have been doing it many more times than what was done earlier. If the Railway uses diesel engine, if it uses coal fired engines then question of environment protection arises, if it uses diesel engine then diesel is required to be imported from abroad. How to protect environment; how to save foreign reserves; how to rapidly move Railways from diesel to electrification; today railway tracks have been electrified at a very large scale and at a fast pace and electric rail engines have been manufactured. In the history of independent India, the biggest Foreign Direct Investment has come in the Railway sector. Investment is coming for setting up two large Loco Engineering manufacturing units which will build engines and these engines will speed up the entire rail network.

In addition to all these things, we have given emphasis to cleanliness and providing facilities in Railways; bio-toilet; otherwise, we all know that railway tracks at Railway stations were full of filth. It's a huge expenditure, we have worked in that direction very fast, emphasized on it, it's a big expenditure. Results may not be visible immediately but it will really help in the long run.

We have emphasized, we have tried from the point of view of hygiene, from the point of view of health. How to increase the speed of rails? Otherwise, these things were very common that rail was moving, it was moving, people could alight from it and then they could board again; all these things can be changed. We have been working in special mission mode that how to improve, how to modify the existing system to increase the speed of trains. We have been changing the technology, associating people from all over the world from the point of view of technology so that safety which a big cause of concern and challenge as well.

There is so much technological advancement in the world that Railway journeys can be made safer. We have been moving forward in that direction by spending huge amount of money to make the coaches safer, we have been moving forward to address those concerns, to create those systems. Freight Corridor, on an average 70% of the world cargo is moved through railways and 30% by road. India is the only country where 70-80% cargo is moved by road and only 15-20% is moved by Railways. And it is very costly if the cargo is moved by road. If someone thinks that the salt produced in Gujarat is to be transported to Jammu and Kashmir and that too by road then it will become so costly that no one could purchase it. And therefore if more cargo is transported by the Railways goods will become cheaper for the poor. That's why we have been working in the direction of increasing the capacity to transport cargo.

I have assigned a task to the Railways soon after joining the government, I told them that the Railway container that weighs around 16 ton, could hardly carry two-three ton salt. I asked them can we reduce the weight of the Railway container to 6 ton from present 16 ton? If its weight can be reduced to 6 ton then it can carry 12 ton salt then wherever the salt is supplied it will become almost free and salt producers can supply their salt very fast. Railways has prepared a design of container for transporting salt so that its weight could be reduced. I mean that railway is working in a very detailed manner to transform everything.

And I am confident that Railways will rapidly transform itself. Not only the facilities for common man will be increased but the railways will also reach the remotest corners of the country, it will connect the Indian ports, it will connect the Indian mines, it will connect all the users and it will also connect economically. Railway stations are located in the heart of cities. That land is extremely valuable but the space above the building is not being used. It's common sense that even if the train passes through on the ground but you can construct 10 floors, 25 floors, you can construct malls, theater, hotels and markets, these things will be operational over the train tracks, trains will continue to pass beneath the. There will dual use of the place, income of railways will be supplemented and investors will come to invest. We have successfully implemented this thing Gujarat, we developed bus stations on the model of public private partnership. Today, if the poorest of the poor gets the same facilities, that are available to rich people at the airports, when he visits the bus station; we have shown this thing in Gujarat.

In the coming days, thousands of railway stations can be developed in this manner. You would remember that the day I laid the foundation stone for Mahatma temple, it was the golden jubilee year of Gujarat in 2010; and while speaking at this place on the first May I had said that I can clearly see that the foundation that is laid for Mahatma Mandir here there will be a day when the eminent people of the world would be discussing the world peace here.

We have constructed a Mahatma Temple associated with the name of Mahatma Gandhi, we constructed it so fast but it requires those facilities that are required for the stay of the world's eminent persons, the hotel that is being constructed at the railway station, people staying in it will naturally use the convention centre of Mahatma Temple; they will stay here and have meetings and exhibitions will be organized at the helipad ground. In a way, I see the potential of this entire corridor of railway, Mahatma temple, the area of helipad, all this area become the magnetic centre for business activity of India. And therefore the infrastructure that is created at this place, the trains were passing through anyway but the land was lying unused but now it can be used in a manner that Mahatma Temple can be kept engaged for 300 days out 365 days, the clear possibility of this thing is emerging. Several global programs is to be organized and a possibility is emerging for them to be linked with it and it also becomes a basis for the development of railways.

This is the country's first project beginning in Gandhinagar today. In the coming days, it will be taken forward in many other places in the country. Our Suresh Prabhu Ji has provided Wi-Fi facility at railway stations. The work has been done to realize the dream of Digital India. Some people think that India is a country of poor people, what would they know, but you would be surprised to know that 60-70% railway travelers book their ticket online, sixty seventy percent purchase ticket online this is the strength of India.

An ordinary person who undertakes railway journey today books his ticket online Because of Wi-Fi people in India as well as across the world can analyse. When some Google employees came on a visit to India they were discussing that the Wi-Fi facility available at the railway stations in India perhaps is the highest in the world. And as a result of that the students who want to read and study online, those who download things for education, they try to reach railway station and use free internet on their laptops and their computers. Therefore, in the last two and a half years Indian railways has set the example

of how one thing can bring about changes by accomplishing this thing. Under that scheme today a project is beginning in Gujarat that will be useful for the entire country, it will be extended to other cities of the country in the coming days to take railways to new heights, to make railways a medium for providing facilities to common man and it is the railways that lends progress and speed to the nation.

Today I feel a sense of a great pride and satisfaction while dedicating this thing to the people of Gujarat, to the people of Gandhinagar on the eve of Vibrant Summit.

Thank you very much.

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