



Preliminary text of English rendering of Prime Minister's speech at the public meeting in Rameswaram, Tamil Nadu (27 July, 2017)

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Rameshwaram is the land which has shown the way to the spiritual life of the country as a light house for thousands of years. And in this century Rameshwaram will also be known for one more reason - for providing this country a diligent scientist, a motivational teacher, an intelligent thinker and a great President in the form of Abdul Kalam ji.

It is a great honour for me to touch this sacred soil of Rameswaram. As home to one of 12 Jyotirlingas of our country Rameswaram is not only a religious center. Rameswaram is also a center of deep spiritual knowledge a ज्ञान पुंज . A place that was also visited by Swami Vivekanand on his return from the United States in 1897. And it is this sacred land that gave to India one of its most famous sons Dr APJ Abdul Kalam. In his actions and thoughts Dr Kalam always reflected the simplicity, depth and calmness of Rameswaram.

It is a very emotional moment for me to have come to Rameshwaram on the death anniversary of Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam. Last year, we had made a resolution and had promised you that in the memory of Dr. Kalam, a memorial will be built in Rameshwaram. I am happy that this resolution has been fulfilled today.

The Defense Research & Development Organization (DRDO) has prepared this memorial in a very short span of time. This memorial will inspire the present and the future generations of the country.

Last year, I had formed a committee under the Chairmanship of Mr. Venkaiah Naidu to whom I had assigned the task to DRDO and the Tamil Nadu government for building such a monument on this land which should encourage the young generation of this country. Today I saw the monument and I feel proud that even within a span of such a short time, a grand memorial with the innovative ideas and imagination, perfectly in line with Dr. Abdul kalam's thoughts, work, life, ideal, resolution has been created. I congratulate Venkaiah ji and his entire team, the Tamil Nadu Government, all the Departments of the Government of India and DRDO for building such a monument.

You would be surprised if any work in our country is completed on time as per our imagination. Then the citizens are surprised that can the government do such a thing?

But this is possible because today we have a government in Delhi which is committed to accomplish the tasks assigned by the people of our country. This government has transformed the entire work culture and has successfully encouraged a time-bound work culture.

However, we should not forget that all the work was not done merely by the government, money, planning or power. I would like to share another secret behind the success of this monument which will make 125 Crore people of this country feel proud of. And that secret ingredient, apart from the government, money, planning and focussed work is manifest in the form of those artisans, labourers, artists and architects who came from every corner of the country. People from every corner of India were engaged in this work. The labourers who were engaged in this work had been working as per the government norms from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Then they used to rest for one hour from 5 to 6 p.m., had their evening tea, and then used to do work for extra time from 6 pm. till 8 o'clock. And they said that they would not charge for overtime works between 6 to 8pm. This indeed is their tribute to Abdul Kalam Ji in the form of sheer hard work and sweat. They said, "we would pay our tribute to him this way".

I bow to all my poor labourers who have fulfilled this sacred task with this devotion. These workers, these craftsmen have done a great job and I urge all of you present here to applaud for them and give an standing ovation to them.

This memorial for Abdul Kalam ji in Rameshwaram is an example of the fact that whenever a labourer's heart fills with the spirit of patriotism, great accomplishments are achieved. I am missing Amma here, and can feel the void. If Amma was here today, in our midst, she would have been very happy to see the work done by the labourers and would have extended her good wishes. She is a leader we all remember. I believe her soul will continue to shower blessings for Tamil Nadu's bright future.

Today, I want to request the people of the country from this holy land of Rameshwaram. People from every corner of India come to visit Rameshwaram. I request the tour operators, the visitors of Rameshwaram, and the young generation of the country that whenever you visit Rameshwaram, please visit this memorial for Abdul Kalam ji and inspire the new generation. You must definitely come for this inspirational pilgrimage.

Today's program is in a way panchamrit or laden with 5-nectars I have had the opportunity of attending these five programs on the death anniversary of Abdul Kalam - Monument of Abdul Kalam ji, Rail, Road, Earth, and the sea. Today, our fishermen take small boats to the sea. They are often unaware of the fact that they are on the Indian side of the border or have crossed it and suffer a lot. The Central Government under the Prime Minister's Blue Revolution Scheme will help the fishermen. Under our scheme, our fellow villagers will get loan from the government, grant, and subsidy. And they have received big trawlers so that they can go for fishing in the deep sea. It has begun today and some fishermen have received cheques from me.

Rameshwar's land is also associated with Lord Ramchandra ji. And today I am happy that I got an opportunity to inaugurate the railroad Rameshwaram to Ayodhya, Shradhha Setu, a railway train linking Ayodhya, the birthplace of Lord Rama. In the same way, the way to Dhanushkodi, those who want to go to see the Ram Sethu, who want to move through the sea route, they have completed the work of an important road, and got an opportunity to devote to the countrymen today.

And today this is the land of Rameswaram, where in 1897, Swami Vivekanand ji landed after winning accolades abroad by enlightening them about India. The famous Vivekananda memorial is nearby and I have learnt that the some NGOs in collaboration with the district collectorate have taken the lead in making Rameswaram green. My congratulations to all the organizations working for Rameswaram's future, especially the the Vivekananda Kendra.

The Indian Ocean and seven thousand five hundred kilometers long coastal line of India is full of investment potential. Government of India has initiated the Sagarmala Project keeping it in mind. The objective of this project is to transform India's logistics sector by taking advantage of the country's coastline. We are trying to reduce the logistics cost of trade and imports and exports under the Sagarmala project. We are trying to bring about a massive change in the lives of people living in the coastal areas through this program.

You would be happy to note that DRDO has constructed this monument as a tribute to Abdul Kalam Ji. In the same manner DRDO is a very important for us working in the field of our military prowess. The organization also undertakes welfare works for the people like this train which starts the journey from here today. It is remarkable that in this train Shraddha Setu, from Rameshwaram to Ayodhya, all the toilets of this train are Bio Toilets. This train, Shraddha Setu, will give a boost to our mission of clean India.

Friends, if Dr. Kalam has inspired someone the most, it is the youth of our country. Today's youth want to build up on his or her own strength. Government of India has started programs like Startup India, Standup India so that the youth can realize their dreams. Training centres and skill development centres have been opened in every district of the country for the skill development of youth. Centre has started Mudra Scheme so that the youth do not have to face the problem of capital for starting their own enterprise. Under the Mudra Scheme, loans worth more than 4 lakh crore rupees has been disbursed to 8 crore accounts holders so that they can choose their path in life and progress. And, I'm happy that among the beneficiaries more than one crore people are from Tamil Nadu alone. This figure shows the enthusiasm and inclination of the youth of Tamil Nadu towards the self employment.

Centre is focusing on the development of infrastructure in the state. New India is not possible without a New Tamil Nadu. That's why the state government has been provided every help for the development of basic facilities. And I'm grateful to the chief minister of Tamil Nadu as he has publicly welcomed and thanked the central government for the programs which have benefitted the people of Tamil Nadu, I thank you for him for this cooperation as well.

Chennai, Koimbatour, Madurai, Tanjavur, all these big cities are among the ten cities in the state which have been selected for the Smart City Mission. Central government has released over Rs. 900 crore rupees for these cities; nearly one thousand crore rupees. 33 cities of Tamil Nadu have been included in the Amrit Mission. In addition the centre has approved Rs.4700 crores for Tamil Nadu. This money will be used in strengthening the facilities like electricity, water, sewage, cleaning and gardens in those 33 cities.

This scheme will immensely benefit Rameshwaram and as well as the 33 other cities including Madurai, Tutikorin, Tirunveli and Nagar Coil. Central government has also approved the expansion of the first phase of Chennai Metro at a cost of nearly 4,000 crore rupees. Besides the centre has released nearly 18,000 crore rupees in the last three years for the rural roads in Tamil Nadu, for the expansion of self-help-groups, for the skill development of rural youth.

I'd like to make an appeal to the people and the Tamilnadu government. There is a competition among all the cities under the Clean India Mission, there is a competition to declare itself free from open defecation before others. And I'm hopeful that Tamil Nadu will not lag behind in this race and it will strive to achieve this goal..

Similarly the state government feels that that more than 8 lakh poor families require homes This demand can be met through the Prime Minister Urban Housing Scheme. I'd appeal to the state government to send the proposal, fast track the process of construction of the approved houses.

Dr. Abdul Kalam continued to work throughout his life to realize the dream of a developed India. He always continued to inspire more than 1.25 billion citizens for achieving this goal. This inspiration is going to help us realize the dream of New India by 2022 when India will complete 75 years of its independence.

Our country will celebrate 75 years of its independence in 2022. Every effort by us to fulfill the dreams of our freedom fighters, who sacrificed their lives for the country's independence, will be a tribute to Dr. Kalam.

And today, when I'm in Rameshwaram, I am reminded of the efforts made by the people here. Ramayana tells us a story of a little squirrel, a little squirrel of Rameshwaram that helped in building Ram-Setu. And in the same manner, the squirrel belonged to Rameshwaram and therefore *the squirrel can be his parasol*. Ramayana Dil Anilpola. Eight Hundred and Twenty Five crore Indians take just one step each, India will march hundred twenty five crore steps ahead.

From one end of the country to the other, Rameshwaram, the ocean begins here; and such a massive crowd reflects that how much respect you had for Dr. Abdul Kalam and how you want to dedicate yourself for the bright future of the country. I can see this thing very clearly. Once again I bow down to this massive crowd. I respectfully offer tributes to Abdul Kalam Ji and also to late Amma.

Thank you very much to all of you.

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