



# English rendering of the text of PM's address in the 'public meeting' at the ground-breaking ceremony of India's first High Speed Rail project in Ahmedabad

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All the dignitaries from Japan and all the dignitaries present here on this historic occasion,

I once again very warmly welcome my close friend Mr. Abe San in India, especially on the land of Gujarat.

And I wish to congratulate to all of you. I express my gratitude to all the people of Gujarat for according a very warm welcome, for the respect given by them to a world leader, to the Prime Minister of Japan, to the best friend of India, to the best friend of mine, for the yesterday's hospitality and atmosphere.

Friends, no country can ever move ahead with half-hearted resolve, with constrained dreams. Expansion of dreams alone has the capability to decide the flight of a country, the flight of a society or the flight of an individual. This is a New India and the vastness of its dreams, the vastness of its flight is infinite, it has unlimited will power.

Today, India has taken a very big, an extremely important step in the direction of realizing an old dream. I congratulate, I convey my best wishes to 1.25 billion countrymen on the occasion of the ground breaking ceremony of Mumbai-Ahmadabad High-speed Rail Corridor. Bullet Train Project is such a project that it will bring speedy results along with high speed, rapid progress and fast technology. This is both convenience and safety, Which will bring both - employment as well as speed. This is both human friendly and eco-friendly. Today is a historic day for the relations of Japan and India and it is equally an emotional occasion as well. A good friend is always above the limits of time and boundaries and Japan has demonstrated this thing that how close a friend of India it is which is beyond the time and boundaries. The first High-speed Rail Project between Mumbai and Ahmadabad is a good example, it is a good symbol of the strengthening of bilateral relations. If the ground breaking ceremony of this project is taking place today within such a short span of time then the biggest credit for this thing goes to my best friend Mr. Abe San. By taking personal interest, Mr. Shinzo Abe ensured that there should not be any hurdles in this project. Friends, growth of human civilization is very closely linked with the development of the means of transportation, if we take a closer look at Asian civilization then we will find that at that time villages, cities and people used to settle on the river banks and these were the regions that used to become the hub of development; after that roads became a medium for development and the cities used to develop from wherever highways were passing through. And now the next generation of growth will only take place near the high-speed corridors.

Friends, transport system, are it railways or be it waterways or be it air corridors, plays an extremely important role in the development of a country. This transportation system becomes the foundation for connectivity in the country and connectivity benefits the people in several ways, in various ways. Those who are familiar with the history of America, today the entire world knows in the history of America that how a new era of economic progress was started in America after the development of railways. Just a while ago, our friend Abe San told us about the situation of Japan after World War II. What a terrible life it was, what kind of poverty was there? But Bullet Train was started in Japan in 1964 and then this technology gradually spread to the fifteen countries of the world and it transformed the economy of Japan. Today, its shadow can be seen from Europe to China. High-Speed Railways has played an extremely important role in bringing about not only economic changes but also in bringing about social changes in these countries. The time has changed a lot since then, requirements have changed. And therefore it's imperative to bring about changes in our approach. Small attempts have been made with the time. New things have been added. However, now is not the time to move slowly. Time doesn't wait much. The Technology that had not changed in the last hundred years, what it has changed in the last 25 years. If the changes are taking place so rapidly then today our emphasis should go beyond the connectivity to high speed connectivity, this is our priority and our emphasis is on this. High-speed connectivity will increase the speed and reduce the distance and it will open new avenues for the economic progress. Friends, there is a direct relation between the productivity and that country's economic progress, growth will happen when productivity is there. Our emphasis is on more productivity with high-speed connectivity.

Friends, today on this occasion, I'd like to especially praise one more aspect of Japan's friendship. When we Indian, particularly we Gujarati's and Ahmadabad's, go out to buy something, when it comes to the selling then we weigh everything, then we account for every single penny. We continuously analyses both the profit and loss. When we go out to purchase an ordinary bike and if we borrow money from a bank then we will knock the doors of ten banks. We will visit every bank at least ten times and we minutely calculate that who will give the loan on low interest. Some bank would offer it for 8% and some other might offer the loan on 9% and then again we calculate, we might try to figure out as well that if I purchase the bike at this interest rate then what will be the final cost of my bike at the time of settlement of the loan with interest, and for how many years? We see these things very minutely and we visit the bank so many times seeking the reduction that even a bank employee would get tired. I can't borrow on 8% or 9% please reduce the interest rate a bit. And we celebrate even if someone reduces the interest rate by just half a per cent. And we know this thing very well and perhaps Ahmadabad's would know it extremely well. Friends, just imagine, no one can get a friend; no one can get a bank like India has got a friend like Abe San, as India has got a friend like Japan. If someone offers an interest free loan and repay it not in ten or twenty years but repay it in fifty years. So will anyone believe this thing? People don't get this kind of bank but India has got such a friend that has decided to lend eighty eight thousand crore rupees at the interest rate of just 0.1% for this bullet train.

I'm surprised when I was in Gujarat and when I used to talk about the bullet train then it was asked to me: Modi talks that why should we bring bullet train, when will he bring it, when will he do it, when will he bring it? And when I have started to bring it then they are asking: why am I bringing it? Brothers and sisters this bullet train is a very big gift of Japan to India and in a way this entire project is being built at no cost. And once again I express my gratitude to Japan which has come forward, which has joined in to support this project along with providing technology and economic assistance for it.

Brothers and sisters, this high-speed railway system will not only reduce the distance between the two places but the people of the cities located at a distance of 500 kilometer will also come closer to each other and therefore I would say that this train will travel from Amaroo Ahmadabad to Amchi Mumbai. When this project will be complete then the distance between Mumbai to Ahmadabad will be covered within two-three hours.

If we compare this thing with the air travel then one can reach Mumbai in less than half of the time by using this high-speed rail than what is required for travelling from here to the airport, in completion of formalities there and also the time required for going home or your office from the airport.

What a big change it will bring about, you can imagine this thing. How much time it will save for the people? It will also reduce the number of thousands of vehicle plying on the Mumbai-Ahmadabad road and it will also have a positive impact on environment and saving of fuel will help in saving the foreign reserves as we are required to import all the fuel from abroad.

With this project, a new economic system is also going to be developed on the Mumbai-Ahmadabad route. In a way, the entire area between the two cities will be converted into a single economic zone. High-Speed Corridor will not only speed-up traffic, it will also boost trade, the interaction between different areas will also increase and whether it is transfer of manpower or transportation of goods, it will make them both simple and easy. This will also lead to the development of the country and as I said earlier, the country will attain a new speed.

There is a notion that whatever new technology comes, it only comes for the rich, whereas experience is something else. If technology is used for the empowerment of the poor, then we can win the fight against poverty very quickly and therefore our aim is to make maximum use of this technology to make it so affordable that it becomes connected to the lives of poor of this country. I believe that technology is beneficial only when a country's ordinary residents can use it well. Today, when we have been bringing in new and highly advanced technologies in the railways, we are striving that the common man of the country should also get the benefits of new technology. Railways will benefit from the technology transfer during this project. It will benefit the technicians, vendors and manufacturers of this area and on the other hand, the railway network that we have, it will have to be modernized and will get benefit from this thing.

Friends, we may be getting technology from Japan but most of the resources for the bullet train will be mobilized in India. And therefore our industries will have to produce world class equipments and also supply them on time. We will have to place emphasis on 'zero defect, zero effect' manufacturing. This will also reinforce 'Make in India' program. This project is also bringing in thousands of direct and indirect employment opportunities with it.

Friends, an integrated transport system in the country is required for a 'New India'. It is a dream of 'New India'. And, therefore, we are focusing on Feature Proofing of the country so that infrastructure can be built according to the future generations. Whether it is railways, highways, waterways or the airways, we have stressed equally on infrastructure in all areas and we have been moving forward in these areas at an unprecedented speed. We are building roads at a much faster pace than before. Benefits of GST can also be seen in the country's transport system; daily distance traveled by trucks has increased by 30 percent. Earlier if a truck carrying goods used to travel 200 kilometers a day, then after the implementation of GST and after removal of check-post troubles, today, the same truck travels more than 250 kilometers in a day instead of 200 kilometers, so a 30 percent increase in speed of the economy is possible due to the implementation of GST alone and therefore there is going to be a possibility of people getting cheaper goods.

The government is committed towards developing waterways as an environmentally friendly mode of transport. Moving forward in this direction, we are working towards developing 106 excess (overflowing) rivers in the form of national waterways. Aviation sector is also bringing new prospects in India. In the last three years, the number of people traveling on airplanes i.e. number of domestic flyers has increased by about three crore passengers. We have created national aviation policy for the first time to strengthen the aviation sector. Lives of the middle class people will be changed with the help of Udan Yojana (Flying Scheme). Under this scheme, 70 small towns of the country are being inter-linked so that the common citizens of the country can sometimes take advantage of affordable air services.

Equal attention is being given to both, on improving the existing railway system and on construction of a new railway network on the basis of modern technology. We have expedited the work of laying of railway tracks, doubling of railway tracks, its electrification and today the work is being done at a faster pace than ever before. The kind of investment that the government is currently making in the railways, it has never been done before. Along with the increase in the investment, now the emphasis is on completing those projects which have been stuck for decades. Indian government is constantly working to increase the capacity of Indian Railways and facilitate freight movement.

Western Dedicated Freight Corridor is being built from Jawaharlal Port in Mumbai to Dadri in Uttar Pradesh. Similarly, the Eastern Dedicated Freight Corridor is being constructed from Kolkata to Ludhiana. We are trying to complete these projects in the next three to three-and-a-half years. Congestion will be reduced after completion of these projects and we will save time for passenger trains and the capacity of railways will also increase.

Friends, High-Speed Rail Project are an integral part of the vision of making a modern railway. I am very happy that today we have performed its ground-breaking ceremony. And my dear brothers and sisters, my dear countrymen, today ground-breaking has been done. This is the 70th year of our independence; we are celebrating the centenary of the Sabarmati Ashram. I have a desire, I have a dream that when we complete 75 years of our independence in 2022-23, we finish this rail project and as Abe San has just said that we both inaugurate it by travelling on that train. If once Japan and India have resolved this thing then we will definitely do it, that I can assure you.

Along with this project a High-Speed Training Institute is also being set up in Baroda for preparing high-speed rail experts. I believe this is a very important project. Vadodara has been a very important unit of the railways for years. Now Japan would be there, the kind of manpower that is needed for the High-Speed Railway, there is a need to teach the new technology, Indian youth especially the youth of Gujarat will get this opportunity and when there is Human Resource Skill Development then country's power increases manifold which is even more than a high-speed train, that work will now be done in Baroda, with the help of Japan. It is a modern railway engineering work and young people of India will be ready for that. You can imagine that this institute is going to perform the task of creating such a capable human resource for the New India. I attach greater significance to the ground breaking ceremony of this institute which is going to provide advance training to the youth of country than the significance that I attach to the ground breaking ceremony of the high speed railway, as it will lay the foundation of the 21st century India.

I once again congratulate all the delegates and employees of India and Japan who are associated with this project. The project has reached at this point due to their efforts. And now the actual ground work is starting. I have full faith that together we will try to complete this project before schedule and we will certainly do it. Once again, I express my gratitude to the Prime Minister of Japan and my best friend Mr. Shinzo Abe, Mr. Abe San. And India's train network is so large that the people equal to the total population of Japan travel on our railway network in a week. Such a large network, what a huge capacity? We have scope, we have speed; you have skills and together we will move ahead to give new momentum to this New India.

Once again, I express my heartfelt gratitude to the people of Gujarat for the grand welcome and the respect that the people of Gujarat have accorded and they did it according to the dignity of the Prime Minister of Japan. I congratulate both the governments of Gujarat and Maharashtra. Both these governments by working together and by working with the Government of India and with the Government of Japan, executed all the work, one after another, at a high speed and took forward the entire system therefore I express my heartfelt gratitude to the chief minister of Gujarat and also to the chief minister of Maharashtra.

Thanks a lot.

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