Prime Minister Modi Addresses at Foundation Stone Laying Ceremony of Development Projects in Chennai

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Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated several projects to boost the country’s development towards a better nation.

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Governor of Tamil Nadu Shri RN Ravi, Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, Shri MK Stalin, Colleagues in the Union Council of Ministers, Ministers of the Tamil Nadu Government, Members of Parliament, Members of the Tamil Nadu Assembly, Sisters and brothers of Tamil Nadu, Vanakkam! It is always wonderful to be back in Tamil Nadu! This land is special. The people, culture and language of this state are outstanding. The great Bhartiyar expressed it beautifully when he said:

Sentamil Nadu Ennum Pothinele Inba Thaen Vanthu Payuthu Kadhunile

In every field, someone or the other from Tamil Nadu is always excelling. Just recently, I had hosted the Indian Deaflympics contingent at my residence. You would be aware that this time it was India's best performance in the tournament. But, do you know that out of the 16 medals we have won, youngsters from Tamil Nadu had a role in 6 of those medals! This is among the best contributions to the team.

The Tamil language is eternal and the Tamil culture is global. From Chennai to Canada, From Madurai to Malaysia, From Namakkal to New York, From Salem to South Africa, the occasions of Pongal and Puthandu are marked with great fervour. There is a film festival going on in Cannes in France. There, the son of this great soil of Tamil Nadu, Thiru L. Murugan walked the Red Carpet in traditional Tamil attire. It made Tamils all over the world very proud.

We have gathered here to celebrate yet another glorious chapter in Tamil Nadu's development journey. Projects worth over Thirty-One Thousand Crore Rupees are either inaugurated or the foundation stones are being laid. We just saw the details of these projects but I do want to make a few points. The focus on road construction is clearly visible. We are doing so because it is directly linked to economic prosperity. The Bengaluru Chennai expressway will connect two key centres of growth. The 4 lane elevated road connecting Chennai Port to Maduravoyal will make Chennai port more efficient and decongest city traffic. Expansions of the Neraluru to Dharmapuri section and Meensurutti to Chidambaram section will have many benefits for people. I am particularly happy that 5 railways stations are being redeveloped.

This modernisation and development is being done keeping in mind the needs of the future. At the same time, it will merge with local art and culture. The gauge

conversion between Madurai and Theni will help my farmer sisters and brothers, giving them access to more markets.

I would like to congratulate all those who will be getting houses as a part of the historic Chennai Light House project under the PM-Awas Yojana. This has been a very satisfying project for us. We had started a global challenge to get the best practices involved in making homes that are affordable, durable and environment friendly. In record time, the first such Light House project has been realised and I am glad it is in Chennai. With the inauguration of the natural gas pipeline from Thiruvallur to Bengaluru and Ennore to Chengalpattu there will be easy LNG availability for people in Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka. To boost the economic growth of the country and with a vision to make Chennai port a hub of economic development, the foundation stone for Multi Modal Logistic Park at Chennai has been laid today. Our government is committed to develop such Multi Modal Logistic Parks in other parts of the country. These multi modal logistic parks will be a paradigm shift in freight ecosystem of our country. Each of these projects across various sectors will boost job creation and our resolve to be Aatmanirbhar.

I am sure each one of you wants your children to lead a better quality of life than you did. Each of you wants a glorious future for your children. Among the most important preconditions for that is top quality infrastructure. History has taught us that those nations which gave topmost importance to infrastructure made the transition from developing to developed countries.

The Government of India is fully focused on building infrastructure that is top quality and sustainable. When I talk about infrastructure, I refer to both social and physical infrastructure. By upgrading social infrastructure we aim to achieve Gareeb Kalyan. Our emphasis on social infrastructure indicates our commitment to the principal of ‘All people welfare, universal happiness’.

Our Government is working to achieve saturation level coverage for key schemes. Take any sector – toilets, housing, financial inclusion…we are working towards complete coverage. We are working on ensuring drinking water to every household – tap water. When we do that, there is no scope left for exclusion or discrimination.

And, with the focus on physical infrastructure, the youth of India will benefit the most. It will help in fulfilling aspirations of the youth and will be used by the youth to create wealth and value.

Our Government has also gone beyond what was conventionally called infrastructure. Till a few years ago, infrastructure referred to roads, power and water. Today we are working to expand India's gas pipeline network. Work is happening on i-ways. It is our vision to take high speed internet to every village. Imagine the transformative potential of this.

A few months back we launched the PM-Gati Shakti programme. This programme will bring together all stake-holders and ministries with the aim to ensure India has top quality infrastructure in the coming years. From the Red Fort, I had spoken about a National Infrastructure Pipeline. This is a project worth more than Rupees Hundred Lakh Crore. Work is underway to turn this vision into reality. During this year's Budget, Rupees Seven Point Five Lakh crore was allocated for capital expenditure which is a historical rise. While creating infrastructure we are also ensuring that these projects are completed on time and in a transparent manner.

The Government of India is fully committed to further popularising Tamil language and culture. In January this year, the new campus of Central Institute of Classical Tamil was inaugurated in Chennai. The new campus is fully funded by the Union Government. It is equipped with a spacious library, an e-library, seminar halls and a multimedia hall. A 'Subramania Bharati Chair' on Tamil Studies at Banaras Hindu University was recently announced. Since BHU is located in my constituency, the joy was extra special.

The National Education Policy gives special importance to promoting Indian languages. Due to the National Education Policy, technical and medical courses can be done in local languages. Youngsters from Tamil Nadu will benefit from this.

Sri Lanka is passing through difficult times. I am sure you are concerned with the developments there.

As a close friend and neighbour, India is providing all possible support to Sri Lanka. This includes financial support, support of fuel, food, medicines and other essential items. Many Indian organisations and individuals have sent assistance for their brothers and sisters in Sri Lanka, including Tamils in the north, in the east and in the upcountry. India has also spoken strongly in international forum for extending economic support to Sri Lanka.

India will continue to stand with the people of Sri Lanka and support democracy, stability and economic recovery in Sri Lanka.

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I can never forget my visit to Jaffna a few years ago. I was the first Indian PM to visit Jaffna. The Government of India is undertaking numerous projects to assist the Tamil people in Sri Lanka. These projects cover healthcare, transportation, housing and culture.

This is the time we are marking Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav. 75 years ago we began our journey as an independent nation. Our freedom fighters had many dreams for our country.

> India will continue to stand with the people of Sri Lanka and support democracy, stability and economic recovery in Sri Lanka.

It is our duty to fulfil them and I am confident we will rise to the occasion and do that. Together, we will make India stronger and more prosperous.

Once again, congratulations on the development works that have begun.

Vanakkam! Thank you!