

# English rendering of PM's address at the dedication of Vizhinjam International Seaport to the nation in Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala

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Governor of Kerala Rajendra Arlekar Ji, Chief Minister Shri P. Vijayan Ji, my colleagues from the Union Cabinet, all other dignitaries present on the dais, and my brothers and sisters from Kerala.

Friends,

Today is the birth anniversary of Lord Adi Shankaracharya. Three years ago in September, I had the privilege of visiting his birthplace Kshetram. I am happy that a grand statue of Adi Shankaracharya has been installed in the Vishwanath Dham complex in my parliamentary constituency Kashi. I have also had the privilege of unveiling the divine idol of Adi Shankaracharya at Kedarnath Dham in Uttarakhand. And today itself the doors of Kedarnath temple have opened in Devbhoomi Uttarakhand. After leaving Kerala, Adi Shankaracharya ji awakened the consciousness of the nation by establishing monasteries in different corners of the country. On this auspicious occasion, I pay my respectful obeisance to him.

Friends,

On one side there is this vast ocean with its possibilities. And on the other side there is the amazing beauty of nature. And amidst all this, there is this Vizhinjam deep-water sea port, a symbol of new age development. I congratulate the people of Kerala, the people of the country.

Friends,

This sea port has been built at a cost of Eight thousand Eight hundred crore rupees. The present capacity of this trans-shipment hub will also increase to three times in the coming time. The world's big cargo ships will be able to come here easily. Till now 75 percent of India's trans-shipment used to happen at ports outside India. Due to this, the country has been facing a huge revenue loss. This situation is about to change. Now the country's money will be used for the country. The money which used to go out, will bring new economic opportunities for the people of Kerala and Vizhinjam.

Friends,

Before slavery, our India has seen prosperity for thousands of years. At one time, India used to have a major share in the global GDP. At that time, what made us different from other countries was our maritime capacity and the economic activity of our port cities. Kerala had a major contribution in this. Trade used to take place from Kerala to different countries of the world via the Arabian Sea. From here, ships used to go to many countries of the world for trade. Today, the Government of India is working with the resolve to further strengthen that channel of the country's economic power. India's coastal states and our port cities, will become important centers of growth of developed India. I have just returned from visiting the port, and when the people of Gujarat will come to know that Adani has built such a great port here in Kerala, he has been working on the port in Gujarat for 30 years, but till now he has not built such a port there, then he will have to be ready to bear the anger of the people of Gujarat. I would also like to say to our Chief Minister, you are a very strong pillar of the Indi Alliance, Shashi Tharoor is also present here, and today's event will give sleepless nights to many people. The message has gone where it was supposed to go.

Friends,

The full potential of the port economy is realized only when both infrastructure and ease of doing business are promoted. This has been the blueprint of the port and waterways policy of the Government of India in the last 10 years. We have progressed rapidly the work for industrial activities and holistic development of the state. The Government of India, in collaboration with the state government, has upgraded port infrastructure under the Sagarmala project and has also increased port connectivity. Under PM-Gatishakti, the inter-connectivity of waterways, railways, highways and airways is being improved at a rapid pace. The reforms that have been done for ease of doing business have also increased investment in ports and other infrastructure sectors. The Government of India has also made reforms in the rules related to Indian seafarers. And the country is seeing its results. The number of Indian seafarers in 2014 was less than 1.25 lakh. Now their number has increased to more than 3.25 lakh. Today India has been included in the list of top three countries in the world in terms of the number of seafarers.

Friends,

People associated with the shipping industry know how long our ships had to wait at ports 10 years ago. It used to take a long time to unload them. Due to this, the speed of business, industry and economy was affected. But the situation has changed now. Ship turn-around time at our major ports has reduced by 30 percent in the last 10 years. The efficiency of our ports has also increased, due to which we are handling more cargo in less time.

Friends,

Behind this success of India is the hard work and vision of the last decade. In the last 10 years, we have doubled the capacity of our ports. Our National Waterways have also expanded 8 times. Today, our two Indian ports are among the global top 30 ports. Our ranking in the Logistics Performance Index has also improved. We have joined the top-20 countries in global shipbuilding. After improving our basic infrastructure, we are now focusing on India's strategic position in global trade. In this direction, we have launched Maritime Amrit Kaal Vision. We have created a roadmap of what our maritime strategy will be to reach the goal of a developed India. You will remember that in the G-20 Summit, we have agreed on the India Middle East Europe Corridor with many big countries. Kerala is at a very important position on this route. Kerala is going to benefit a lot from this.

Friends,

The private sector has also played an important role in giving new heights to the country's maritime sector. Thousands of crores of rupees have been invested in the last 10 years under Public-Private Partnerships. With this partnership, our ports have not only been upgraded to global standards but have also become future ready. The participation of the private sector has promoted both innovation and efficiency. And may be the media people might have focused on one thing, when our Port minister was giving his speech, he said, while mentioning Adani, he said that the partner of our government, a minister of a communist Government is speaking, for the private sector, that the partner of our government, this is a transforming India.

Friends,

We are also moving towards establishing a shipbuilding and repair cluster in Kochi. With the establishment of this cluster, many new employment opportunities will be created here. The local talent of Kerala, the youth of Kerala, will get a chance to move forward.

Friends,

The country is now moving forward with big goals to increase India's shipbuilding capabilities. In this year's budget, a new policy has been announced to increase the construction of big ships in India. This will also give a boost to our manufacturing sector. This will directly benefit our MSME, and it will create a large number of employment and entrepreneurship opportunities.

Friends,

Development in the true sense happens when infrastructure is built, trade grows and the basic needs of the common man are also fulfilled. The people of Kerala know how rapidly the port infrastructure along with highways, railways and airports have developed in Kerala in the last 10 years due to our efforts. Projects like

Kollam Bypass and Alappuzha Bypass, which were stuck for years, have been taken forward by the Government of India. We have also given modern Vande Bharat trains to Kerala.

Friends,

The Government of India believes in the mantra of development of the country through the development of Kerala. We are working in the spirit of cooperative federalism. In the last decade, we have also worked to take Kerala forward on the social parameters of development. People of Kerala are getting a lot of benefits from many such schemes like Jal Jeevan Mission, Ujjwala Yojana, Ayushman Bharat, Pradhan Mantri Surya Ghar Free Electricity Scheme.

Friends,

The benefit of our fishermen is also our priority. Projects worth hundreds of crores of rupees have been approved for Kerala under Blue Revolution and Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana. We have also modernized fishing harbors like Ponnani and Puthiyappa. Thousands of fishermen brothers and sisters in Kerala have also been given Kisan Credit Cards, due to which they have received help worth hundreds of crores of rupees.

Friends,

Our Kerala has been the land of harmony and tolerance. The country's first church, and one of the world's oldest churches, St. Thomas Church was built here hundreds of years ago. We all know that a great moment of sorrow has come for all of us just a few days ago. We all lost Pope Francis a few days ago. Our Honorable President, Draupadi Murmu ji went there to attend his funeral on behalf of India. Our colleague from Kerala, our minister Mr. George Kurien also went with her. I, too, once again, from the land of Kerala, offer my condolences to all those involved in this grief.

Friends,

The world will always remember Pope Francis for his spirit of service and his efforts to give everyone a place in Christian traditions. I consider it my good fortune that whenever I got the opportunity to meet him, I got the opportunity to talk to him in detail on many topics. And I noticed that I always got special affection from him. I had discussions with him on topics like humanity, service and peace, his words will always inspire me.

Friends,

I once again convey my best wishes to you all for today's event. The Government of India will continue to work with the state government to make Kerala a major centre for global maritime trade and create thousands of new jobs. I have full confidence that with the potential of the people of Kerala, India's maritime sector will touch new heights.

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Thank You.

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**MJPS/VJ/SS**

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