



English rendering of PM's address during inauguration of 72nd National Volleyball Tournament in Varanasi via VC

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Har Har Mahadev!

Hon'ble Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh Yogi Adityanath ji, Deputy Chief Minister Brajesh Pathak ji, Ministers of the UP Government—brother Ravindra Jaiswal ji, Dayashankar ji, Girish Yadav ji, Mayor of Banaras brother Ashok Tiwari ji, other public representatives, all office bearers of the Volleyball Association, players who have come from across the country, and my family members of Kashi—Namaskar.

As the Member of Parliament from Kashi, it gives me immense happiness to welcome and congratulate all the players. Today marks the inauguration of the National Volleyball Championship here in Kashi. Each one of you has reached this national tournament after tremendous hard work. In the coming days, your efforts will be tested on the grounds of Kashi. I have been informed that teams from 28 states of the country have gathered here. This itself presents a beautiful picture of Ek Bharat, Shreshtha Bharat (One India, Great India). I extend my best wishes to all the players participating in this championship.

Friends,

Here in Banaras, it is often said: “If you wish to truly know Banaras, you must come to Banaras.” You all have come here, and now you will also get to know Banaras. Our Banaras is a city of sports lovers. Wrestling, wrestling arenas, boxing, boat races, kabaddi—many such sports are very popular here. Banaras has produced several national-level players. The athletes of Banaras Hindu University, UP College, and Kashi Vidyapeeth have shone at state and national levels. And Kashi, for thousands of years, has welcomed all those who come here in pursuit of knowledge and art. That is why I am confident that during the National Volleyball Championship, the enthusiasm of Banaras will remain high. You will find spectators who will cheer you on, and you will also experience the hospitality traditions of Kashi.

Friends,

Volleyball is not just an ordinary sport. On both sides of the net, it is a game of balance, a game of cooperation, and it reflects determination. The essence of volleyball is that the ball must always be lifted upwards, no matter what. Volleyball connects us with team spirit. The mantra of every volleyball player is Team First. Each player may have different skills, but all play for the victory of their team. I see many parallels between India's development story and the game of volleyball. Volleyball teaches us that no victory is ever achieved alone. Our success depends on our coordination, our trust, and the readiness of our team. Everyone has their own role, their own responsibility. And we succeed only when each person fulfills their responsibility sincerely and seriously.

Our nation too is progressing in the same way. From cleanliness to digital payments, from planting a tree in the name of one's mother to the campaign for a developed India—we are advancing because every citizen, every community, every state is working together with a collective consciousness, with the spirit of India First, for the nation.

Friends,

Today, India's growth and our economy are being widely praised across the world. But when a nation develops, progress is never confined to the economic front alone. That confidence also shines on the sports field. This is exactly what we have witnessed in recent years across every sport. Since 2014, India's performance in different disciplines has steadily improved. We feel immense pride when we see Gen-Z athletes hoisting the tricolor on the field of play.

Friends,

There was a time when both the government and society were indifferent towards sports. Because of this, players often felt uncertain about their future, and very few youngsters chose sports as a career. But in the past decade, we have seen a transformation in the mindset of both government and society. The government has significantly increased the sports budget. Today, India's sports model has become athlete-centric. From talent identification, scientific training, nutrition, to transparent selection—at every level, the interests of athletes are placed foremost.

Friends,

Today, the nation is riding the Reform Express. Every sector, every development destination is connected to this Reform Express, and sports is one of them. Major reforms have been introduced in the sports sector as well. Provisions like the National Sports Governance Act and the Khelo Bharat Policy 2025 will ensure that genuine talent gets opportunities, transparency increases in sports organizations, and the youth of the country can advance simultaneously in both sports and education.

Friends,

Through initiatives like TOPS (Target Olympic Podium Scheme), India's sports ecosystem is being transformed. On one hand, we are building strong infrastructure and funding mechanisms, and on the other, we are working to provide world-class exposure to our youth. You must have noticed that in the past decade, India has hosted more than 20 major international events—such as the FIFA Under-17 World Cup, the Hockey World Cup, and major chess tournaments. The 2030 Commonwealth Games are also set to be held in India, and the nation is preparing with full strength to host the 2036 Olympics. The effort behind all this is to ensure that more and more players get more and more opportunities to play.

Friends,

We are also working to give school-level players exposure to Olympic sports. Thanks to the Khelo India initiative, hundreds of youngsters have had the chance to rise to the national stage. Just a few days ago, the Sansad Khel Mahotsav concluded, in which nearly one crore youth showcased their talent. As the Member of Parliament from Kashi, I proudly share that during this Mahotsav, almost 3 lakh youngsters from my Kashi displayed their strength and skills on the field.

Friends,

The changes in sports infrastructure are also benefiting Kashi. Modern sports facilities are being built here, stadiums for different sports are coming up, and new sports complexes are giving training opportunities to players from nearby districts. The Sogra Stadium, where you stand today, is now equipped with many modern facilities.

Friends,

I am delighted that Kashi is preparing itself for major events. Securing a place on the sporting map of India through this National Volleyball Championship is very significant for Kashi. Even before this, many events have been organized here, giving local people and the local economy great opportunities to perform. For example, Banaras has hosted important G-20 meetings, cultural festivals like Kashi Tamil Sangamam and Kashi Telugu Sangamam, conferences of the Indian diaspora, and Kashi has also been recognized as the cultural capital of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. Today, this championship is being added as another jewel to these achievements. Through all these events, Kashi is emerging as a major destination for such grand platforms.

Friends,

Banaras is experiencing pleasant winter at this time. And in this season, you will find some of the finest delicacies. If time permits, do enjoy Malaiyo. Seek the blessings of Baba Vishwanath, take a boat ride on the Ganga—carry these experiences with you. And above all, play your best in this tournament. From the soil of Kashi, may every spike, every block, and every point raise India's sporting aspirations to greater heights. With this expectation, I once again extend my heartfelt best wishes to all of you.

Thank you. Vande Mataram!

MJPS/VJ/SR

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