



# English rendering of PM's address at the Khelo India Dialogue via video conferencing

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Namaskar.

You all have organized this Khelo India Samvad program in such a wonderful way. I extend my heartfelt congratulations to all of you. Through technology, I warmly greet my colleagues from the Union Cabinet connected with this program, all Chief Ministers, many ministers from state governments, my colleagues in Parliament, and the lakhs of volunteers of My Bharat. Today, athletes from across the country and distinguished personalities from the sports world have also joined us in this program.

You all know, friends,

Two days later, on 29th August, it will be National Sports Day. I extend advance greetings of Sports Day to all of you, to the youth across the country, and to all companions connected with the sports world. This day is also an occasion to remember one of Mother India's great sons, Major Dhyan Chand ji. A hundred years ago, the Indian Army's hockey team went on a tour to New Zealand, and Dhyan Chand ji was part of that team. That tour laid the foundation of 100 years of sports relations between India and New Zealand. A few days ago, I visited New Zealand. There too, I remembered him. The relationships that Major Dhyan Chand ji laid the foundation for, today India is continuously working for their prosperity.

Friends,

On this 15th August from the Red Fort, I placed India's sports vision before the nation. When I speak of sports, it is not limited only to winning medals. It is a campaign to combine India's sports power and India's youth power together in building a developed India. I have always said - jo khelega, woh khilega - "whoever plays, will blossom." And blossoming in sports is not only about winning on the field. Blossoming in sports means blossoming of personality, blossoming of family, and increasing the pride of the nation.

Friends,

When a player succeeds, that success is not only his or hers. That success builds the identity of his family, increases their prestige. The school and college where he studied, their prestige increases. The identity of his district and state becomes stronger. That is, the world begins to recognize that city or state by the name of that player. And when many such successes make a region shine on the global sports map, the world's perspective of that city also changes. In today's program, players from hundreds of districts of the country are connected. Every district has the strength to shine on the world's sports map. Understanding this strength, we must carry forward this dialogue program.

Friends,

This time from the Red Fort I also drew the nation's attention to a very big challenge related to sports. This challenge is connected with the Olympics. A bitter truth is that in the Olympics, of all the different sports, India's teams participate in only half of them. That means for a very large part of the medal tally, we do not even compete. And this has been going on for decades. In the 2012 Olympics, India participated in only 13 sports. In more than 20 sports, India had no participation. And in those 20+ sports, many are such that people in the country may hardly have even heard their names. Other countries win medals in those sports, and we do not even participate. To increase our medal tally, we must achieve mastery in those sports too. For example, surfing and sports climbing - we have such a large coastline, such a vast mountainous region, where there can naturally be interest in these sports. We have both the demography and the geography for water sports and winter sports. Yet we are not visible in such sports globally. Therefore, we must explore possibilities in different districts where an ecosystem for a particular sport can be developed. And in this, today's program has a very big role.

Friends,

When we talk of preparing for the 2036 Olympics, our focus should be that we must prepare today those players who will qualify and compete in different sports in 2036. That is why, from the Red Fort, I announced a major talent hunt campaign to identify players between the ages of 5 and 15. And in this too, we must not only see which child is interested in which sport, but also which child is fit for which sport. We must train the child accordingly. And I assure you all, whatever support is needed from the government, the government will walk shoulder to shoulder with you.

Friends,

Our government is fully committed to building a modern sports ecosystem of the 21st century in India. Today, from sports universities to modern training centers, a system is being created in the country where at every level - from identifying talent to bringing it to the world stage - support is available. We are also increasing cooperation with other countries of the world to share sports science, training, coaching, and experiences.

Friends,

How serious the government is about sports, this very event is an example of it. Khelo India Samvad is not just a program to talk about sports. It is a platform of dialogue where every idea can give a new direction to the country's sports vision. And along with this, the youth dialogue happening here is a great medium to connect your ideas and aspirations with the dreams of the nation. In this program, what the youth think about the sports ecosystem, talent development, governance, and developed India, what their suggestions are - these will be heard and included in the policy process. Therefore, I urge you all to make maximum meaningful use of this platform, bring new ideas. These new ideas of youth power will become the strength for achieving a developed India.

Friends,

We often hear that for a healthy society, for a good family system, for a better work culture, sports-person spirit is very necessary. And this sports-person spirit is very difficult to learn without going to the sports field. Sports not only teach us to become champions, but also teach us to become better competitors. To rise, to fall, to rise again after falling - sports bring this spirit within us.

Friends,

A big example of how sports change life is our para-athletes. When someone sees para-athletes on the field, their perspective on life changes. And when they achieve something, along with that athlete, their entire family gets a new life. The parents, brothers, sisters, who saw their child struggling in the early days - for them, the success of that differently-abled athlete gives their dreams and courage a new height.

Friends,

I myself have always been inspired by such players. For example, you have all heard the name - in archery, our daughter, an amazing player, you know her name? Sheetal. When she won a medal in the Paralympics, the whole of Jammu & Kashmir, the whole of Hindustan was filled with pride. Similarly, our daughter Avani Lekhara, who has won medals twice in the Paralympics. Whenever I meet daughter Avani, I feel very proud. Whether it is Sumit Antil, Nitesh Kumar, or just recently you must have heard the name of our Jhandu Kumar - such para-athletes, such companions, inspire us too.

Friends,

Sports are a guarantee of a better life. Sports make us fit to live a better life, improve our quality of life. We all know about Fauja Singh ji. Last year, at more than 100 years of age, Fauja Singh ji passed away. Love for sports, fitness - how it continues lifelong, Fauja Singh ji was an example of this. His life is a great inspiration that shows how sports and quality of life are connected.

Friends,

Another very big benefit of sports is that true players develop the willpower to stay away from drugs and intoxication. Today, when such a big challenge of addiction is before the youth, sports play a very meaningful role in this too.

Friends,

I am happy that today in India sports have emerged as an excellent profession. Society's perspective toward sports has changed. Today you can see, people in our country are participating in triathlons, running 5K and 10K races. Friends are coming together to complete challenges like Hyrox. Someone is celebrating doing a headstand for the first time, someone is playing pickleball and badminton with friends and family. These are small things, but if you look at them from a larger perspective, you see a big change. The change is that sports are now becoming part of our lives. If timetables are being made for study and career, then sports are also getting a place in the daily routine. And this is the change, this is the transformation, because of which trust in India's sports future is increasing.

Friends,

A sports culture in the country is built only when ordinary people are connected with it. When schools consider sports periods not as co-curricular, but as part of life. When this happens, the talent pool increases, and children who want to take sports as a career also get support from their families. That is why I say - more important than screens are sports centers. More important than PlayStation is the playground. And this will happen only when all you young companions carry forward this approach.

Friends,

I have great trust in the capability and success of India's youth power. I want to say to every youth of the country - whether on the sports field or in society, your participation is India's strength. If you love sports, then many avenues are being created to connect with it. Now new sports equipment has come, new technology has come. Training and coaching methods have changed. The needs of organizing sports, of competition, of disciplines have changed. Equipment design, sports technology, sports medicine, nutrition, psychology, analytics - in all these areas new opportunities are being created for youth. You must not miss these opportunities. Therefore, in this dialogue, present your ideas openly. This participation of youth power is the greatest strength of developed India. Once again, I extend my best wishes to all you young companions.

Thank you.

Vande Mataram.

**DISCLAIMER: This is the approximate translation of Prime Minister's address. Original address was delivered in Hindi.**

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