English rendering of PM's speech at the launch of development projects in Banaskantha, Gujarat

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Bharat Mata Ki Jai.

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Popular Chief Minister of Gujarat Shri Bhupendra Bhai Patel, Deputy Chief Minister Bhai Harsh Sanghvi ji, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly Shri Shankarbhai Chaudhary, all ministers of the Gujarat Government, Members of Parliament and Members of the Legislative Assembly, other public representatives, brothers and sisters.

Today, through technology, farmers from every district of the country are connected with us. Today, through technology, farmers from every village of Gujarat are connected with us. Chief Ministers of different states, ministers, all of them are with us today in this important programme for farmers. I heartily welcome all of them as well.

Today, Banaskantha has established its stature. Just now, I was watching on the screen that perhaps such a large gathering seated on charpoys has never been held anywhere in the world. For the people of the country too, it must be an amazing sight that everyone in this gathering is seated on charpoys. Today, Banaskantha has revived this great tradition of our villages. Had you informed the Guinness Book of World Records in advance, they would certainly have recorded it as a world record. It was just mentioned here a moment ago.

The responsibility that you entrusted to me has now completed twenty-five years. And look at the coincidence, after completing twenty-five years, my first visit has been to our Banaskantha. Let me remind you that after becoming Chief Minister in 2001, my first major public programme as Chief Minister was held in Deesa. The older people here will remember that Lok Kalyan Mela. That programme was perhaps historic. Three lakh people from a single district attended it. I do not believe that record has been broken to this day. That record belongs to Banaskantha. The journey began there, and today I have got the opportunity to present an account of twenty-five years of service at the same place.

Only a few days after Navratri, I have received the opportunity to come to the sacred land of Mother Amba. I bow at the feet of Mother Amba. A short while ago, projects dedicated to women, children, farmers, and livestock rearers were inaugurated and foundation stones laid here. A new instalment of PM-Kisan Samman Nidhi has also reached the

accounts of crores of small farmers across the country. I extend my heartfelt congratulations to the people of Gujarat, to the people of the country, and to farmers across India.

Friends,

The people of Gujarat and Banaskantha should forgive me, but I have to speak in Hindi today because people from all over the country are connected with this programme. You permit me to speak in Hindi, don't you? Very good.

Friends,

Our farmers, our food providers, are among the strongest pillars of a Developed India. Our government has always prioritised the welfare and empowerment of farmers. Compared to 2013–14, the agricultural budget of the country has now increased more than five times. PM-Kisan Samman Nidhi has become a part of the lives of crores of small farmers. Today, more than ₹18,000 crore has been transferred into the accounts of nearly ten crore farmers. More than fifty lakh farmers of Gujarat have also benefited from it. More than ₹1,000 crore has been deposited into their accounts. In Banaskantha alone, nearly ₹50 crore has reached the accounts of lakhs of farming families.

Friends,

Because of our government's policies over the past years, farmers have received benefits or savings worth more than ₹50 lakh crore. Fifty lakh crore rupees. Let me give you an example of just five schemes. Around ₹4.5 lakh crore under PM-Kisan Samman Nidhi has directly reached the bank accounts of small farmers. Sister, you have defeated me. I thought you would sit down after a while because your hands would start hurting. I request the SPG personnel to collect that beautiful picture which this daughter has brought. Otherwise, she will grow tired holding it up. They will collect it from here, my child. Please stay where you are. Let the SPG personnel collect it. After Independence, the needs of small farmers were never truly understood. Nobody paid attention to them. Yet small farmers account for more than 85 percent of all farmers in our country. More than 85 percent. It is our government that understood their concerns and supported them through PM-Kisan Samman Nidhi.

Friends,

Over the past few years, global uncertainties caused fertiliser prices to surge sharply. But a government dedicated to farmers did not allow that burden to fall upon them. The government spent nearly ₹16 lakh crore on this. To ensure that fertilisers remain affordable for you, we had to spend ₹16 lakh crore from the national treasury, so that the burden would not fall upon our farmers.

Friends,

Previous governments repeatedly misled farmers on Minimum Support Price. But ours is the government that fulfilled its MSP promise. Over the past twelve years, farmers growing wheat and paddy have received ₹24 lakh crore in MSP payments directly into their accounts.

Friends,

Our government has provided farmers with a powerful safety net through the PM Fasal Bima Yojana. We launched crop insurance on a large scale. During the past ten to twelve years, farmers have received more than ₹2 lakh crore in crop insurance compensation. Whenever crops suffered losses, over ₹2 lakh crore reached farmers through insurance support. We are continuously trying to reduce farmers' irrigation costs as well. PM-KUSUM is playing an increasingly significant role in this effort. Under this scheme, nearly twelve lakh solar pumps have already been provided. Twelve lakh pumps powered by solar energy have been given to farmers for irrigation. Because of this, the need for electricity and diesel has reduced substantially. If these solar pumps had not been provided, farmers would have had to purchase more than 80 crore litres of diesel. That entire expense has been saved by lakhs of farmers. And besides that, additional electricity has also been generated. If viewed in one way, these five schemes and decisions alone have either directly benefited farmers or saved them the equivalent of ₹50 lakh crore. This is an enormous figure. These ₹50 lakh crore have increased farmers' incomes and strengthened Indian agriculture.

Friends,

Agriculture is our tradition. Agriculture is our culture. Agriculture is our culture. During the past twelve years, our government has extensively integrated science and technology into farming. We have linked agriculture and animal husbandry with scientific methods. Soil Health Cards are an excellent example of this. Earlier, farmers found it difficult to determine what type of fertilizer their fields required and in what quantity. Soil Health Cards solved this problem. Today, more than 26 crore Soil Health Cards are in the hands of farmers. These have modernised farming practices.

Friends,

Changing weather patterns are a major challenge for farmers. Therefore, our effort is to continuously provide farmers with new seed varieties that are better suited to changing climatic conditions. Over the past years, around three thousand new seed varieties have been made available to farmers.

Friends,

Animal husbandry is an important part of our rural economy, and our sisters have a major role in it. During the past decade, we have strongly promoted the use of science and technology in animal husbandry and the dairy sector. When livestock breeds improve, milk production increases. As Shankarbhai was saying earlier, we want one cow to produce as much milk as four cows once did. If animals receive timely vaccination and treatment, losses due to disease are reduced. In other words, healthier animals mean higher incomes for our livestock-rearing brothers and sisters.

Friends,

You are all familiar with the National Gokul Mission. Through it, indigenous breeds are being preserved and scientific breeding is being promoted. The new research centre established in Banaskantha will further strengthen this mission. Indigenous cattle breeds such as Gir, Sahiwal, and Kankrej, and buffalo breeds such as Mehsana, Murrah, and Jaffarabadi, will be preserved here. At the same time, major work will be done to improve their quality. For the Kankrej breed, this is the first facility of its kind in the country.

Consider a farmer who owns a high-quality cow that produces more milk and remains healthy at a lower cost. Naturally, that farmer would want future generations of that cow to retain those same qualities. Modern technologies such as IVF help achieve exactly that. They increase the likelihood that superior traits will pass on to future generations. The direct benefit of this goes to livestock rearers.

Friends,

Protecting livestock from disease is also one of our priorities. Foot-and-mouth disease affects both animal health and milk production. Therefore, we launched a nationwide free vaccination campaign. So far, nearly 150 crore vaccine doses have been administered to animals. The livestock of more than eight crore farmers have received free vaccinations. This has also reduced the financial burden on livestock rearers.

Friends,

The impact of these efforts is visible in milk production as well. In 2013–14, a cow or buffalo produced on average less than five litres of milk per day. This was the situation when you sent me to Delhi. Less than five litres a day. Today, the national average has increased to around eight litres per day. India's growth rate in milk productivity is the fastest in the world. India ranks number one globally in milk production. The benefits have reached villages, and the incomes of farming families have increased.

Friends,

We want livestock rearers to earn not only from milk but also from dung. Infrastructure is being developed for producing biogas, bio-CNG, and organic fertilisers from dung and agricultural residues. Institutions like Banas Dairy have an important role in this. Today, foundation stones have also been laid for two bio-CNG plants. Our objective is clear: healthier livestock, higher milk production, and complete utilisation of dung. We are transforming animal husbandry into not merely a tradition but also a strong means of increasing farmers' incomes and enriching villages. I was interacting with the women here earlier. They told me they supply milk worth ₹2 crore. Milk worth ₹2 crore. Then I asked them how much education they had received. They replied, "Four books," and yet they supply milk worth ₹2 crore.

Friends,

Over the past years, we have worked with a holistic approach for the prosperity of villages. Just look at the fisheries sector and see how much it has expanded. You will be pleased to know that India's seafood exports have more than doubled. Our fishermen go out to sea, catch fish and shrimp, and sell them. Today, this sector has made enormous progress, and demand across the world has risen sharply. Cooperation in the fisheries sector is also being promoted.

Friends,

There is another sector that has provided an additional source of income for our farmers. That sector is beekeeping. Over the past twelve years, honey production has doubled. I remember that when I came to Banaskantha, I urged all of you to bring about a Sweet Revolution, a Honey Revolution. Today Banaskantha is setting new records in honey production. When I was interacting with the women earlier, they told me they sell honey

worth ₹35 lakh. You will be proud to know that India has become the world's second-largest exporter of natural honey. In this Sweet Revolution, the contribution of our women's self-help groups is also steadily increasing.

Friends,

A few days ago, on 7th October, I completed twenty-five years as head of government. It feels as though it happened only yesterday. Yes, it feels like yesterday itself, when I first took the oath on 7th October 2001. You all gave your Narendra Bhai immense affection and immense love.Today, I felt a little awkward here. Whatever is said in the rest of the country is one thing, but here Shankarbhai said, "Prime Minister Sahib, Prime Minister Sahib." Tell me honestly, how will such an address go down my throat? Here, people habitually say, "Our Narendra Bhai has come." Doesn't it feel better to say that? What joy is there in saying "Prime Minister Sahib"? And when my brothers from Gujarat say "Our Narendra Bhai," my heart overflows with emotion. More than affection, every Gujarati taught me something. They guided me towards the right path and inspired me. At that time, I knew nothing about government offices, government functioning, or files. A person from an ordinary family, whose generations had never even dreamed of becoming the head of a village, was entrusted by you with the responsibility of serving first Gujarat and then the nation. Earlier while speaking with the women, they asked me how ideas such as Jyotigram, bringing water, natural farming, and initiatives for livestock came to me. I told them that there was no special formula. You taught me everything, and I simply went and implemented it.

Friends,

I have always known only two things: service to the people is service to the nation, and the development of Gujarat leads to the development of India. Everything else, how to work and how to move forward, you taught me. Whatever I have been able to do for the nation belongs to all the citizens of India, and to all of you as well. For this, I will remain indebted to you for my entire life. Until my final breath, I will remain devoted to service. Service, service, and service to the people of the country and to all of you.

Friends,

The senior citizens present here will still remember the old days. Twenty-five years ago, when I used to come here, there were severe problems of electricity and water. Even then, I used to say that we must save electricity and water. Farmers would protest against me, saying, "Who is Modi to tell us to save water? He won't even give us electricity." I kept arguing with you, and eventually you accepted what I was saying. And today, just look at where we have come from and where we have reached. Those old problems now remain only in memories. Today, I will once again tell you the same thing: we must save water, and we must save electricity as well.

Friends,

The waters of the Narmada and modern technologies such as drip irrigation have transformed Banaskantha. They have changed both the face and the destiny of Banaskantha. Banaskantha's potatoes are now world-famous. No one can come to a person from Banaskantha and say, "I will turn potatoes into gold," because he will reply, "I am already doing that." We have a cooperative brand like Banas Dairy here, which is

expanding the cooperative movement to other parts of the country, including Kashi. I am especially grateful to Banas Dairy because even in my Kashi, people are benefiting from your experience and your service. Now, even the French fries potato processing plant has expanded its capacity. This will make it possible to purchase a larger quantity of potatoes. This is a major facility and support for potato farmers.

Friends,

A Cluster Development Programme is being implemented for farmers engaged in fruit and vegetable cultivation. Under this programme, twelve clusters have been approved today. These clusters are associated with fruits and vegetables such as tomatoes, potatoes, chillies, grapes, bananas, onions, oranges, pomegranates, and cocoa. Under this initiative, farmers will be supported in establishing new orchards and rejuvenating old ones. People will be trained and guided for the rejuvenation of older orchards, and subsidies will be provided for the entire project. The two clusters approved in North Gujarat will greatly benefit potato farmers of Banaskantha and Sabarkantha.

Friends,

Today, several other development projects related to Gujarat have also been inaugurated and launched. Gujarat has received two new railway services: the Ahmedabad–Varanasi Sabarmati Express and the Mehsana–Becharaji–Sabarmati MEMU train. Both are highly significant rail connectivity projects. In addition, the Ahmedabad Metro service is also being expanded. Today, the foundation stone has been laid for metro projects connecting GIFT City and the airport. The Ahmedabad–Mehsana Highway is now set to be expanded from four lanes to eight lanes.

Friends,

Today, more than 4,000 modern Anganwadis are also being inaugurated for the children of Gujarat. Nearly four lakh children and pregnant mothers will benefit from them.

Friends,

Every such effort is aimed at making India a developed nation. Today, every farmer, every young person, and every daughter and sister in the country is moving forward with the resolve of building a Developed India. But unfortunately, some people do not like this. Some people are unable to accept it. These are people who want to see the country in difficulty. They derive satisfaction from seeing the nation in trouble. Whenever challenges arise for the country, they feel happy.

Friends,

A recent example of this is the war taking place around Iran and the Gulf region. At a time when India is united in dealing with its consequences, these people were busy spreading rumours. Rumours were spread among farmers that fertilisers would not be available. Artificial queues were created and the atmosphere was disturbed. Women were frightened by being told that cooking gas would no longer be available, asking them how they would cook food and how their children would go to school. Their plan was to create panic and disorder in the country so that they could defame Modi.

Friends,

I want to remind the farmer brothers and sisters of this country that I had said Modi would stand firmly with you. And you can see that even though the war is still continuing, Modi did not allow any shortage of fertilisers for farmers. We did not allow fertiliser supplies to run short.

Friends,

Because of this war, fertiliser prices around the world have risen sharply. The chemicals used in producing fertilisers have also become much more expensive. Yet the government did not allow this burden to fall on farmers. A bag of urea that costs around ₹3,000 elsewhere in the world is available to Indian farmers for less than ₹300. The global price of a bag of urea is around ₹3,000, but the government bears that burden and provides it to you for around ₹300. The price of a bag of DAP fertiliser has crossed ₹5,000 globally. But Indian farmers receive the same bag for around ₹1,350. The nation is providing this support so that our farmers become stronger and their lives improve.

Friends,

In a world full of uncertainty, India's rapid development has become a new source of hope for the entire world. In such a situation, we must continue moving forward on the path of Ek Bharat, Shreshtha Bharat - One India, Great India. And tomorrow, the 31st of October, is a day to strengthen this resolve. Tomorrow is the birth anniversary of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and National Unity Day. The entire nation will celebrate National Unity Day. On this day, the Run for Unity is organised across the country. Reports are coming in from all directions about the grand preparations being made for the Run for Unity. I would especially urge all citizens of the country, particularly our young friends, to participate enthusiastically in the Run for Unity tomorrow morning.

Friends,

Every year, the Unity Festival is celebrated in Ekta Nagar on the morning of 31st October. But this year, keeping the Run for Unity and other programmes in mind, it will be held in the evening instead of the morning. This is a change from previous years. Tomorrow at 5:30 in the evening, a grand Unity Festival will be celebrated in Ekta Nagar. The programme will be organised on a very large scale. You should watch it on television. There will be such a parade on the soil of Gujarat that it will remind you of the Republic Day celebrations in Delhi. Do watch it. There will be parades by police and security forces, and impressive tableaux will be displayed. I urge all citizens of the country to join this programme tomorrow evening as well. From Kashmir to Kanyakumari, from Kutch to Kamakhya, the entire nation should pay tribute to Sardar Patel and reaffirm the resolve of Ek Bharat, Shreshtha Bharat. With this appeal, I once again extend my best wishes to all of you for these development works.

Thank you very much.

The sisters seated at the back are offering their blessings to me. Mothers, I bow at your feet. Your blessings give me tremendous strength. I am deeply grateful to all of you.

Bharat Mata Ki Jai!

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Disclaimer: This is an approximate English translation of the Prime Minister's address. The original address was delivered in Hindi, with some portions in Gujarati, which have been translated to convey their intended meaning.

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