English rendering of PM’s address at the Foundation Stone Laying Ceremony of Pune Metro Projects via video conferencing

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Governor of Maharashtra Shri Jishnu Dev Varma ji, Chief Minister Shri Devendra Fadnavis ji, my colleague in the Union Cabinet Shri Manohar Lal ji, Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Shri Eknath Shinde ji, Smt. Sunetra Ajit Pawar ji, all ministers, Members of Parliament and Members of the Legislative Assembly, other public representatives, and my dear brothers and sisters of Pune!

Diwali is just around the corner. First of all, I extend my heartfelt greetings to all of you on the occasion of Diwali!

Friends,

The joy of festivals becomes even greater when a new facility is added to people's lives. Today is such a happy occasion for the people of Pune. I am pleased that another line of the Pune Metro is being inaugurated today. Ten years ago, I had the opportunity to lay the foundation stone for the first phase of this project in Pune. With the metro now starting between Hinjawadi and Shivajinagar, one of Pune’s major IT hubs will receive improved connectivity. The new line whose work has commenced today will further strengthen connectivity between the old and new parts of Pune. I extend my heartfelt congratulations to all the people of Pune and Maharashtra.

Friends,

Pune has always been a centre of ideas that have given new direction to the nation and to society. Today, Pune is also providing direction to the new energy of a Viksit Bharat. From IT, automobiles, pharmaceuticals, startups, innovation, and manufacturing, Pune is a place of dreams and aspirations for the youth of the country. In such a situation, the strengthening metro connectivity here is set to give a new momentum to the development of Pune city.

Friends,

The inauguration and expansion of the Pune Metro demonstrates how we are building cities for a Viksit Bharat. Earlier, a city's identity was defined by its industries, or by its famous cuisine, fruits, or crops. But today, two more benchmarks have been added to the

identity of cities. First, how competitive a city is. Second, the level of ease of living it offers. Metro projects help improve both these parameters for any city. As Pune Metro expands, it is saving time and providing greater convenience to the residents of Pune. And we all know that when a city's time is saved, its productivity increases. When a city's productivity increases, the country's economy gains momentum. And when the economy grows, both the poor and the middle class benefit.

Friends,

Today is also an example of pro-people, proactive good governance. The first metro in our country began operating in 1984. In the thirty years that followed, only 248 kilometres of metro lines were built. Two hundred and forty-eight kilometres. Until 2014, metro services existed in only five cities of the country. Had the same old thinking continued, had the old government remained in place, had the old work culture continued, it would have taken many more decades for the metro to reach Pune. But when the people gave the NDA an opportunity to serve in 2014, we moved forward with a resolve. That resolve was to improve ease of living and ease of transportation for the middle class living in our cities. Today, we can see the results. Over the past twelve years, metro transportation in the country has undergone a complete transformation. From 248 kilometres of metro routes in 2014, the network has now expanded to nearly 1,200 kilometres. From only five cities having metro services in 2014, metro systems are now operating in 26 cities. More than one crore people are now travelling by metro every day. Today, India's metro network is counted among the top three metro networks in the world.

Friends,

The situation in Maharashtra was similar to that in the rest of the country. When the NDA's double-engine government was formed for the first time in 2014, Maharashtra had only around 10–11 kilometres of operational metro lines. Today, nearly 175 kilometres of metro lines are in service in Maharashtra. Work is underway on more than 680 kilometres of metro corridors. Today, investments of more than ₹2.5 lakh crore are being made in Maharashtra's metro infrastructure alone. This money is going into the pockets of workers. This money is generating employment for engineers. This money is creating jobs in shops and factories.

Friends,

This metro project is special for another reason as well. This metro line has been constructed on a PPP model. That is, it has been built through the joint efforts of the government and the private sector. This is a development model whose success will further accelerate the country's progress.

Friends,

Today, every citizen of India, every young son and daughter of India, is working with full strength to build a Viksit Bharat. Today everyone is confidently saying: We Will Do It. We Will Do It. This spirit exists throughout the country. Over the past twelve years, the nation’s energy has been reflected in village roads, highways, expressways, electrification of new railway lines, long tunnels, and towering bridges. Numerous projects and schemes are taking shape across the country. In the coming years, along with this, the country will devote its energy to making its cities among the best in the world.

Friends,

Our cities are not merely places to live. They are also major centres of economic activity. We must transform hundreds of small cities across the country into growth hubs. It was with this vision that the Urban Challenge Fund was approved in February this year. The central government is providing support of ₹1 lakh crore for this fund. The goal is to attract investments worth many lakh crores of rupees into cities across the country in the coming years. I urge local bodies, our friends in the private sector, and everyone else to come forward. We must all work in mission mode. I am confident that Maharashtra will expand its role further in this effort.

Friends,

There are two additional reasons why India is being discussed throughout the world today. First, India has maintained the fastest growth rate in the world despite difficult global circumstances. Second, within just ten to twelve years, fifty crore people in India have overcome extreme poverty. This fact has emerged in the latest World Bank report. Many generations in the country grew up hearing promises and claims about eradicating poverty. Earlier, the fight against poverty existed only in slogans. Today, India is defeating poverty on the ground.

Friends,

Today, India is the country that is both the fastest-growing economy and the fastest reducer of poverty. These two achievements are interconnected. India's economy is growing rapidly. India's budget is expanding. Investments in the people are increasing. The money that earlier disappeared through scams, favoritism, and leakages is now reaching beneficiaries directly. When the nation’s resources are invested in roads, railways, airports, and metro systems, when the government increases investment in electricity, water, and gas pipelines, people's lives improve and employment opportunities increase.

Friends,

Facilities such as homes for the poor, toilets, tap water for every household, and gas connections have increased people’s confidence and saved their time. And this saved time is being used to earn additional income for their families.

Friends,

Just last month, with your blessings, I completed twenty-five years as the head of government. The motto of our government has always been that when you empower the poor, the poor gain the courage to lift themselves out of poverty. I remember that when I was Chief Minister of Gujarat, I started the tradition of Garib Kalyan Melas with this very thought. These events focused on delivering welfare schemes directly to the poor. Poor citizens were invited onto the stage. They would take a pledge to defeat poverty and return home with renewed confidence.

Friends,

The work that I began twenty-five years ago continues uninterrupted even today. This is what I call Power to Empower. Power to Empower is true good governance. This transformation did not happen overnight. Previous governments grew tired of merely

raising slogans. We connected every link. We wove together the dreams of millions of lives. This is the result of years of thoughtful and well-planned efforts. And that is why fifty crore Indians have defeated poverty.

Friends,

When poverty declines, the benefits are not limited to those families that escape it. It injects new energy into the country's economy. It creates a new middle class. This neo-middle class brings new dreams. Its purchasing power drives markets. New opportunities emerge, from shops to factories. In other words, the reduction of poverty in India is taking the Indian economy to new heights.

Friends,

In this journey towards a Viksit Bharat, our farmer brothers and sisters also have a major role. Therefore, our government is continuously empowering farmers. However, due to adverse weather conditions in Maharashtra, many farming families are facing difficulties at present. Over the past few years, a great deal of work on water conservation has been done under the leadership of Devendra Fadnavis ji. But this natural disaster has created major challenges. I want to assure every farmer brother and sister in Maharashtra that in this difficult time, the NDA government stands firmly with them with full sensitivity and commitment. I am aware of the drought conditions in Maharashtra. The state government has already provided advance assistance as well. I have transferred the PM-Kisan funds. Please do not worry at all. We are standing with every farmer.

Friends,

I would also like to tell the people of the country that this is the season of festivals and celebrations. We must remember our farmer brothers and sisters. We must ensure that the joy of Diwali remains alive in their homes as well. This is also our social responsibility. We must not forget the difficulties faced by our drought-affected citizens, our farmers, and others living in villages. Together, we will face this challenge.

Friends,

Collective effort, united effort, is the lifebreath of a Viksit Bharat. With this spirit, we must remain dedicated to the development of the nation. Once again, my best wishes to all of you for these metro projects. My heartfelt greetings for the upcoming festivals. Thank you very much. People of Pune, repeat after me with full strength, raising both your hands:

Bharat Mata Ki Jai!

Bharat Mata Ki Jai!

Bharat Mata Ki Jai!

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

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