

**PRESIDENTIAL
ADDRESSES
TO
PARLIAMENT**

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LOK SABHA SECRETARIAT
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राष्ट्रपति
भारत गणतंत्र
PRESIDENT
REPUBLIC OF INDIA

MESSAGE

It gives me immense pleasure to learn that the Lok Sabha Secretariat is bringing out the third edition of the publication titled "Presidential Addresses to Parliament". Hailed as the Mother of Democracy, India has a unique parliamentary tradition tracing its origin to the Vedic times. The modern practice of the Presidential Address to Parliament owes its genesis to the century-old address of the Governor-General to the Legislative Assembly and Legislative Council in the Pre-Independent India. As the Head of the Nation and of Parliament, the President addresses the Houses of Parliament and delineates the policies, achievements and programmes of the Government as envisaged by the Constitution.

Through a compilation of the President's Addresses of the last seven decades, the Publication gives an insight into India's trials and tribulations, its developmental journey to become the fifth largest economy of the world today. I am sure this book will add immense value to the existing body of literature on India's policies and priorities.

I commend the Lok Sabha Secretariat for bringing out this valuable publication in a short span of time. I believe that the latest edition of this publication will be found useful by the parliamentarians, media persons, academics and all those interested in the study of parliamentary journey of our nation.

New Delhi;
January 05, 2023


(Droupadi Murmu)

PREFACE

Parliament of India is the very foundation of our vibrant and thriving democracy. Consisting of the President and the two Houses—the *Lok Sabha* and the *Rajya Sabha*, the Parliament epitomizes peoples' power, reflects their dreams and aspirations. Through the seventy-five eventful years of its journey since Independence, our Parliament has not only steered the nation on the path of peace, progress, and prosperity, but also shouldered the vital responsibility of making a blueprint for inclusive and sustainable development in this *Amrit Kaal* in collaboration with the executive.

It is the President of India, the head of the State, the Executive, and an integral part of the Parliament, on whom the Constitution bestows the responsibility of summoning, proroguing and addressing the Parliament. Presidential Address to Parliament, an important parliamentary procedure, thus, bears special significance for a democracy such as ours through which President informs the Parliament, and through the Parliament, the people of the country, about the political intent and policy priorities of the Government, about the achievements and future activities of the Government.

A solemn occasion and a ceremony of national importance, President's Address to Parliament, as provided in the Constitution (in Article 87), brings all the three constituents of Parliament together – the President and the two Houses of Parliament. It also marks the beginning of the parliamentary year and sets the tone for parliamentary business as the President addresses both Houses of Parliament, assembled together at the commencement of the first session each year and at the commencement of the first session after each general election to the House of the People, *i.e. Lok Sabha*.

Opening the floor of the Houses (of Parliament) for debate and discussion, the Address of the President offers ample opportunity to the Members to deliberate extensively on a wide range of issues and subjects touching upon almost all matters relating to the governmental functioning. It concludes generally with the reply of the Prime Minister. Motion of Thanks on the President's Address works as a guiding force in ensuring that there is consistency in our national plans, policies, and priorities.

I compliment the Lok Sabha Secretariat for bringing out this important publication on **Presidential Addresses to Parliament**, covering the Addresses

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of Presidents from 1950 to 2022. I express my sincere gratitude to the Hon'ble President of India, Smt. Droupadi Murmu ji for contributing an illuminating Foreword to the Publication which has added immense value to the new edition.

I am sure, the publication will be found useful and informative by the parliamentarians, public servants, scholars and citizens alike, besides all those who have interest in the constitutional and parliamentary democracy of the country.

New Delhi;
January 2023

OM BIRLA
Speaker, Lok Sabha

EDITOR'S NOTE

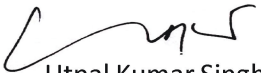
Research and Information Division of the Lok Sabha Secretariat has been bringing out publications of value for the use of Parliamentarians, legislators and all students of participatory democracy in India and abroad from time to time. It is absolutely imperative that the chronicle of our times, as mirrored by the goings-on in the Parliament, are documented and preserved through publications for posterity. The present edition of the Presidential Addresses to Parliament is a step in that direction.

The Address of the President of India to the Houses of Parliament assembled together is made at the first session of the Lok Sabha on its constitution after every general election and also at the commencement of first session of the year. The President's Address to Parliament lays out the policy intent and significant achievements of the Central Government for the benefit of the elected representatives and through them, the people of India. This Address symbolises the solemn affirmation of the principle of accountability of governments to the people of the nation. These Addresses open a fenestra into the thought processes of the government of the day on policy choices. Often, achievements of governments are also presented to the nation through these Addresses. Thus, Presidential Addresses are a treasure trove of information for law makers, researchers and anybody interested in understanding our journey as a parliamentary democracy.

The present edition attempts to update *Presidential Addresses to Parliament* published in 2015 by adding speeches made after that year. Thus, this publication will cover all Addresses of Presidents from January 1950 to January 2022.

I take this opportunity to express my appreciation to Shri Prasenjit Singh, Additional Secretary and his team members in the Research and Information Division of Lok Sabha Secretariat for their effort in bringing out this valuable publication. I also extend my thanks to officers and staff of the Editorial and Translation Services and the Printing Branch for their role in making this publication possible.

New Delhi;
January 2023


Utpal Kumar Singh,
Secretary General

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AIBP	Accelerated Irrigation Benefit Programme
AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
AIR	All India Radio
APDRP	Accelerated Power Development and Reforms Programme
APL	Above Poverty Line
ASEAN	Association of South-East Asian Nations
ASEM	Asia-Europe Meeting
ASHAs	Accredited Social Health Activists
AYUSH	Ayurveda, Yoga and Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homoeopathy
BALCO	Bharat Aluminium Company Limited
BIMSTEC	Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation
BPCL	Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited
BPL	Below Poverty Line
BRICS	Brazil, Russia, India, China and South-Africa
BSNL	Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited
CHOGM	Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting
CIL	Coal India Limited
CMC	Computer Maintenance Corporation
CPSEs	Central Public Sector Enterprises
CPSU	Communist Party of the Soviet Union
CRZ	Coastal Regulation Zone
CSIR	Council of Scientific and Industrial Research
DDT	Dichloro Diphenyl Trichloroethane
DMICDC	Delhi-Mumbai Industrial Corridor Development Corporation
DMU	Delivery Monitoring Unit
DNA	Deoxyribo Nucleic Acid
DRDO	Defence Research Development Organisation

DTH	Direct-to-Home
DVC	Damodar Valley Corporation
ECAFE	Economic Commission for Asia and Far East
ECS	Electronic Clearing System
EDUSAT	Educational Satellite
EEC	European Economic Community
EPC	Engineering, Procurement and Construction
EU	European Union
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
FII	Foreign Institutional Investor
GATT	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GDR	German Democratic Republic
GIAN	Global Initiative of Academic Networks
GM	Genetically Modified
GNP	Gross National Product
GRT	Gross Registered Tonnage
GSLV	Geo-synchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle
GST	Goods and Services Tax
GTA	Gorkhaland Territorial Administration
HBJ	Hazira-Bijapur-Jagdishpur
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
HUDCO	Housing and Urban Development Corporation
IBSA	India-Brazil-South Africa
ICAR	Indian Council of Agricultural Research
ICDS	Integrated Child Development Services
ICMR	Indian Council of Medical Research
ICT	Information Communication Technology
IDBI	Industrial Development Bank of India
IETF	International Engineering and Technology Fair
IITs	Indian Institutes of Technology
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IMF	International Monetary Fund

IMPRINT	Impacting Research, Innovation and Technology
INF	Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces
INSAT	Indian National Satellite
INSPIRE	Innovation in Science Pursuit for Inspired Research
IPCL	Indian Petrochemicals Corporation Limited
IRDP	Integrated Rural Development Programme
IRS	Indian Remote Sensing
ISI	Indian Statistical Institute
ISI	Inter Services Intelligence
ISO	International Organisation for Standardization
ISRO	Indian Space Research Organisation
IT	Information Technology
ITDC	India Tourism Development Corporation
ITI	Industrial Training Institute
JNNURM	Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission
KITSAT	Korea Institute of Technology Satellite
KVIC	Khadi and Village Industries Commission
LoC	Line of Control
LPG	Liquefied Petroleum Gas
LTTE	Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam
MCA	Ministry of Corporate Affairs
MBBS	Bachelor of Medicine, Bachelor of Surgery
METSAT	Meteorological Satellite
MFA	Multi Fiber Agreement
MGNREGS	Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme
MISA	Maintenance of Internal Security Act
MLA	Member of Legislative Assembly
MoDVAT	Modified Value Added Tax
MPLADS	Member of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme
MSMEs	Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises
MSP	Minimum Support Price
MTNL	Mahanagar Telephone Nigam Limited

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MTPA	Million Tonnes Per Annum
NABARD	National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development
NAFED	National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India Ltd.
NAM	Non-Aligned Movement
NCMP	National Common Minimum Programme
NDC	National Development Council
NEC	North-Eastern Council
NEFA	North-East Frontier Agency
NELP	New Exploration Licensing Policy
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
NHAI	National Highways Authority of India
NHDP	National Highways Development Project
NPE	National Policy on Education
NREGA	National Rural Employment Guarantee Act
NREP	National Rural Employment Programme
NRIs	Non-Resident Indians
NSS	National Service Scheme
NTC	National Textile Corporation
OBCs	Other Backward Classes
OCI	Overseas Citizenship of India
ONGC	Oil and Natural Gas Commission
PAHAL	Pratyaksh Hastantarit Labh
PDS	Public Distribution System
PIO	Persons of Indian Origin
PLO	Palestine Liberation Organisation
POTA	Prevention of Terrorism Act
PPP	Public-Private Partnership
PRASAD	Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spiritual Augmentation Drive
PSLV	Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle
PSUs	Public Sector Undertakings
PURA	Provision of Urban Amenities in Rural Areas
R&D	Research and Development

RBI	Reserve Bank of India
RLEGP	Rural Landless Employment Guarantee Programme
RTE	Right to Education
S&T	Science & Technology
SAARC	South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation
SAFTA	South Asian Free Trade Area
SANKALP	Skills Acquisition and Knowledge Awareness for Livelihood Promotion
SARDP-NE	Special Accelerated Road Development Programme in North East
SATYAM	Science & Technology of Yoga and Meditation
SCs	Scheduled Castes
SDR	Special Drawing Right
SEATO	Southeast Asia Treaty Organisation
SEBI	Securities and Exchange Board of India
SEBs	State Electricity Boards
SEZs	Special Economic Zones
SHG	Self-Help Group
SIT	Special Investigation Team
SMS	Short Message Services
SSI	Small Scale Industries
START	Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty
STD	Subscriber Trunk Dialing
STRIVE	Skill Strengthening for Industrial Value Enhancement
STs	Scheduled Tribes
SVANidhi	Street Vendor's Atmanirbhar Nidhi
SWAPO	South-West Africa People's Organisation
TB	Tuberculosis
TDS	Tax Deducted at Source
TPDS	Targeted Public Distribution System
TRAI	Telecom Regulatory Authority of India
TRIFED	Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India Limited
TRYSEM	Training of Rural Youth for Self Employment

TUBSAT	Technical University of Berlin Satellite
UAR	United Arab Republic
UDAN	Ude Desh Ka Aam Naagrik
UDAY	Ujwal DISCOM Assurance Yojana
UGC	University Grants Commission
UK	United Kingdom
ULFA	United Liberation Front of Assam
UMPPs	Ultra Mega Power Projects
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UPSC	Union Public Service Commission
USA	United States of America
USSR	United States of Soviet Socialist Republic
USTTAD	Upgrading the Skills and Rraining in Traditional Arts/ Crafts for Development Scheme
VAT	Value Added Tax
VRS	Voluntary Retirement Scheme
VSNL	Videsh Sanchaar Nigam Limited
WTO	World Trade Organisation

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PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESSES TO PARLIAMENT— AN INTRODUCTION

A symbol of solidarity, integrity and unity of the India, The President of India is the head of the Indian Republic with a primary duty to preserve the sanctity of the Constitution. The Constitution of India which came into force on 26 January 1950 provides for a bicameral Parliament consisting of the President and the two Houses known as the Council of States (Rajya Sabha) and the House of the People (Lok Sabha). The President is, therefore, an integral part of the Parliament.

As a representative of the nation as well as of the people the President is elected by an electoral college consisting of the elected members of both Houses of Parliament and the elected members of the Legislative Assemblies of the States. Though the President of India is a constituent part of Parliament, he does not sit or participate in the discussions in either of the two Houses. There are certain constitutional functions which he has to perform with respect to Parliament. For instance, as per article 53(1) of the Constitution, the executive power of the Union is vested in the President of India and is exercised by him either directly or through officers subordinate to him in accordance with the Constitution.

Constitutional Provisions

Articles 86 and 87 of the Constitution deal with the Address by the President. Article 86 confers a right on the President to address either House of Parliament or both Houses assembled together, and for that purpose require the attendance of members. However, since the commencement of the Constitution, the President has not so far addressed a House or Houses together under this provision.

Article 87(1) originally required the President to address both Houses of Parliament at the commencement of every session. The Constitution (First Amendment) Act, 1951, amended this provision to the present scenario where article 87 makes it incumbent upon the President to address both Houses of Parliament assembled together (in the Central Hall of Parliament House) at the commencement of the first session after each general election to the Lok Sabha and at the commencement of the first session of each year. The President's Address to both Houses of Parliament assembled together

is the most solemn and formal act as it is an important occasion in our scheme of governance as envisaged by the Constitution.

Historical Framework

The provision for Address by the Head of State to Parliament goes back to the year 1921 when the Central Legislature was set up for the first time under the Government of India Act, 1919. The Act provided for the Address by the Governor-General in his discretion to either House of the Central Legislature. Though there was no specific provision in the Act for the Governor-General's Address to both the Houses assembled together, in practice, however, during the years 1921 to 1946, the Governor-General addressed the Lower House separately as well as both the Houses assembled together on a number of occasions.

Government of India Act, 1935 provided that the Governor-General may address the Dominion Legislature but the Governor-General did not address the Constituent Assembly (Legislative) on any occasion during its existence from November 1947 to January 1950. After the Constitution came into force, the contemporary President, Dr. Rajendra Prasad addressed members of Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha for the first time on January 31, 1950.

Significance of President's Address

President's Address which corresponds to the 'Speech from the Throne in Britain' essentially highlights the policy statement of the Government and plays a vital role in informing the Parliament, the elected representatives and people of our country about government's policies, priorities, agenda, actions in the preceding year and plans and vision for the upcoming year. It also contains a brief account of the programmes of the Government business and indicates the main items of legislative business which are proposed to be brought before Parliament during the sessions to be held that year. Even during tough time of Covid-19, former President, Shri Ram Nath Kovind addressed the Parliament and appreciated the unmatched resolve and spirit of Indians in fighting Covid-19, which was once a century crisis.

Schedule, Decorum and Ceremony

A communication regarding commencement of a session is received from the Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs. When the President has to

address both Houses of Parliament assembled together, the Ministry also informs about the date and time at which the President will address. However, the information regarding the Address is not given in the summons. Members are informed about the date, time and the venue of the President's Address through a paragraph in a Bulletin. No other business is transacted till the President has addressed both Houses assembled together. This is done in order to give precedence to the President's Address over all other business.

Members of both Houses of Parliament assemble together in the Central Hall of the Parliament House where the President delivers his Address whereby utmost dignity and decorum befitting that occasion is maintained. Members assemble in the Central Hall of Parliament sufficiently before the arrival of the President for the Address. Except for the rows reserved for Ministers, Deputy Chairman/Deputy Speaker, Leaders of Opposition parties/groups in both Houses, Members of Panel of Chairpersons and Chairpersons of Parliamentary Committees, members occupy other seats which are not specifically allotted or earmarked.

The President arrives at the Parliament House (north-west portico) in the State coach or Limousine car attended by his Secretary and Military Secretary and escorted by his bodyguards. When the President alights from the coach or car at the Parliament House, the bodyguards give the 'National Salute', and the President is received at the gate by the Chairman, Rajya Sabha; the Prime Minister; the Speaker, Lok Sabha; the Minister of Parliamentary Affairs; and Secretaries-General of the two Houses.

The President is then conducted to the Central Hall in procession. As soon as the Presidential procession enters the Central Hall, the Marshal of the Lok Sabha announces the arrival of the President and the trumpeteers give a fanfare till the President arrives at the dais. Members rise in their places and remain standing until the President has taken his seat. On reaching the floor of the Central Hall in front of the dais the procession bifurcates: the President and the Presiding Officers move towards their seats on the dais—the Chairman, Rajya Sabha, to the right and the Speaker, Lok Sabha, to the left of the President who occupies the middle seat; the Prime Minister and the Minister of Parliamentary Affairs occupy the seats facing dais; the Secretary-General, Rajya Sabha, Secretary to the President and two Aides-de-camp (ADCs) move towards the chairs placed in the pit of the Central Hall on the right hand side of the dais and the Secretary-General, Lok Sabha, Military Secretary and two ADCs move towards the chairs at the

left hand side of the dais. Two ADCs stand behind the President's Chair on the dais.

Immediately thereafter, the National Anthem is played by the band of the Rashtrapati Bhawan which is positioned in one of the Lobbies of the Central Hall. Thereafter, as the President sits down, the Presiding Officers and members and visitors in the galleries resume their seats. The President then reads the Address in Hindi or English. The other version of the Address in English or Hindi, as the case may be is generally read out by the Vice-President. The Vice-President since 2004 has been reading the first and concluding paragraphs of the Hindi or English version and the rest of the Address is being treated as read.

After the conclusion of the Address, the President rises in his seat, followed by the members and visitors in the galleries when the National Anthem is played again. The President, thereafter, leaves the Central Hall in a procession which is formed in like manner as at the time of his arrival. The members remain standing till the procession leaves the Central Hall.

Separate Sitting and Laying a Copy on the Table

When members of the two Houses of Parliament assemble together to hear the President's Address, it does not constitute a sitting of the Lok Sabha (or the Rajya Sabha) since a sitting of Lok Sabha or Rajya Sabha or a joint sitting of both the Houses is duly constituted only when it is presided over by the Speaker or any other member competent to preside under the Constitution or the Rules. To incorporate the address delivered by the President in the proceedings of the House, a separate sitting of the House is held half-an-hour after the conclusion of the President's Address when a copy each of the Hindi and the English version of the Address duly authenticated by the President is laid on the Table by the Secretary-General.

It is a convention that printed copies of the Address, received from the President's Secretariat, are distributed to members and others only after a copy thereof has been laid on the Table. A copy each of the Hindi and the English versions of the Address is distributed to members in the lobby of the House. Such of the members as do not get their copies from the lobby are requested to obtain them from the Publications Counter.

Discussion in the House by Motion of Thanks

The Constitution requires that provision shall be made by the rules regulating the procedure of either House for the allotment of time for

discussion of the matters referred to in the President's Address. Under article 87(2), as originally enacted, the provision was required to be made by the rules 'for the precedence of such discussion over other business of the House'. By the Constitution (First Amendment) Act, 1951, these words were omitted. Thus, the discussion on the Address takes place a few days after it is delivered and in the intervening period other business is transacted.

The Speaker, in consultation with the Leader of the House, allots time for the discussion of the matters referred to in the President's Address. The discussion takes place on a Motion of Thanks moved by a member and seconded by another member. According to an established practice, the mover and the seconder of the Motion are selected by the Prime Minister and invariably belong to the ruling party. The notice of the Motion, given by a member and seconded by another, is received through the Minister of Parliamentary Affairs (and through the Leader of the House in case the Prime Minister is not the Leader of the House), and after it is admitted by the Speaker, the Motion is published in the Bulletin and the List of Business.

On the days allotted for discussion, the House is at liberty to discuss the matters referred to in the Address. The scope of discussion on the Address is very wide and the entire administration is thrown open for discussion. Even matters which are not specifically mentioned in the Address are brought into discussion through amendments to the Motion of Thanks. The only limitations are that members cannot refer to matters which are not the direct responsibility of the Government of India, and that the name of the President cannot be brought in during the debate since the Government and not the President is responsible for the contents of the Address.

Amendments to the Motion of Thanks

Notices of amendments to the Motion of Thanks can be given only after the President has delivered the Address. Lists of amendments are, however, circulated to members only after the notice of Motion of Thanks is received and published in the Bulletin. A member is permitted to table not more than ten amendments to the Motion of Thanks (Under Direction 42). Notices of amendments to the Motion of Thanks are tabled by members with reference to matters referred to in the Address as well as to matters

which, in the opinion of the movers thereof, the Address had failed to mention. The amendments are moved by members in such form as is considered appropriate by the Speaker.

At the end, generally the Prime Minister replies to the debate on President's Address but it is in order for any other Minister to do so. After the Prime Minister has replied to the debate, the amendments that had been moved are disposed of and the Motion of Thanks put to the Vote of the House. If during the course of his reply to the debate the Prime Minister announces the decision of the Council of Ministers to resign, the Motion of Thanks is declared infructuous and not proceeded with.

After the Motion is carried, it is conveyed to the President directly by the Speaker/Chairman through a letter. The President also acknowledges the receipt of the Motion through a message to the Speaker/Chairman. On receipt of the message, the Speaker/Chairman reads it out to the House. However, if the message from the President is received at a time when any of the House is not in the session, then the same is notified in the Bulletin for information of members.

Dr. RAJENDRA PRASAD

ADDRESS TO PROVISIONAL PARLIAMENT—31 JANUARY 1950

Session	—	First Session
President of India	—	Dr. Rajendra Prasad
Prime Minister of India	—	Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru
Speaker, Provisional Parliament	—	Shri G.V. Mavalankar

MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT,

As I stand here today to greet you, representatives of the people of India, my mind is filled with emotion, and the recent past of India, with its travail and struggle, passes before my eyes. We meet in this sovereign Parliament of the Republic of India, and the high enterprise of serving our motherland and the millions of our countrymen has been entrusted to us, That is an immense and sacred trust and, as your President, I approach it with humility and prayer.

On this historic occasion our thoughts naturally turn to Mahatma Gandhi and our hearts pay homage to him. Let us accept our great task in the spirit of the Father of the Nation, who brought us our freedom, and let us remember always the message that he gave us, the message of unity and goodwill between all the people of India, of communal harmony, of the abolition of class distinctions and of those based on birth, caste or religion, and the evolution of a peaceful, cooperative India, which gives opportunities of progress to all her citizens.

It is the firm policy of my Government to maintain peace and friendship with all the nations of the world and to help in every way possible in the maintenance of world peace. The Republic of India inherits no enmities or traditional rivalries with other nations and my Government intend continuing a policy directed towards securing peace in the world and avoiding any alignment which leads to hostilities with any nation.

India is a sovereign democratic Republic, but she has decided to continue her association with the Commonwealth of Nations. That is a unique development, new to constitutional law and history. Thereby we do not limit our freedom in any way, but we indicate our desire for continued friendship and co-operation with the group of nations represented in the Commonwealth. My Prime Minister recently attended the Conference of Commonwealth Foreign Ministers held in Colombo. That conference was an

example of how independent nations can meet together and discuss, in a friendly way, the great problems that face the world and endeavour to find common ways of action, without in any way infringing the independence and sovereignty of one another.

Our relations with foreign powers are friendly and my Government have exchanged diplomatic representation with a very large number of countries. Treaties of friendship have been concluded with Switzerland, a country with a great tradition of democratic freedom, and with Afghanistan with whom we have been bound by cultural and historical ties since the dawn of history. Negotiations have been proceeding for treaties of friendship and commerce with Iran, Nepal and the United States of America. As you are aware, my Prime Minister visited this great country recently and his visit led to a greater understanding and respect and closer ties between India and the United States.

My Government have recently accorded *de Jure* recognition to the new Government of China and it is hoped that an exchange of diplomatic representatives will take place soon. With this great country we have had friendship and cultural contacts for more than two thousand years. I trust that those friendly contacts will be maintained and will help in preserving the peace of Asia and the world.

With the nations of Europe, America and Australasia, India is developing friendly contacts. It is natural that India should be even more interested in the mother-continent of Asia, of which she is a part, as well as in Africa. Her primary interest is in the freedom of peoples still subject and in the removal of all barriers that come in the way of the full development of nations and peoples. She is entirely opposed to the continuation of colonial rule, in any shape or form, as well as to any kind of racial discrimination. In Asia freedom is on the march; at the same time there is trouble and turmoil in some parts of it. I earnestly trust that out of this turmoil will emerge peace and freedom and co-operative relations between all the countries of Asia.

An historic event took place recently in the establishment of the free and independent United States of Indonesia. We have welcomed this more particularly because of the very close relations, both in the past and in the present, between the people of India and the people of Indonesia. It has been an honour and privilege for us to welcome the President of the United States of Indonesia in our midst and to convey to him and to his people our greetings and good wishes.

India has large numbers of her children living in countries abroad, notably in Africa, in Fiji, in the West Indies, in the island of Mauritius and elsewhere. Our advice to them has always been that they should identify themselves with the indigenous people and look upon the country of adoption as their real home.

I regret to say that our relations with our neighbour country, Pakistan, are not as good as they should be and there are several matters in dispute between us. Our history and culture; as well as the unalterable facts of geography, compel both India and Pakistan to live in friendly co-operation with each other. But the grievous wound caused by recent events will take some time to heal. It is my Government's policy to endeavour to help in every way this process of healing. In pursuance of this policy, my Government have proposed to the Government of Pakistan that both the Governments should make a solemn declaration for the avoidance of war as a method for the settlement of any disputes between them, and to resort to negotiation, mediation, arbitration or reference to some international tribunal, in order to settle such disputes. I trust that the Pakistan Government will accept this offer in the spirit in which it has been made and thus help to reduce the unfortunate tension that has existed between these two countries.

One of the principal causes of tension between India and Pakistan is the dispute over the future of Jammu and Kashmir. The matter is before the Security Council and I wish to say nothing at this stage that may prejudice the prospect of a just and peaceful settlement by the efforts of that body. My Government have repeatedly declared their intention that the people of the State should themselves decide freely whether they will remain acceded to India. That policy remains unaltered. But the conditions which will make a free declaration of the will of the people possible have not yet been established. Until that happens and a satisfactory solution to the difficult problem has been found, India will continue to discharge her obligations to protect The State and its people against aggression.

During the last two and a half years the map of India has changed greatly. Hundreds of States have disappeared or have been formed in larger units. This remarkable change has been brought about in a peaceful manner and the process of integration of over 500 States is now practically complete. Their number has been reduced to 16 units. The federal functions of the Unions and States will be taken over by the Central Government with effect from the 1st April. My Government propose to bring forward a Bill during the current session which will bring about legislative uniformity, in so far as the Central laws are concerned, between the States and the rest of India.

The economic situation in the country has been a matter of grave concern to my Government. Suffering from many generations of colonial rule, India had to face the heavy burdens of the world war. Her economy was badly shaken; there was shortage of essential materials, and inflation. It is the primary objective of my Government to raise the standard of living of the people. Owing to the great difficulties which have followed from partition and which have cast a heavy burden on our finances, the progress

we had hoped for has not been made. The burden of defence expenditure has been great, as also expenditure on the relief and rehabilitation of millions of displaced persons. The deficit in food has compelled Government to import large quantities of foodstuffs at a heavy cost to the country. My Government have aimed at stopping inflation and bringing about gradually a lowering of prices. All these additional burdens and certain upsets which have taken place from time to time in our economy, have delayed our progress in many important aspects of nation-building, among them being education and health, to which my Government attach great importance. My Government regret this delay greatly. It was essential, however, that in the difficult circumstances which the country had to face, every kind of economy should be practised, so that a sound foundation might be laid for future progress. There has been some definite progress in economy of expenditure.

Our railways, which had suffered grievously during the war and immediately after the Partition, have registered a welcome improvement in many directions. With the integration of the railways of Indian States and Unions of States with the Indian Government Railways from the first of April next, there will be practically one entirely nationalised railway system operating throughout the land.

It is my Government's intention to establish a Planning Commission so that the best use can be made of such resources as we possess for the development of the nation. Such planning will need the fullest help from statistical information. It is proposed therefore to establish a Central Statistical Organisation. It must be remembered that planning must have clear objectives and that any widespread effort can only succeed with the full co-operation of the people. It is only when governmental agencies and popular enthusiasm and co-operation are yoked together that large-scale economic and social development can take place.

My Government have also been considering for sometime past the reorganisation of the machinery of Government in order to make it more efficient and to avoid waste.

I have referred to the large expenditure on our defence forces. My Government, wedded as they are to the promotion of peace in India and outside, have had to face painful dilemmas during the past two and a half critical years. With all the desire to reduce defence expenditure, they could not take the risk of putting the country in jeopardy at a time when evil forces were endangering its security both within and from outside. The first essential of freedom is the strength to preserve it and no country can take any risk in such a vital matter. Hence the process of demobilisation, which should have taken place after the World War, Was delayed and

slowed down. I am glad to say that our defence services have acquitted themselves admirably and have gained the praise and approbation of competent experts. While the security of the country must remain the paramount obligation of any Government, they are anxious to reduce expenditure on defence, in so far as this is possible, and they propose to do so as a measure of economy as well as a gesture of peace.

Food has been a heavy item in our national expenditure and a great deal of thought and effort has been devoted to solving this problem. My Government have declared that we must make good the deficiency in food by the end of 1951. At the same time it is necessary to ensure adequate production of cotton and jute, which are essential industrial raw materials in short supply. I am glad to say that definite progress is being made in regard to food production and we are proceeding with both short-term and long-term schemes for adding to it. Food procurement is an essential part of our short-term scheme. Fortunately the harvest generally has been good though there has been lack of winter rainfall in certain areas and, in Madras, almost complete failure. The campaign for growing more food requires the full co-operation of the people and more especially the peasantry. Among the major schemes before the country are certain river valley projects. Three of these, viz. the Damodar Valley, the Bhakra Dam and Hirakud are under construction at present. Government attach great importance to these, from the point of view of irrigation and food and hydro-electric power.

I am glad that scientific research is making considerable progress in the country. It is ultimately on science and the applications of science that all progress depends. Recently two great national research laboratories have been started. One of these is the National Chemical Laboratory at Poona and the other, the National Physical Laboratory in Delhi, Both are magnificent research institutions, it is proposed to have nine more national research laboratories, of which five will be working this year, in addition to the two mentioned above. These laboratories will not only carry out research work of all kinds but will also be feeders to industry and will thus help in industrialisation.

The Well being of the country depends very largely on the welfare of labour, both urban and agricultural. In the course of the last two years the Factories Act and the Minimum Wages Act have been enacted and beginning has been made with schemes of social security by enacting the Employees' State Insurance Act of 1948 and the Coal Mines Provident Fund and Bonus Schemes Act, 1948. My Government will shortly bring before you two comprehensive Bills dealing with labour relations and trade union. An all-India agricultural labour enquiry is at present in progress and, when it is completed, it will assist Government in devising measures for improving the lot of those who are engaged in agricultural production.

The problem of rehabilitation of the large number of evacuees from Pakistan is of great importance not only for them but also for the country. My Government have devoted their earnest attention to it and achieved a measure of success, and a large number of people have been settled and rehabilitated. But it is also true that a large number still remain to be settled and have suffered great hardships. My Government are determined to proceed with the rehabilitation of these displaced persons as quickly as possible.

A statement of the estimated receipts and expenditure of the Government of India will be laid before you in due course during this session and you will be asked to approve the financial proposals of my Government.

There are twenty Bills pending before you. Some of them have passed the Committee stage and some others have already been discussed in principle. A few of them, which are still under consideration by the Committees, will be brought before you with their recommendations during the course of this session.

A few ordinances have been issued before the commencement of the present session. Such of them as require permanent legislation will be brought before you in the shape of new Bills.

Among the other legislative measures that it is intended to bring before you during this session, the following may be specially mentioned:

A Bill to amend the Indian Income Tax Act in the light of the recommendations made by the Income Tax Investigation Committee, a Bill to extend the duration of the Import and Export Control Act, a Bill to give protection to certain industries, a Bill to provide for the conservation of India's coal resources and the regulation of the coal mining industry, and a Bill to provide for the proper regulation and development of inter-State rivers and river valleys—these are the more important measures which my Government propose to place before you. They also propose, if the preliminary work could be got through in time, to introduce a comprehensive Representation of the People Bill providing for various election matters under the new Constitution.

I have given you a broad survey of the work in the legislative field. My Government will announce to you from time to time the precise form in which these and other legislative measures and important motions relating to matters of general public interest will be brought before you and will explain to you the degree of urgency in respect of them.

I shall now leave you to your labours. We live in a troubled world scarcely recovered from the consequences of the war, facing crisis after crisis and enveloped by suspicion, bitterness and fear. Nothing good can

come out of these. We have heavy and difficult tasks before us and the only way to face them is with courage, co-operation and hard work. Above all I trust we shall always remember that the foundations of our nation's progress can be well and truly laid only if they are based on right objectives and right action and on integrity of mind and purpose. Great tasks cannot be accomplished by petty means, nor can good results flow from evil methods. We have to face the great challenge of our generation. I am convinced that we can face it, if we prove true to the great ideals that the Father of the Nation placed before us.

I pray that wisdom and tolerance and the spirit of concerted effort may guide you in your deliberations.

ADDRESS TO PROVISIONAL PARLIAMENT—31 JULY 1950

Session	—	Second Session
President of India	—	Dr. Rajendra Prasad
Prime Minister of India	—	Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru
Speaker, Provisional Parliament	—	Shri G.V. Mavalankar

MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT,

We have met here today earlier than was intended when the last session of Parliament was adjourned, because of the great emergency that has suddenly arisen to confront the world. The shadow of war has descended again upon this earth, and though fighting is still restricted in its scope, fear of its extension to wider areas grips the world.

Since the last session of Parliament, my Government has been reconstituted in accordance with the procedure laid down in our Constitution. On May 5th, 1950, the Prime Minister, Shri Jawaharlal Nehru, resigned his office so that I might take action to appoint a Council of Ministers under the new Constitution. I accepted his resignation and called on him to accept responsibility again as Prime Minister and advise me in regard to the appointment of other Ministers. He agreed to do so and, in accordance with his advice, I have appointed, under Article 75, a Council of Ministers to advise me in the exercise of my functions and be responsible to this House for the good government of India. Most of these Ministers are members of the old Council of Ministers.

My Government are deeply concerned over the present conflict in Korea. India supported the first two resolutions of the Security Council on this subject since, apart from border incidents, the aggression of North Korea had been established by the weight and proven preparedness of its onslaught. The course of events has confirmed this conclusion. It has been India's policy not to submit to aggression, for submission to aggression, in any part of the world, is to invite its repetition in other parts and thus to imperil peace and freedom. While India supported the first two resolutions of the Security Council in regard to the conflict in Korea, she made it clear that she would continue to pursue an independent policy based on the promotion of world peace and determined by her ideals and objectives.

My Government have been conscious of the threat to world peace inherent in a continuation of this conflict and because of the possibility of its extension. It was for this reason that my Prime Minister appealed to Premier Stalin and to the Secretary of State of the United States of America, Mr. Dean Acheson, that the authority and power of these two great countries should be exerted to localise the armed struggle in Korea, and to break the deadlock in the Security Council of the United Nations over the admission of the People's Republic of China, so that the present international tension might be eased and the way opened to a solution of the Korean problem by discussion in the Security Council. This suggestion was not intended to condone aggression or to weaken the authority of the United Nations; it was meant to add to the strength and moral force of the organisation and to facilitate the early termination of a dangerous situation. Had it been acceptable to all concerned, my Government would have actively cooperated in bringing about a settlement through the agency of the United Nations and on the basis of the two resolutions of the Security Council that it has supported.

It is my earnest hope that the Korean conflict will soon be ended and world peace assured through the unremitting efforts of all peace-loving nations. Peace remains the paramount need of mankind and its one hope of survival.

My Prime Minister recently paid visits to the United States of Indonesia, to Malaya and to the Union of Burma*. His visit has strengthened the close and friendly relations which existed between our country and these countries of South-East Asia. The conflict in Korea has made it even more necessary than before that there should be co-operation among the independent countries of Asia for the maintenance of peace and the preservation of their own freedom. I rejoice that the Government and people of Indonesia are strengthening the foundations of their newly-acquired freedom, and that Burma, after long travail and suffering, is overcoming her difficulties.

The Prime Minister of Pakistan was recently in Delhi as our guest. My Prime Minister and he discussed the Kashmir issue with the U.N. Representative, Sir Owen Dixon. These conversations, which lasted five days, enabled the parties to examine fully the principles that ought to govern the arrangements for ascertaining the will of the people of Kashmir and the practical problem of applying these principles. It was natural that, in the course of this examination, new points of view should come to light. These also are being examined and it is proposed that the two Prime Ministers should again meet in Karachi with the U.N. Representative to continue exploration of ways and means to find a just, peaceful and lasting solution of the Kashmir problem.

* Now known as Myanmar.

A previous meeting of the two Prime Ministers in Delhi in April last had led to an agreement, which eased a dangerous situation and brought relief to minority communities. While this Agreement brought about a significant change for the better in the situation and created a more friendly atmosphere, many difficulties persisted and migrations of large numbers of people continued. The two Prime Ministers, during their recent meeting, examined the working of this Agreement with a view to overcoming the difficulties that impede the return of normal conditions and of a sense of security among the minorities. My Government are fully conscious of the need for improvement and of the sad plight of large numbers of people, whom the compulsion of events has forced to migrate from their homes. The Central Ministers of India and Pakistan, responsible for the implementation of the Agreement of April last, will confer with my Prime Minister and later with the Prime Minister of Pakistan. The Chairmen of the Minority Commissions of East Bengal and West Bengal will also be invited to Delhi and Karachi respectively to meet my Prime Minister and the Prime Minister of Pakistan.

Another problem of far-reaching importance, both to India and Pakistan, is that of evacuee properties. Progress has thus far been slow, but the approach of both Governments to this problem, as recent conversations have indicated, is inspired by a desire to find an early solution.

Honourable Members will recall that, last February, an agreement was reached between the Governments of India, Pakistan and the Union of South Africa to hold, at a later date in the course of this year, a conference for the discussion of the Indian problem in South Africa. This agreement presupposed that nothing would occur between the preliminary conference held in February and the main conference to vitiate the atmosphere for a friendly adjustment. Unfortunately, this expectation has not been fulfilled. The administration of existing oppressive laws, applicable to the Indian community in South Africa, has been tightened and the enactment of the Group Areas Law has reaffirmed and extended the application of the Union Government's policy of segregation, to which the Government of India have consistently and firmly objected over a period of nearly seventy years. My Government, therefore, decided that no useful purpose would be served by their participation in the conference which the Union Government had proposed should be held early this autumn. They feel that the subject must again be raised in the United Nations and have asked for its inclusion in the agenda of the General Assembly of the Organisation, which is due to meet in New York in September.

Honourable Members are aware that the economic situation in the country has been a matter of constant concern to my Government. With a view to formulating a plan for the balanced development of the productive resources of the country and thus ensuring the maximum possible social

and economic progress, a Planning Commission has been established, which is applying itself with ability and earnestness to its work. The prevailing crises and complexities in international affairs add greatly to the difficulties of the economic situation. The new threat to world peace, which affects every country, has potentialities of grave import to our economy. The situation calls for constant vigilance and examination of measures likely to assist in holding the price level. The greatest economy has to be practised in all Departments of Governments and restraint in spending exercised by the public.

The food situation continues to be given the highest priority by my Government. The overall position in regard to it shows considerable improvement. There has been record procurement of wheat in the *rabi* areas. This, coupled with imports, for which arrangements have already been made, will place an adequate quantity of wheat at our disposal. As regards rice, however, the procurement in certain areas has not been satisfactory. In some States, notably Madras, West Bengal and Bihar, difficulties have arisen and these have been added to by natural disasters and by the influx of large numbers of migrants. Government are taking every step to prevent the development of any serious situation, partly by supplying wheat and millets and partly by importing rice. My Government are determined to overcome all these difficulties and are confident of the success of the programme that has been laid down to make India self-sufficient in regard to food by the end of 1951.

Considerable progress has been made in the rehabilitation of displaced persons. But a great deal remains to be done and large numbers of these refugees are undergoing privation and suffering. As the problem was being brought under control in the North, a large and continuing influx of migrants in Bengal, Assam and Tripura upset previous calculations and added greatly to its complexity and magnitude. This problem can only be handled effectively on an all-India basis and with the co-operation of all States.

The commerce of India, during the past year, gives us a better picture than that of the previous year. As a result of the measures taken to increase India's exports and to regulate imports, with due regard to the availability of foreign exchange, the year ending 30th June 1950 closed with a credit balance in regard to foreign exchange. This is a welcome and striking contrast to the position for the previous year, which closed with a deficit of Rs. 247 crore. Our exports during this year have been double those of the corresponding period in the previous year.

Though the main purpose of this session of Parliament is to consider the international situation, Government will place before the House such other matters as is convenient for Honourable Members to consider during its

brief duration. A supplementary statement of estimated receipts and expenditure of the Government of India will be laid before you for your approval. Some ordinances, which have been issued since Parliament adjourned, will be placed before you in the shape of new Bills. There are other legislative measures and important motions relating to matters of general public interest, which will be brought before you during the course of this session. Of these, the more important are: The Mines Bill, The Contingency Fund Bill, The Indian Finance (Amendment) Bill and the Electoral Bill.

ADDRESS TO PROVISIONAL PARLIAMENT—14 NOVEMBER 1950

Session	—	Third Session
President of India	—	Dr. Rajendra Prasad
Prime Minister of India	—	Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru
Speaker, Provisional Parliament	—	Shri G.V. Mavalankar

MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT,

We met here three and a half months ago at a special session of Parliament to consider a crisis that had arisen in international affairs. That crisis led the United Nations to face aggression in Korea and, after many trials and difficulties, the forces of aggression were checked and thrust back. But recent developments have deepened that crisis and the world, hungering for peace, appears to stand perilously on the verge of war. In our own country we have had to face unparalleled calamities. A great earthquake and subsequent floods brought disaster to our North-Eastern State of Assam. In many other States there were also mighty floods bringing destruction in their terrain; lack of rain in certain other areas ruined not only the present harvest but also gravely affected the season to come. Thus we meet today at a moment of grave trial, both external and internal, and it will require all our wisdom, courage and restraint to face these perils and dangers and work for the good of our people and the peace of humanity.

During these difficult months that have passed, my Government have laboured consistently in the international sphere for the preservation of world peace and to prevent the extension of the Korean war. Peace is recognised by all to be the paramount need of humanity, and yet fear drives nations in a direction which endangers peace. World peace can only be assured if the great nations of the world seek it and work for it; war may come even if one of them considers it unavoidable. This Parliament has expressed its will to peace on many occasions and my Government will continue to labour to that end to the best of their ability. I earnestly hope that the statesmen gathered together at Lake Success, and those who are in charge of the foreign policies of nations, will succeed in their endeavours to prevent the spread of war. While aggression has to be met and evil cannot be condoned, it has to be remembered that war itself is an evil which brings even greater evils in its train. The peace that we seek and that is worth preserving is a living peace and not the peace of the grave.

The conflict in Korea has already brought tremendous destruction to that country and its people and a like fate would befall many other countries if war spreads. I pray that the leaders of the great nations of the world, on whom rests a great responsibility will take counsel together and yet save the world.

My Government have been consistently following a policy of friendship with our great neighbour country, China. It was a matter of deep regret to us, therefore, that the Chinese Government should have undertaken military operations in Tibet, when the way of peaceful negotiations was open to them. Tibet is not only a neighbour of India but also has had close cultural and other ties with her for ages past. India must, therefore, necessarily concern herself with what happens in Tibet and hope that autonomy of this peaceful country will be preserved.

Recently, His Majesty the King of Nepal sought shelter with his family in our Embassy in Kathmandu, as certain differences had arisen between him and his Government, and expressed a desire to come to India. His Majesty has now come to Delhi and we have welcomed him as our honoured guest. Nepal is a country with the closest relations with India and a treaty of friendship was signed between India and Nepal only a few months ago. It has been and remains my Government's desire to respect the independence of, and to maintain friendly relations with, Nepal and to see her people achieve political and economic progress.

The recent natural calamities and disasters in our country have seriously affected the food situation. Ripening harvests have been destroyed by floods and in some cases even stores of foodgrains have been washed away. What is more disturbing is that even the coming harvest has been seriously affected by drought over wide areas, notably in Bihar, where a calamity of such magnitude has not occurred in living memory. This has necessitated large imports of foodgrains from foreign countries. But, even so, we are likely to experience grave difficulties during the concluding weeks of this year. It has become essential, therefore, for us to use, to the best advantage, the foodgrains that may be available in India. Private hoarding, in such circumstances, is a crime of the first magnitude. States which have some surplus foodstuffs must share them with other less fortunate areas. All of us must avoid every kind of waste and try to help those in need. The situation is grave. It does not help to minimise it; it helps still less to exaggerate it or to use the language of panic about it. We have to understand the position fully and deal with it with determination and a grim resolve to bear all necessary privations.

In spite of the disasters we have had affecting our food position and the difficulties we are experiencing today, there is no going back on our programme of self-sufficiency. We have made considerable progress in our

food production and we hope to do better next year. It must be remembered that our present food crisis is due to very extraordinary and abnormal causes and there is no reason to give up our objective of producing enough food for the normal consumption of our country by March, 1952.

To meet the situation arising out of the rise in prices, my Government have taken steps to control the supply and prices of eleven articles, to liberalise imports, and to check anti-social practices. These steps can only succeed with the full cooperation of the people themselves.

I regret to say that trade between India and Pakistan has largely been at a standstill because no decision has yet been reached about the par value of the Pakistan rupee. It was hoped that this question would be settled immediately after the recent meeting of the International Monetary Fund in Paris, but its consideration was postponed. My Government have made a proposal to the Pakistan Government for the final decision of two of the major issues between India and Pakistan. They have suggested a tribunal of the highest standing to decide the issues of evacuee property and canal waters. I trust that this proposal will be accepted and thus two serious causes of conflict between the two countries will be removed. Evacuee properties concern vast numbers of people both in India and Pakistan and an early decision in regard to them would not only bring relief to these people, but would also help in improving the relations between the two countries.

I am glad that as a result of the Indo-Pakistan Agreement of April 8th, 1950, there has been a gradual improvement of conditions and a flow back of migrants to their original homes.

It has become even more necessary than before that we should apply our limited resources to the best advantage and that we should explore all avenues, which will help in developing the country. The problems that face us cannot be solved unless there is such development. The Planning Commission has been strenuously labouring, in cooperation with the Ministries of the Central Government and the State Governments, to lay down a preliminary plan as well as to prepare a plan for a longer term. It is hoped that the short-term plan will be placed before the country before long. Meanwhile, the three great river valley projects—the Bhakra, Damodar and Hirakud—are making substantial progress. Scientific research has also made considerable progress; and a number of new national laboratories have been opened.

Progress has been made in the rehabilitation of displaced persons and some of the new townships, such as Faridabad, Nilokheri, Rajpura, Kandla and Fulia, have now taken shape and most of them are functioning. In regard to displaced persons from East Pakistan, the position has been fluid because of movements of migrants in both directions. One million and one

hundred thousand of such displaced persons have been settled under various schemes on land or in shops. There is still a camp population of 250,000 chiefly in West Bengal and also in Bihar, Orissa, Tripura and Assam. Steps are being taken to rehabilitate this camp population. Much remains to be done for the displaced persons from East Pakistan.

More accurate figures are available for the displaced persons from West Pakistan. These totalled about 5 million. Of these 600,000 families, comprising about 3 million persons, were offered allotment of land with some help for equipment. Of these, 500,000 persons, who had secured allotment of land, preferred to live in towns. The displaced persons in towns thus came to about 2,500,000. Some of these showed enterprise and made their own arrangements. Government had to provide housing and gainful employment for others. In regard to housing 2,070,000 have been given accommodation in evacuee houses, reconditioned barracks, and in newly-built houses. In addition plots have been developed for private construction and houses are being built all over the country.

In regard to providing gainful occupation, shops and business premises have been allotted to 54,000 persons and about 1,700,000 have been given assistance through loans or employment or vocational and technical training. Thus a great deal has been done in regard to housing and rehabilitation of displaced persons from West Pakistan though the standards achieved are unfortunately not high. The settlement of the evacuee property question would help considerably in the solution of this problem.

My Government have been anxious to hold the General Elections for Parliament and the State Legislatures as early as possible in accordance with the new Constitution. These elections will be on a scale which has had no parallel in any country at any time and it is estimated that the electors will number over 170 million. The preparation of electoral rolls and the delimitations of constituencies involve great labour both for the Central and State Governments. Every effort has been made to complete all preparations so as to be able to hold the elections in April-May, 1951. It is important that a firm date should be fixed and adhered to, as changes at a later stage would be exceedingly embarrassing to all concerned. The present position is that Parliament has not yet finalised many matters connected with elections and progress has thus far been made on various assumptions which may or may not be justified. This introduces an element of uncertainty. Some States have also informed us that it is not possible for them to be ready for elections by April-May, 1951. In Bihar the unprecedented deterioration of the food position has created formidable difficulties. My Government have carefully reviewed the situation in all its aspects and taken into consideration both official and non-official viewpoints. They have come to the conclusion that any date in April-May next will give rise

to serious difficulties and cannot, in the circumstances, be considered a firm date. They have therefore decided to fix definitely the date for the General Elections in the second-half of November or early December, 1951.

A supplementary statement of estimated receipts and expenditure of the Government of India will be laid before you for your approval.

There are twenty-one Bills pending before you. Some of these Bills, which are at present under consideration of your Select Committees, will be brought before you with their recommendations during the course of the session.

After the last session of Parliament, it became necessary to promulgate eight Ordinances. Out of these, four deal with matters in respect of which Bills are pending before you, and the remaining four will be placed before you in the form of new Bills.

There are other legislative measures and motions relating to matters of general public interest which will also be placed before you during the session. Of these the more important ones are: the Representation of the People (Amendment) Bill; the Income Tax (Amendment) Bill; and the Finance Commission Bill.

ADDRESS TO PROVISIONAL PARLIAMENT—6 AUGUST 1951

Session	—	Fourth Session
President of India	—	Dr. Rajendra Prasad
Prime Minister of India	—	Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru
Speaker, Provisional Parliament	—	Shri G.V. Mavalankar

MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT,

We are meeting here today, in the closing stages of the life of this Parliament. Within a few months, general elections will take place all over this great country in which more than 170 million voters will participate. This scale of democratic election is greater than the world has ever witnessed before; it entails a very heavy burden on those who are responsible for its organisation, and a heavy responsibility on all our people. I pray that this responsibility will be worthily discharged and that the elections will take place in a spirit of disciplined co-operation among our people and will result in the election of men and women of high principle, vision and integrity of purpose. The problems that the world and our country have to face are complex and difficult, and it will require all our wisdom and courage to help in their solution. In the world today, war and peace are in precarious balance, and the forces of peaceful constructive effort have to contend against the forces of disruption and destruction. It is my firm belief that only by adhering to principles, and not by seeking some temporary advantage at the cost of principles, shall we serve our country and the great causes we have at heart.

The unfortunate country of Korea, which has suffered during the past year death and destruction on a colossal scale, is the example today of what might happen to the world at large if fear, obstinacy and passion lead great nations to war. For some time past, a conference in Korea, has been considering the terms for a cease-fire. I earnestly hope that success will crown the efforts of this conference and that this terrible war will cease. After this first success, other steps will have to follow to settle the problems of the Far East. That settlement can only be enduring if it brings into its scope all the countries that have vital interests in the Far East and recognises their legitimate position in the world today. Proposals have been made for the conclusion of a treaty of peace with Japan. We welcome all efforts to bring peace and to give opportunities for self-development to Japan and

her people, for whom India has the friendliest feelings. I trust that this treaty of peace will be such that it brings relief from tension and leaves the door open for ever-growing cooperation between the nations of the East.

The most significant feature of the age we live in is the emergence of the countries of Asia. When the history of this period comes to be written, perhaps pride of place will be given to this awakening of Asia. That awakening has been and continues to be troubled. It has been varied and has taken different forms in different countries, but the outstanding fact is that great changes are coming over the continent of Asia; in many cases the old order has been entirely upset; in others some middle stage of democratic progress has been found. Our neighbour, Nepal, with whom our relations have always been of the closest friendship, has taken a great step towards the establishment of a democratic form of government. She is having some difficulties in this period of transition, but I feel sure that these will be overcome and independent and democratic Nepal will make rapid progress.

In Western Asia there has been an emergence of the same spirit and of the same urge for political and economic progress. This has sometimes led to trouble and tension and difficult problems have arisen. Many tragedies have occurred in this region in recent months; only some days ago His Majesty the King of Jordan was the victim of assassination.

In Iran, behind the dispute about oil, lies a great awakening. I hope that these disputes will be settled amicably so that Iran may prosper and the world may also benefit by her great resources in oil.

My Education Minister, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, recently paid goodwill visits to Turkey and Iran and carried our messages of friendship to them. I should like to express my gratitude to the Governments and peoples of these countries for the cordial welcome that they gave him. During his visit to Turkey, he signed, on behalf of India, a cultural agreement with that country which will promote even greater understanding and co-operation between the two countries. India has also signed treaties of peace and friendship with Iran, Indonesia and Burma. These treaties will greatly strengthen the ancient ties and long-standing friendship India has had with these countries.

I regret that the Government of the Union of South Africa has rejected the resolution passed by the General Assembly of the United Nations in regard to Indians in South Africa. This question does not affect India only. It is vital and affects the future of the world, because on a right solution of it depends peace or conflict between great races. Only on the basis of equality and equal treatment of different races and peoples can there be peace in this world. The Government of the Union of South Africa, however, unfortunately continues its racial policies, which can only bring unhappiness and conflict in the world.

While our relations with all our neighbour countries are cordial and co-operative, I deeply regret that there has been continuing friction between India and Pakistan and many major questions have remained unsolved. It has been and is our earnest desire to solve these questions by peaceful methods and to develop co-operative relations with Pakistan. Our past history and culture, our common interests and the intimate relations we had till misfortune overtook us, dictate that we should live in peace with each other. Yet circumstances beyond our control have affected these relations, and in Pakistan the cry of war against India is being raised. Because of possible dangers to our security, my Government was compelled to revise our defensive dispositions. But all such steps as my Government took were meant to ensure peace and to avoid war. We are determined to avoid war, unless it is thrust upon us. I earnestly trust that the present tension between India and Pakistan will pass away and a more favourable atmosphere be created for the consideration of our problems.

Eighteen months ago a serious situation arose in East Pakistan and West Bengal and Assam, when large migrations took place. An agreement between my Prime Minister and the Prime Minister of Pakistan stopped this dangerous drift and the situation improved. I have noticed with anxiety that there has been deterioration and another exodus is taking place from East Pakistan to West Bengal. This is a matter involving many millions of people who live in East Pakistan and I trust that earnest and effective steps will be taken to bring about conditions to stop the exodus.

The important work of rehabilitation has made considerable progress and a very large majority of displaced persons have had some provision made for them. But there are still many who lack this provision. In so far as displaced persons from West Pakistan are concerned, we are justified in thinking that the problem has come under control and will be adequately dealt with in the near future; but fresh problems have arisen owing to the new developments in Bengal which have resulted in large numbers of migrants seeking help and succour.

The Governor of the Punjab submitted a report to me on the 17th of June this year stating that his Ministry had resigned and that he had satisfied himself that it was not possible to form a Council of Ministers and carry on the Government of the State in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution. I, accordingly, issued a proclamation on the 20th June, 1951, under Article 356, assuming to myself, as President of India, all the functions of the Government of the Punjab and all powers exercisable by the Governor, and declaring that the powers of the Legislature of the State shall be exercisable by and under the authority of Parliament. I issued an Order directing that the Government of the State shall be carried on by His Excellency the Governor of the Punjab subject to my superintendence, direction and control. A resolution will be placed before this House asking

for approval of this proclamation. A Bill will also be introduced for suitable and necessary delegation of the authority of Parliament as the Legislature for the Punjab.

I much regret that it should have been necessary to issue this proclamation and hope that it will not be very long before normal constitutional arrangements are re-introduced in the Punjab.

The Planning Commission appointed by my Government last year has recently concluded the first stage of its work and presented an outline of a Five-Year Plan. This will be placed before you for your consideration. The Plan is based on a careful assessment of the resources available for development and has been evolved in consultation with the Central and State Governments as well as with representatives of Industries and Labour and of leading organisations engaged in different fields. These recommendations are at present tentative and the Commission hopes to finalise them after Parliament has expressed its views in regard to the Plan, and suggestions have been received from the Central Ministries and State Governments as well as from others.

In the multitude of problems that face us, nothing is more important than for us to plan for our economic progress, so that a better life may come to millions of our people who have suffered hardship for generations. Inevitably, the Plan gives primary importance to agricultural production which is the very basis of our existence. Next in importance come the great multipurpose river valley development schemes and certain basic industries which are essential for a nation's growth. It is these projects that give us hope for the future. The Plan also emphasises the importance of cottage and small scale industries, with a view to adding to production, giving employment and raising the standards of life in the villages. I trust that when this Plan has been finalised, it will become the basis for national activity in all its various forms and will enlist the widest association and co-operation of the people. Effective steps will have to be taken to implement it with speed and efficiency. Meanwhile, I hope that our present development schemes will be proceeded with, keeping in mind the proposals made in the draft Five-Year Plan. In order to review the working of the Plan from time to time and to promote common economic policies in all vital spheres, my Government propose shortly to constitute a National Development Council which will include the Prime Minister of India and the Chief Ministers of States.

The food situation in the country has been a matter of the gravest concern to my Government and, for many months, the threat of famine hovered over large areas of the country, more especially over Bihar. I am glad to say that there has been appreciable improvement and that threat has receded into the background. But dangers remain and constant and co-operative effort is needed to overcome them. I should like to express my

gratitude to the friendly nations who came forward with help in shipping foodgrains. In particular, I should like to express my gratitude to the United States of America for the loan of two million tons of foodgrains.

Though enough foodgrains have come to us to meet our present needs, another difficulty faces the people in the affected areas. Owing to various calamities and long continued drought in some parts of the country, the purchasing power of certain classes of the community in those areas has diminished considerably and, even when food is available, many have not the capacity to buy it. It has, therefore, become necessary to increase this purchasing power by public works, and also to help those in the greatest need by free distribution of foodgrains.

Our people have suffered considerably from the shortage in the supply of cloth and yarn. Last year production was relatively low and there was also the need to maintain exports at a level high enough to balance our imports. This year our cotton harvest has been better, and we are also doing our utmost to secure cotton from abroad. Certain restrictions have been placed on textile mills in regard to export, which has been strictly limited, and stress has been laid on the manufacture of *dhotis* and *saris* which have been specially in short supply. There has been already a marked improvement in this matter of cloth and yarn, and it is hoped that this improvement will continue during the next few months.

It is important for us to help in every way the handloom industry in India which is of considerable dimensions and gives employment to a very large number of people. This depends chiefly on the supply of yarn and efforts are being made to increase this supply progressively.

The rise in prices in recent months, as judged from the wholesale price index, has been the cause of anxious concern to my Government. This rise has been due partly to decontrol of jute but largely to developments in the international situation, over which we have no control, following the outbreak of hostilities in Korea. My Government's policy throughout this anxious period has been to hold prices as far as possible. The main item in the cost of living for the bulk of the population is food. An increase in the price of foodgrains could not be wholly avoided owing to insufficient production at home, which necessitated import from abroad at higher prices. The landed cost of these foodgrains was made even higher by the steep rise in freight rates. My Government have, however, endeavoured to keep down the increase to the minimum by more than doubling the food subsidy to the States from Rs. 22.3 crore to Rs. 46.73 crore, and by modifying the basis of the subsidy so as to give increased relief to industrial towns to keep down the cost of industrial products. The policy of my Government to hold prices of essential commodities, which affect the cost of living of the common man, to the maximum extent possible within the available resources, will be continued.

A re-assuring feature in the economic position of the country is that the level of industrial production has been well maintained in recent months. Schemes for expanding food production are progressing well, while the production of jute and cotton is also expected to increase in the coming season. Unless there are unforeseen developments, we can confidently look forward to an all-round improvement in our economic situation.

One such development, which is certain to retard this improvement, is the threatened strike on Railways, if it takes place. My Government is fully conscious of the difficulties experienced by railwaymen as well as other workers and by the public generally because of the rise in prices. Government has sought, to the best of its ability, to mitigate these difficulties of low-paid employees, and my Government is always prepared for friendly consultations with industrial or other workers with a view to removing their difficulties within available resources and with due regard to the various factors of our national economy. It is my earnest hope and the hope of my Government that railway workers will give up the idea of a strike and that nothing will be done to dislocate railway transport whose efficient functioning is essential to the adequate distribution of foodgrains in the present difficult and troubled situation. Any such dislocation will also inevitably check the movement of the wheels of industry and production, and will worsen the very position which the railway workers desire to improve. My Government is resolved to prevent any such dislocation.

There have been frequent demands for an increase in dearness allowance to compensate for the rise in prices. The recommendations of the Pay Commission, which are usually referred to in this connection, were made in a different context and provided a scheme for a reduction in the dearness allowance in the expectation of a fall in prices rather than for an increase. Unfortunately, prices have been continually rising since that recommendation was made and to follow the same basis for increasing the dearness allowance is obviously beyond the financial resources of the country and would create a dangerous spiral of inflation, which would make the benefits illusory and might lead to economic chaos. My Government hope that the measures of taxation in this year's budget and the sale of wheat obtained from abroad, will encourage anti-inflationary tendencies and have a mitigating influence on the general level of prices.

The all-India agricultural labour enquiry undertaken by the Ministry of Labour, in a large number of selected villages, has made considerable progress. The two stages of the enquiry, namely the general survey of villages and the general family survey, have already been completed, while the third stage, an intensive family survey, is still in progress.

My Government is deeply interested in fostering and developing the study of statistics and the use of statistical methods in administration and industry. Proper statistical data are essential for any system of planning. For this purpose a Central Statistical Organization has been set up.

Coal production during 1950 reached the peak figure of 31.99 million tons. Coal supplies to Pakistan, which were suspended in December, 1949, were resumed in March, 1951, and 334,081 tons of coal and coke were supplied till May 31st, 1951. It is further proposed to supply 1,520,000 tons of coal and coke to Pakistan, during the period July 1951 to June 1952, in exchange for imports. The year 1951 promises well for coal exports. The total exports during the first 4 months of the year have been 352,090 tons, excluding despatches to Pakistan, as compared to 233,902 tons in 1950 and 297,716 tons in 1949. The overall shipping scarcity has interfered considerably with our coal export programme.

The large fertilizer factory, which has been in process of construction at Sindri, is rapidly nearing completion. A part of the factory is already working, and it is hoped that the production of ammonium sulphate will begin soon. Production at the full installed capacity of 350,000 tons per annum is hoped to be reached about the middle of 1952. This large scale production of fertilizers will help greatly in increasing food and other crops, thus adding to the income of the agriculturists.

During the last session of Parliament certain Articles of the Constitution were amended. The amendments chiefly related to the legislation for the abolition of the Zamindari system and to Article 19(2) of the Constitution. My Government is anxious that the abolition of the big Zamindari System should be completed as soon as possible all over India, as this is an essential preliminary step towards further land reform. Criticism was raised about the amendment relating to Article 19(2) because this was said to limit the freedom of expression which is guaranteed by the Constitution. It was not and is not my Government's intention to limit the freedom of expression of opinion in any way, except when freedom becomes licence and threatens the security of the State or encourages communal discord. My Government has always attached great value to communal unity which is the foundation of our State policy. It hopes to bring forward a Bill during this session which will remove those provisions from the statute book which are out-of-date and no longer necessary. Amending legislation will cover not only some laws affecting the press but also certain sections of the Indian Penal Code, and the Code of Criminal Procedure, such as Sections 124(A) and 153(A), which relate to freedom of speech and expression.

My Government also hope to submit a Bill in the current session of Parliament dealing with Part-C States. It is their policy to remove progressively the differences which exist in regard to constitutional development between different classes of States. Part-C States differ from one another greatly and some of them have special problems to face. Their cases, therefore, have to be considered, to some extent, separately.

In accordance with Article 338 of the Constitution I appointed a Commissioner for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in November 1950. The Commissioner has undertaken extensive tours in various parts of India

where there are large numbers of these castes and tribes, and has presented valuable reports to me. The welfare of these Scheduled Castes and Tribes as well as of other backward classes, is a special concern of my Government as well as of the Governments of the States.

A supplementary statement of estimated receipts and expenditures of the Government of India will be laid before you for your approval.

After the last session of Parliament it became necessary to promulgate some Ordinances. These will be brought before you in the form of new Bills and you will be asked to consider and pass them during the course of this session.

There are a large number of Bills pending before Parliament, some of them having been referred to Select Committees. It may not be possible for this session of Parliament to consider all these Bills, but a number of them are important and should be passed in this session. I have already referred to an amended press law and a Bill dealing with Part C States. A Bill, which has long been before Parliament for some years, is the Hindu Code Bill. My Government hope that this will be passed during this session. Among the other more important Bills are: The Industries (Development and Control) Bill; The Tariff Commission Bill; The State Financial Corporations Bill, 1950; and some bills dealing with displaced persons.

I shall now leave you to your labours which are of vital importance to our people. I pray that they will be conducted in a spirit of friendly co-operation, which is essential for the successful functioning of democracy, keeping always in view the larger good of the nation, and the high principles that the Father of the Nation placed before us. May wisdom and tolerance of spirit guide you in your deliberations.

ADDRESS TO PROVISIONAL PARLIAMENT—5 FEBRUARY 1952

Session	—	Fifth Session
President of India	—	Dr. Rajendra Prasad
Prime Minister of India	—	Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru
Speaker, Provisional Parliament	—	Shri G.V. Mavalankar

MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT,

We meet here today under unusual circumstances. Even as this Parliament assembles a new Parliament is coming into being at the bidding and by the choice of the people of India. The governance of this great country will be the high destiny and charge of this new Parliament as soon as it is fully constituted. But we cannot wait till then as the Constitution of India demands that there should not be too great an interval between two meetings of Parliament. There are also urgent and important matters which have to be disposed of before the financial year ends. We are meeting here, therefore, to consider these important matters and, more particularly, to pass votes on account authorizing expenditure for a part of the next financial year as also to vote Supplementary Grants for current financial year. My Government will bring forward such other urgent or non-controversial matters as can be disposed of in this session of Parliament. In the circumstances it would not be proper, and it is not the intention of my Government, to bring forward controversial matters whose consideration can be postponed. It will be for the new Parliament to consider all such legislation.

Two years ago our Constitution came into effect and the Republic of India came into being. In accordance with this Constitution, general elections all over this vast country have been held on a scale unprecedented in the history of democratic institutions. The pledge which the people of India took has been fulfilled and an act of faith has justified itself. Although the general elections are not over yet, I should like to express my appreciation of the efficient manner in which this vast undertaking was organised and carried through, by officials and non-officials, acting in close co-operation, and to pay my tribute to the scores of millions of our voters who justified the faith that was reposed in them by voting in a peaceful and orderly manner. I am particularly gratified at the keen and intelligent interest that our womenfolk have displayed in these elections all over the country by exercising their right to vote freely. This is a happy augury for the peaceful and co-operative progress of our Republic, based on the strength and good sense of our people.

While India has faced this great task successfully, I regret that the general state of tension in the world continues and there have been conflicts and outbreaks of violence in some countries with whom our relations are friendly. I must express my sorrow at the recent developments in Egypt, which have led to much destruction and unhappiness, and express my earnest hope that the problems that face that country will be solved peacefully and in accordance with the legitimate aspirations of the peoples concerned.

On the last occasion when I addressed you, I pointed out that the most significant feature of the age we live in is the emergence of the countries of Asia. That great upsurge continues and it is not confined to Asia but spreads to other countries whose people have yet to attain freedom. In Tunisia that same urge for freedom animates the people and our sympathies must naturally go to them. I earnestly hope that the spirit of the age, as exemplified in these movements, will not be hampered and will find fulfilment by peaceful methods. I should like to welcome on your behalf and mine the emergence of the independent State of Libya.

In Nepal this new freedom has had to contend again many difficulties and some people have been unwise enough to try to endanger the stability of the State. Fortunately they met with failure, and the Government of Nepal is determined to pursue its course of progressive reform. The bonds that tie India to Nepal were strengthened by a visit of the Prime Minister of Nepal to my Prime Minister to discuss many matters of mutual concern. As a result of this visit and the conversations that took place, decisions were taken to the advantage of both countries.

A Cultural Delegation, consisting of eminent men in science, literature and the arts, from our great neighbour, China, paid a welcome visit to India and were the guests of our Government. The Delegation toured extensively in India and thus added to the knowledge of each country of the other, which is so necessary to the growth of mutual understanding. It is my Government's intention to send a Cultural Delegation to China to convey to the people of China the good wishes of our people and their desire for friendship.

I am glad to inform you that we have concluded Treaties of Friendship with Iran, Turkey and Indonesia. An air link with Afghanistan has been established. Diplomatic relations at Legation level have been established with the Philippines; and the Indian Legation in Bangkok and the Thai Legation in New Delhi have been raised to Embassy level. We have welcomed in India Air Force Missions from Indonesia and Thailand. Negotiations for Air Agreements are taking place with Iran and Afghanistan. My Government hopes to conclude a Peace Treaty with Japan soon.

It has been my Government's earnest desire and consistent policy to cultivate friendly and peaceful relations with all countries and I am glad to say that policy is bearing fruit. I regret however that no solution has yet been found for the problem of Indians in South Africa. The United Nations have again considered this problem and appointed a Three-Man Commission to help settle this problem, which is of vital importance not only to India and Pakistan but also to the world. Any policy which is based on racial intolerance and domination cannot be accepted or succeed in the modern world and must lead to conflict, which might endanger the peace of the world.

The Kashmir issue is still being considered by the United Nations. I hope that this problem, which has already lasted for over four years, will find a final solution soon. That solution can only be in accordance with the will of the people of Jammu and Kashmir State. I am glad that a Constituent Assembly, representative of the people, has been elected and will soon commence the Work of framing a new Constitution for the State.

The food situation in the country is still causing us grave concern owing to the failure of rains over a large part of Western India and some areas in other provinces. Steps have been taken to import food from abroad. The 'Grow More Food' campaign is yielding good results and it is proposed to continue it intensively in selected areas. My Government is appointing a committee to enquire into the working of the Grow More Food campaign and to recommend comprehensive measures for its effective working and intensification.

The general economic situation of the country shows some improvement. The wholesale price index fell from 457.5 in April 1951 to 433.1 in December 1951. There has been a substantial increase in production in a number of industries, e.g. cotton textiles, jute, steel, coal, salt, sugar, cement, electrical goods, rubber goods, machine tools, small tools and diesel engines. There has been considerable improvement in the supply of cloth for internal consumption. There has also been an increase in foreign trade, but the balance of trade is still unfavourable to us and there is need for ensuring better adjustment between imports and exports.

Some new industries have been started, such as Linoleum, automatic looms, carding machines and aluminium powder. Sources of sulphur have been located and efforts are being made to make India self-sufficient in sulphur. The construction of a Machine Tools Factory and a Telephone Cables Factory has begun. A Penicillin Factory is being constructed; meanwhile a Penicillin Bottling Plant has been set up in Bombay*.

Agreements have been arrived at with some foreign companies for the establishment of Oil Refineries in India.

* Now known as Mumbai.

The great Fertiliser Factory at Sindri has started production and it is hoped that it will be in full production by the middle of this year. This will be of great help to our agriculture and is expected to bring about a considerable saving in foreign currency.

The management of the Visakhapatnam Shipbuilding Yard is being taken over by a new company in which Government will have the controlling interest. The foundation stone of the new Port at Kandla in Kutch was recently laid. This port, which is likely to grow rapidly in importance, will serve the whole of northern India.

I welcome the Agreement with the USA for aid amounting to 50 million dollars for development projects. I should like to express my special gratification that these projects are particularly meant to encourage food production and the development of community schemes such as Nilokheri, Faridabad and Etawah. The Agreement with the Ford Foundation for rural development is also very welcome.

Progress has been made for the welfare of labour. The Plantations Labour Act and the Minimum Wages Act are being implemented and action is being taken for legal protection against forced labour. A beginning has been made in the implementation of the Employees State Insurance Act. The Agricultural Labour Enquiry is nearing completion and action is being taken in some States for the fixation of minimum wages in agriculture. The Industrial Housing Scheme is being extended to Part B and C States. The Employees Provident Fund Ordinance, which was promulgated last November, is an important measure for providing assistance to the industrial worker in his old age and to the family in the event of premature death of the bread-winner.

I am glad to note that an agreement has been arrived at with Railwaymen for the setting up of a permanent negotiating machinery for dealing with disputes. The welfare of the country demands that our transport system must work efficiently and without interruption or obstruction and that any dispute should be settled by friendly negotiation. There has been a considerable improvement in the transport situation in the country. The part played by railways in the movement of foodgrains to deficit areas has been very creditable.

Since its publication a few months ago, the draft Five-Year Plan has been widely discussed throughout the country and many comments and criticisms have been received. The Planning Commission is giving careful consideration to the suggestions made and is now engaged in drawing up its final report which it hopes to complete in about three months time. My Government feel greatly encouraged by the wide interest aroused among all sections of the people and are confident that the people of the country

will participate fully in the implementation of the Plan, so that the country's human and material resources might be utilised to the fullest extent and the maximum contribution made towards the solution of our economic problems.

As I have already stated, this session of Parliament will undertake only urgent or non-controversial legislation. This essential legislation will include such Ordinances as have been issued after the last session of Parliament and the Presidential and Vice Presidential Election Bill. The Punjab Proclamation which was approved by Parliament on the 9th August 1951 expires after six months. It is necessary to renew this till such time as the new Punjab Assembly meets.

This is the fifth and the last occasion when I am addressing this Parliament. My first address to you was delivered a little over two years ago, on the 31st January 1950, soon after the Proclamation of the Republic of India. These two years of this young Republic of ours, to whose service we are pledged, have been full of travail and difficult problems. You have faced these problems with courage and the work you have done is now a part of the history of India. Some of you will come back to this historic chamber which is so full of memories, and some of you may not return. But whether your labour lies in Parliament or elsewhere, it is dedicated to the service of this country. It is only in this spirit of dedication and with the memory of the Father of the Nation to inspire us that we can be worthy of the high destiny that beckons us. Let us always remember the message of him who brought us our freedom, the message of unity and goodwill among all the people of India, of the abolition of class distinctions and of those based on birth, caste or religion, of the raising of those who have been suppressed or disinherited, and of the evolution of a peaceful, co-operative India which gives opportunities of progress to all her citizens. A chapter of our history ends and a new chapter will soon begin. May wisdom and tolerance of spirit be with you and the service of our Motherland ever inspire your efforts.

ADDRESS TO PARLIAMENT—16 MAY 1952

Lok Sabha	—	First Lok Sabha
Session	—	First Session after the 1st General Election
President of India	—	Dr. Rajendra Prasad
Vice-President of India	—	Dr. S. Radhakrishnan
Prime Minister of India	—	Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru
Speaker, Lok Sabha	—	Shri G.V. Mavalankar

MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT,

I welcome you here today as Members of the first Parliament of the Republic of India, elected under our Constitution. We have now given full effect to the provisions of the Constitution relating to the composition of the Legislatures and the leadership of the State, and thus completed one stage of our journey. Even as we complete that stage, we start on another. There is no resting place for a nation or a people on their onward march. You, Members of Parliament, newly elected by over 170 million of our people, are the pilgrims who have to march forward in their company. On you rests a unique privilege and a heavy responsibility.

As I speak to you on this historic occasion, I have a feeling of the high destiny of our ancient land and the vast numbers of men and women who live in it. Destiny beckons us and it is for us to respond to its call. That call is for the service of this great land of India, which has passed through good fortune and ill-fortune alike since its story began many thousands of years ago, at the dawn of history. During these many years, greatness has come to our land and tragedy has also been our fate. Now that we stand on the threshold of another phase of India's long story, we have to determine afresh how best to serve her. You and I have taken the oath of service to this country of ours. May we be true to that pledge and dedicate our highest endeavour to its fulfilment.

India has, after a long period of subjection, gained her freedom and independence. That freedom has to be maintained, defended and enlarged at all cost, for it is on the basis of that freedom alone that any structure of progress can be built. But freedom by itself is not enough—it must also bring a measure of happiness to our people and a lessening of the burdens

they suffer from. It has, therefore, become of vital importance for us to labour for the rapid economic advancement of our people and to endeavour to realise the noble ideals of equality and social and economic justice which have been laid down in our Constitution.

India has represented throughout her history certain other urges of the human spirit. That has, perhaps, been the distinguishing mark of India, and even in recent years we saw a noble example of that ancient spirit and urge of India in the form of Mahatma Gandhi, who led us to freedom. To him political freedom was a vital step, but only a step to the larger freedom of the human spirit. He taught us the way of peace and non-violence, but not the peace of the grave or the non-violence of the timid. And he taught us, in line with the teachings of India's ancient sages and great men, that it is not through hatred and violence that great ends are achieved, that right ends must be pursued and achieved only through right methods. That is a basic lesson not only for us of India but if I may venture to say so also for people throughout the world.

I earnestly trust that, in the great tasks that face us you will remember this ancient and ever-new message of India and will work in a spirit of co-operative endeavour, placing the cause of the nation and of humanity above all lesser objective. We have to build up the unity of India, the unity of a free people working for the realisation of the high destiny that awaits them. We have, therefore, to put an end to all tendencies that weaken that unity and raise barriers between us, the barriers of communalism, provincialism and casteism. Opinions will and must differ in regard to many political and economic matters, but if the good of India and her people is our dominant urge and we realise, as we must, that this good can only be achieved through the methods of peaceful co-operation and democratic processes, then these differences can only add to the richness of our public life.

It is with this outlook that I beg of you to face your problems here in this country and to face the world with friendly eyes and without fear. Fear today, fear of some approaching disaster, darkens the world. It is not through fear that the individual or the nation grows, but through fearlessness *abhaya*, as our ancient books told us.

We have consistently pursued a policy of friendship with all the countries of the world and that policy, though sometimes misunderstood, has been progressively appreciated, by others and is yielding fruit. I trust that we shall firmly continue that policy and thus try to lessen somewhat the tension that exists in many parts of the world. My Government has not sought to interfere with other countries just as it does not invite any interference from others in our own country. We have tried the method of co-operation wherever possible and our good offices are always available to further the cause of peace. We have no desire to thrust them on anyone.

We realise, however, that in the world today no country can remain isolated, that it is inevitable that international co-operation should grow till, at some distant date, all the nations of the world join together in a great co-operative endeavour for the advancement of humanity.

For nearly a year now, efforts have been made in Korea to find some way to a truce which might lead to a peaceful settlement of the many problems that afflict the far-east of Asia. I have expressed the hope on several occasions that success will crown these efforts and peace be established again. It is the greatest of tragedies that, despite assertions of goodwill for the Korean people, this ancient country has been reduced by war, hunger and pestilence to utter ruin. It has become a sign and a warning to the world of what war means, whatever immediate justification might be advanced for it. War does not solve problems, it creates them. In Korea now it appears that most of the obstacles to a truce have been overcome and only one major hurdle, the exchange of prisoners, remains. It should not be beyond the wit of statesmen to overcome this last obstacle. Not to do so will be to confess the failure not only of wisdom but also of common humanity. The world hungers for peace and the statesmen who bring peace will remove a heavy and fearful burden that now oppresses the minds of hundreds of millions of people throughout the world.

I have referred on previous occasions to the great nationalist upsurge in various parts of Asia and Africa which are still denied freedom. In particular, I have made reference to recent events in Tunisia and expressed our sympathy for the people of that land in their desire for freedom. I regret greatly that, in spite of the desire of a large number of countries in Asia and Africa, even a discussion of this subject was not allowed in the United Nations. The United Nations Organisation was meant to represent the world community inclusive of all, and its primary aim was the preservation of peace. Gradually, the noble aims of the founders of the United Nations and the Charter that they framed appear to be getting blurred. The wide vision gives place to a more limited outlook. The conception of universality changes into something far narrower and the urge to peace weakens. The United Nations Organisation came into existence to fulfil a deeply felt want of humanity. If it fails to fulfil that want and becomes an ineffective organ for the maintenance of peace and the advancement of freedom, that, indeed, will be a tragedy. I earnestly trust that this great organisation, on which the hopes of the world have been built up, will return to its old mooring and become, as it was meant to be, a pillar of peace and freedom.

My Government has sent a Cultural Delegation to our great neighbour, China. That Delegation has carried the greeting and goodwill of our people to the people of China. I should like to express my gratitude for the cordial welcome that it has received from the Government and people of China.

I regret greatly that the racial policy of the Government of the Union of South Africa has continued and has led to serious developments. Our people have been intimately concerned over this policy because there are many people of Indian origin who live in South Africa. But this question is no longer merely one of Indians in South Africa; it has already assumed a greater and wider significance. It is a question of racial domination and racial intolerance. It is a question of the future of Africans even more than that of Indians in South Africa. Delay in settling this and like questions is fraught with peril for humanity. I am glad that there has been a growth of friendly relations of all over Africa between the Africans and the Indians resident there. It is our desire not to interfere in any way with the growth of the peoples of Africa, but to help them to the best of our ability.

I regret also that a large number of Indians, long resident in Ceylon*, have been deprived of their voting rights. They claim to be as much Ceylonese citizens as other inhabitants of that country. Our ties with Ceylon* go back to thousands of years and our relations with Ceylon* and her people have been most friendly. We welcomed her independence and we hoped that her people would advance in every way as an independent people. But true progress will not come by depriving a large number of citizens of their natural rights. This will lead, as it has already led, to serious problems and complications.

We have for many years past suffered a shortage of food and large quantities of foodgrains have had to be imported. In this we were helped greatly by the United States of America, and we must be grateful to that great country for the generous help that it gave. For the first time in recent history, we have large stocks of foodgrains (except for rice), and are building up a substantial reserve which will help us in the future in case of need. This is to be welcomed. But the failure of the rains over large parts of our country has created a difficult situation for the people there. For five successive seasons, Rayalaseema has suffered the misfortune of a drought and its greatest need today is water. Our Army is doing valuable work to help the civil population by deepening wells and carrying water and in other ways. In these large areas of drought and scarcity, many minor projects have been undertaken to provide work and cheap grain shops have been opened. Wherever necessary, free food is given.

Owing to the high cost of imported foodgrains, their price has gone up. The contraction of the food subsidy has contributed in some measure to those high prices, and has caused some distress and discontent in rationed areas. To some extent this is partly counter-balanced by a general fall in prices. The limitation of food subsidies has induced Governments in various States to make a more realistic appraisal of their need for import of foodgrains, and this has led to a reduction of the demand from various States for foodgrains, with its consequent result on their import. This is undoubtedly an advantage in the present and for the future. The amount

* Now known as Sri Lanka.

saved from the food subsidies has been diverted to financing minor irrigation schemes which will yield more foodgrains in future and thus help in solving our food problem. My Government is giving the most careful attention to these matters. It has to balance immediate with future advantages. At the same time it is anxious that no distress should be caused and it will do all in its power to prevent this from happening.

The Planning Commission is now finalising its report on the Five Year Plan. A very vital addition to this Plan has been made by the proposal to start fifty-five Community Projects throughout the country. This has been possible because of aid from the United States of America through their Technical Cooperation Plan. These Community Projects are intended not only to increase our food production but also, what is even more important, to raise the whole level of community living. It is hoped that this programme will grow and cover a considerable part of India. But it can only grow if it has the full co-operation of the people and I earnestly trust that in this matter, as in implementing the other proposals of the Planning Commission, their co-operation will be forthcoming in full measure.

The integrated programme for agricultural production has made satisfactory progress. Jute production has increased considerably from 16.6 lakh bales in 1947-48 to 46.8 lakh bales in 1951-52. Cotton production has gone up during the same period from 24 lakh bales to over 33 lakh bales. Production of foodgrains has increased by 14 lakh tons, though this has been offset by drought in certain areas. Sugar production increased from 10.75 lakh tons in 1947-48 to 13.5 lakh tons in 1951-52. There has also been an increase in the production of steel, coal, cement and salt. India is now self-sufficient in salt and is able to export her surplus. A Central Salt Research Station is being established in Saurashtra.

The general economic situation in the country has been kept under continuous observation by my Government. In my last address to Parliament I referred to a slight fall in wholesale prices. This trend was sharply accentuated in the months of February and March. Partly this was due to a general readjustment of prices all over the world, a process which started in 1950 but received a set-back owing to the outbreak of the Korean War. With the prospect of an armistice in Korea in sight, this process of readjustment gathered strength. This has been assisted by an increased production of goods in the country coupled with increasing consumer resistance to high prices. The monetary and credit policy of my Government, initiated with a view to checking inflation, has also contributed to the fall in prices. This sharp fall in the price level has caused difficulties to those engaged in business and industry, more especially in the textile industry. This is also leading to a fall in our export earnings. My Government are closely watching the situation to ensure that production and employment are not affected. It is their intention to take such action as might be necessary to assist in the stabilisation of prices at a reasonable level.

I am glad that a new Ministry of Production has been created. Production by State-owned industries is of vital importance and the creation of a new Ministry for this purpose indicates that special attention is going to be paid to it.

An assurance was given by Government last year to Parliament that a Press Commission would be appointed to consider various matters connected with the Press. My Government hope to appoint such a Commission in the near future. It is also proposed to place before Parliament a bill arising out of the recommendations of the Press Laws Enquiry Committee.

This session of Parliament will be mainly concerned with the Budget and there will probably not be much time for other legislation. A statement of the estimated receipts and expenditure of the Government of India for the financial year 1952-53 will be laid before you. The members of the House of the People will be required to consider and pass the Demands for Grants.

After the last session of the provisional Parliament, it became necessary to promulgate an Ordinance relating to the repealing of the Saurashtra (Abolition of Local Sea Customs Duties And imposition of) Port Development Levy. This Ordinance will be brought before you in the form of a new bill and you will be asked to consider and pass it. Another Ordinance was issued for the purpose of extending the Displaced Persons (Claims) Act, 1950. A bill to replace this ordinance will also be placed before you.

A number of bills which were introduced in the provisional Parliament have now lapsed. Some of these will be placed before you in so far as time permits. It is also proposed to place before Parliament a bill dealing with Preventive Detention.

One of the legislative measures which was discussed at considerable length in the provisional Parliament was the Hindu Code Bill. This couldn't be passed and, in common with other pending bills, has lapsed. It is the intention of my Government to introduce afresh legislation on this subject. It is proposed, however, to divide up the bill into certain parts and to place each part separately before Parliament, so as to facilitate its discussion and passage.

I have endeavoured to indicate to you some of the work that will be placed before this session of Parliament. I trust that your labours will bear fruit for the good of our people and that this new Parliament of the Democratic Republic of India will set an example of friendly co-operation and efficient working. Your success will depend on the spirit of tolerance that governs your activities and the wisdom that inspires your efforts. I earnestly trust therefore that this wisdom and tolerance of spirit will always be with you.

ADDRESS TO PARLIAMENT—11 FEBRUARY 1953

Lok Sabha	—	First Lok Sabha
Session	—	First Session of the Year
President of India	—	Dr. Rajendra Prasad
Vice-President of India	—	Dr. S. Radhakrishnan
Prime Minister of India	—	Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru
Speaker, Lok Sabha	—	Shri G.V. Mavalankar

MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT,

Nine months ago, I welcomed you as members of the first Parliament of the Republic of India, elected under our Constitution. Since then, you have had to shoulder heavy burdens and to face difficult problems, both domestic and international. As we meet here today, we bring with us faith in our country's destiny and the assurance that our people are advancing, through their labours towards the goal that we have set before us. These nine months have seen advances on many fronts, industrial and agricultural, and the finalization of the Five Year Plan, which has mapped out the lines of our progress in the coming years. It is for us now to march along that path and to implement and fulfil the promise held out to our people. That is no easy task, for a multitude of old and new problems always tend to overwhelm us and our wishes often run faster than our capacity and resources.

At this moment, when we require all the wisdom and experience of our leaders, it is a misfortune that we have lost one of the most eminent and devoted of our elder statesmen. I learnt with deep sorrow of the death yesterday, in the early morning, of Shri N. Gopaldaswami Ayyangar, who had filled, in the course of a full life, many high offices with rare distinction. To the end of his days, regardless of his health and the leisure he had so richly earned, he devoted his life to the service of his country and people. His colleagues in the Government and I relied on his ripe wisdom whenever any difficult problem confronted us. His death is a great loss to the country and to all of us.

While we labour in our own country to build up a new and prosperous India, bringing relief to the millions who have suffered so much in the past from the curse of poverty, the problems of the rest of the world thrust

themselves upon us and we cannot avoid them or isolate ourselves from them. My Government has no desire to interfere with other countries, but it has to face the responsibility which has inevitably come with independence to India. We have endeavoured, as is well known, to pursue a policy of peace and of friendship with all the countries of the world. Gradually, that policy has been understood and appreciated, even by those who may not always agree with it, and it is recognised that India stands for peace among the nations and will avoid taking any step which might encourage the tendency to war. In pursuit of this policy, my Government put forward certain proposals which they hoped might lead to a settlement of the Korean War. Those proposals met with a very large measure of support, but unfortunately some of the great countries most intimately concerned were unable to accept them. This war continues not only to the utter misery and ruin of the people of Korea, but also as a focus of danger for the rest of the world. Certain statements recently made, and the consequences that might flow from them in extending the war in Korea, have caused considerable apprehension in the minds of people all over the world. My Government has viewed these developments with grave concern. I trust that any tendency towards an extension of the war which has already brought disaster in its train, will be checked and the minds of nations and peoples will be turned towards a peaceful approach to these problems. My Government will continue to work to this end and will pursue a policy of friendship with all countries without any alignment with one group of nations against another. The democratic processes to which we are so firmly committed in our own country involve methods of peaceful approach to problems. If democracy is to survive, the same climate of peace and spirit of reconciliation has to be extended to the international sphere.

The General Assembly of the United Nations will meet again in the near future and will consider these grave problems, on which hangs the momentous issue of peace or war in the world. I earnestly hope that the great nations whose representatives will assemble there will address themselves to the promotion of a spirit of reconciliation and the fulfilment of the objectives embodied in the Charter of the United Nations.

In the continent of Africa, which continues to be the greatest sphere of colonialism today, events have taken a turn for the worse. In South Africa, the doctrine of racial domination is openly proclaimed and enforced by all the power of the State. The efforts made by the United Nations to deal with this problem have been ignored by the Government of the Union of South Africa. A movement against racial discrimination, which was remarkable for its peaceful and disciplined character, is sought to be crushed by legislation and governmental action, which are unique in their denial of democratic processes and the purpose which was proclaimed in the Charter of the United Nations. In East Africa there is racial conflict which, if not ended to the satisfaction of the people, is likely to extend and engulf vast

areas of Africa. There are many people still who do not realise that racial domination and discrimination cannot be tolerated in the world today and any attempt to perpetuate them can only lead to disaster.

Our relations with our neighbour countries in Western and South-Eastern Asia continue to be close and friendly and there is an increasing measure of co-operation between us. Even in regard to Pakistan, with which unfortunately our relations have been strained, there has been a certain improvement. That improvement is not very great, but it is an indication which I welcome. Recent conferences between representatives of the two countries have been held in a friendly atmosphere and will, I hope, yield results. The upheaval caused by the introduction of the passport system between the two countries has subsided and many of the difficulties that were created by this system are being gradually removed. I trust that this effort will be continued and directed towards the removal of the basic problems that still confront the minorities in East Bengal.

The canal waters issue is being considered at a technical level jointly by representatives of the two countries, assisted by the International Bank. This issue is eminently one which ought to be considered objectively and dispassionately so that the maximum advantage can be derived by both countries from the waters that flow through them. A great proportion of these waters run waste to the sea. If they can be properly harnessed, they will bring relief and prosperity to vast numbers of human beings in both India and Pakistan. It is unfortunate that an issue like this should be treated in a spirit and atmosphere of rivalry and hostility. I trust that the new approach will yield fruitful and happy results to both countries. This approach can also be applied to the settlement of the evacuee property problem which affects the fortunes of millions of people both in India and Pakistan.

Another vital issue between India and Pakistan has been the Jammu and Kashmir State. This matter is again being discussed by our representatives with the representative of the United Nations. That issue, like others, has to be considered dispassionately, keeping always the welfare of the people of that State in view. It is not by war or threats of war that this, or any other outstanding problem between India and Pakistan, can be solved. My Government has declared repeatedly that it will not go to war unless it is attacked, and has invited a like declaration by Pakistan. If fear of war was eliminated, it would be much easier to consider all the issues that confront us today.

Internally, in the Jammu and Kashmir State, progress has been made in many ways. Our Constitution contains specific provisions about the relationship of India with the State, and by an agreement between the Government of India and the Jammu and Kashmir Government, the bonds

that tie that State to India have been strengthened and made closer. A part of this agreement has been implemented and the remaining part should also come into operation soon. Unfortunately a misconceived agitation was started in Jammu which, though aiming at a closer union with India, is likely to have exactly the opposite effect. I trust that this misguided agitation will cease and the people of Jammu and Kashmir will co-operate for the progress and advancement of the State in the larger Union of India. Where there are legitimate grievances, they will undoubtedly be enquired into and every effort made to remove them.

The question of linguistic provinces has often agitated the people in various parts of the country. While language and culture are important considerations in the formation of States, it has to be remembered that the States are administrative units in the Union of India and that other considerations also have to be kept in mind. Above all, the unity of India and national security have always to be given the first priority. Financial and administrative aspects, as well as economic progress, are also important. Keeping all these factors in view, there is no reason why the question of the reorganisation of States should not be considered fully and dispassionately so as to meet the wishes of the people and help in their economic and cultural progress. I am glad that my Government has taken steps in the matter of the formation of a separate Andhra State and I hope that there will be no great delay in establishing this new State. Any such change as the establishment of a new State demands the fullest co-operation of all those concerned with it and I trust that this will be forthcoming.

The Planning Commission has completed the first part of its labours by finalising its report on the Five Year Plan. The other and the more difficult part, of implementing this plan, now faces the country and to that we must address ourselves. I am glad to find that this Plan and the fifty-five Community Projects that have been started in the country are evoking a considerable degree of enthusiasm among our people. In the course of a few months, hundreds of miles of roads have been built, tanks dug, school houses constructed and many other minor projects undertaken, almost entirely by the voluntary labour of our people. That is a sign of hope and promise, for it lies with our people ultimately what they make of their future.

The general economic situation in the country shows distinct signs of improvement, although there are still unfortunately areas where, owing to lack of rain, near-famine conditions prevail. The State Governments are doing their utmost to give relief by utility works or otherwise in these areas. The problem, however, has to be tackled in a more basic way so as to avoid recurrence of famine conditions and a complete dependence upon the vagaries of the monsoon.

The Finance Commission, constituted towards the end of 1951 under the provisions of Article 280 of the Constitution, have submitted their report. The Commission's recommendations have been accepted by my Government and necessary action will be taken for implementing them. The recommendations of the Commission will be laid on the Table of both Houses of Parliament in the current session.

There has been a steady improvement in the food situation and the closing stock for 1952 was 19 lakh tons, which is the highest on record so far. One of the factors in building up this stock was the wheat loan from the U.S.A. The prospects of foodgrains for 1952-53 are better than in the two preceding years. Owing mainly to the drought in parts of Bombay*, Madras and Mysore, caused by an inadequate monsoon, foodgrains will have to be imported, but their quantity will be less than in the last two years. It is of the highest importance that we should gain self-sufficiency in food and I hope that this might be possible within the three remaining years of the Five Year Plan. For the first time we start this year with a considerable stock of foodgrains. We should endeavour to build this up so that we can meet any contingency. Prices of foodgrains have shown a downward trend in recent months. Controls have been relaxed in many parts of India and there is greater freedom of movement. The Government, however, intend to retain control at strategic points so that no untoward results may affect prices or procurement.

The production of sugar during 1951-52 reached the record figure of 15 lakh tons and for the first time production exceeded internal requirements. This made it possible to relax control over the prices, movement and distribution of sugar, as well as on *gur* and *khandsari*. With the easing of the supply position of groundnut oil, controls of prices on hydrogenated oils have also been lifted, except those intended to ensure quality.

Very considerable progress has been made in cotton and jute production. In 1948-49 cotton production amounted to 17.7 lakh bales and jute 20.7 lakh bales. In 1951-52 cotton had increased to 31.3 lakh bales and jute to 46.8 lakh bales.

In order to add to the country's food production, special attention is being paid to the construction of more than 2,000 tube-wells and for an accelerated programme of minor irrigation works. Crop competitions are becoming increasingly popular all over the country and have yielded very remarkable results. Large-scale experiments are being made to introduce what is called the Japanese method of rice cultivation which promises substantial results in increase of yield. A large mechanised farm has been set up in Jammu Province. Vigorous attempts are being made for the extensive application of fertilizers and other manure and for the use of

* Now known as Mumbai.

improved seeds. The community centres are specially aiming at increasing the yield of foodgrains by various methods, including a rural extension service.

For the improvement of cattle, 92 key farm centres were started in 1951-52. In addition it is proposed to provide one key village unit in each Community Project area. Sheep breeding schemes have been reorganised to provide for the production of fine wool. A Board for the preservation of wild life has been set up. At Jodhpur a Desert Afforestation Research Station is being established. This will undertake work for the reclamation of arid areas.

The Sindri Fertilizer Factory produced 180,000 tons of ammonium sulphate during 1952. This is expected to be increased to three lakh tons in 1953. The pool price has been reduced from Rs. 365 per ton to Rs. 335.

The production of cotton textiles, which amounted to 4,600 million yards during 1952, was highly satisfactory and the prospects for the next year are good. The lower prices of mill-made cloth, though welcome, led to a fall in the off-take of handloom cloth and the handloom industry, which provides livelihood to millions of people in the country, was faced with serious difficulties. My Government attaches great importance to this and other cottage industries both because vast numbers of people are employed in them and because they are the most effective method of removing unemployment. An All-India Khadi and Village Industries Board has been established and legislation undertaken to raise funds for technical development and research for village and cottage industries. In order to help the handloom industry, the production of *dhoties* by mill industry was curtailed to sixty per cent of the 1951-52 production.

The tea industry was badly affected by the fall in international prices. The Government have taken measures to assist tea gardens to secure better credit facilities and propose to set up an expert committee to enquire into all aspects of the tea industry, including marketing. The price of tea is now showing some signs of improvement.

The readjustment of world prices affected foreign trade and exports fell in value and to a lesser extent, in quantity. The balance of payments position, however, continued to be satisfactory, as imports also declined.

My Government has been paying special attention to the tribal areas in the North-East and other parts of India and help is being given for their development. A Commission to consider the problems of backward classes has been appointed. A Press Commission has also been appointed to consider problems of the newspaper press in India.

The great multi-purpose river valley projects have made good progress and in some of them the operational phase will begin soon. Work on other projects has made steady progress.

Steps are being taken to improve the efficiency of the Hindustan Shipyard at Visakhapatnam and for the expansion of the Iron and Steel Industry. Production of coal, steel, cement, salt and fertilizers has reached higher levels than in the previous year.

Scientific research has made further progress by the establishment of new National Laboratories and Research Institutes. A Central Electro-Chemical Research Institute was opened at Karaikudi and the Central Leather Research Institute at Madras. The Building Research Institute at Roorkee will be opened soon. A factory for processing monazite sands has been set up at Alwaye in Travancore-Cochin and a Machine Tool Prototype factory was recently opened at Ambarnath in Bombay State. The Hindustan Aircraft Factory at Bangalore* has produced, from its own designs, a number of trainer aircraft which are being used now. A defence factory near Jubbulpore** is nearing completion.

My Government has decided to take under State control the existing air companies and to operate the scheduled air services. It is proposed to establish two State Corporations for this purpose, one for internal services and the other for external services.

Indian Railways are celebrating their centenary next month. This great State undertaking belonging to the community is continuing its progress and extending its operations.

The progress of a people and of a nation ultimately depends upon education. My Government views with much concern the present state of education in the country which suffers in many ways, both in quality and quantity, and too much attention is paid to the granting of diplomas and degrees and not to the real improvement of the individual in cultural, scientific and technical matters and, above all, in the training for good citizenship. Basic education has been adopted as the model, but progress in this has thus far been unfortunately slow. Many schemes for the improvement of basic, secondary and social education are under consideration, and a Commission on Secondary Education has been appointed.

An overall view of the situation in India indicates all round general progress at an increasing pace. This is a matter for satisfaction. But the goal we have set before us is still far and requires greater and continuous effort and an increasing pace of change. We aim at a Welfare State in which all the people of this country are partners, sharing alike the benefits and the obligations. So long as there is poverty and unemployment, a section of the community derives no benefit from this partnership. It is, therefore, necessary for us to aim at full and productive employment.

* Now known as Bengaluru.

** Now known as Jabalpur.

A statement of the estimated receipts and expenditure of the Government of India for the financial year 1953-54 will be laid before you. The Members of the House of the People will be required to consider and pass the demands for grants.

The House of the People will also be asked to vote supplementary grants to meet additional expenditure during the current financial year.

There are 24 Bills pending before you. Some of them have passed the Committee stage. A few of them, which are still under consideration by the Committees, will be brought before you with their recommendations during the course of this session.

Among the other legislative measures that it is intended to bring before you, the following may be especially mentioned: The Representation of the People (Amendment) Bill, the Bill on National Housing, the Air Services Corporation Bill, the Minimum Wages (Amendment) Bill, and the Indian Tariff (Amendment) Bill.

I earnestly trust that wisdom and tolerance and the spirit of co-operative endeavour will guide you in your labours and will yield results for the good of the country and the people whom we are all privileged to serve.

ADDRESS TO PARLIAMENT—15 FEBRUARY 1954

Lok Sabha	—	First Lok Sabha
Session	—	First Session of the Year
President of India	—	Dr. Rajendra Prasad
Vice-President of India	—	Dr. S. Radhakrishnan
Prime Minister of India	—	Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru
Speaker, Lok Sabha	—	Shri G.V. Mavalankar

MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT,

I have come here, after a full year, to welcome you to the new session of Parliament. During this past year, you have had to consider many difficult problems and to shoulder heavy burdens. Many of those problems still remain with us, but I think that you may well look back on this year as one of considerable achievement. As a symbol of the indomitable spirit of man conquering almost insurmountable obstacles and difficulties, came the final conquest of Everest. With this single achievement was associated one of our own brave countrymen. In the international sphere, the old tensions and fears continue. But efforts are being continually made to find some settlement and I earnestly trust that these efforts will lead to an easing of these tensions and will point the way to some future settlement both in the West and in the Far East.

India has continued to pursue a policy of peace and friendship with all the countries of the world and has not hesitated to undertake responsibilities where, it was hoped, this might enable her to perform some service in the cause of peace. In Korea, my Government accepted the Chairmanship of the Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission and sent a Custodial Force to take charge of the prisoners of war, pending a final decision about their future. Unfortunately, the process laid down in the Armistice Agreement could not be carried through, as intended, and a difficult situation arose. The Commission will conclude its labours within a few days and the Custodial Force is gradually returning to India. The major matters of dispute in Korea have not been settled yet. I earnestly hope that an early attempt will be made in the United Nations General Assembly, or otherwise, to give full consideration to these outstanding issues. I should like to express, on your behalf and mine, our high appreciation of the work of our representatives

in the Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission in Korea and of our officers and men of the Custodial Force, who discharged their difficult and delicate tasks with ability and impartiality.

India's relations with other countries continue to be friendly, even though sometimes some misunderstandings arise. My Government's representatives are at present discussing with the Government of the People's Republic of China various issues of common concern in regard to Tibet. I have every hope that these discussions will lead to a settlement of outstanding issues. Trade agreements have been made with the Soviet Union and several other countries. In the course of the past year, meetings took place between my Prime Minister and the Prime Minister of Pakistan. These meetings were friendly and led to some understandings about various matters which have long been in dispute between the two countries. While some progress was made in this respect, unfortunately some other developments have at present come in the way of further progress. I am glad to find that an agreement has been arrived at between my Government and the Government of Ceylon* over the long standing issue of the people of Indian descent in Ceylon*. This agreement does not finally solve this problem but is a first step and an earnest attempt to that end and I welcome it as such. It has always been my Government's endeavour to develop close and friendly relations with our neighbour countries, Ceylon* and Burma** with whom India has not only geographical but cultural affinities of long standing.

With the countries of Western Asia and Egypt, our relations have been of close cooperation and friendship. I am glad that the services of our Chief Election Commissioner as Chairman of the Electoral Commission for the Sudan were appreciated and successful elections were held. I welcome the emergence of self-government in Sudan both in itself and as a symbol of future progress in the Continent of Africa, which has suffered so much in the past, and is now undergoing a severe ordeal.

Since I addressed you on the last occasion, a new State in the Indian Union has come into existence, the State of Andhra. I welcome this addition to our fraternity of States and wish it success. In view of the demands for further reorganisation of the States in India, my Government have appointed a Commission for this purpose consisting of eminent and experienced members. This is a task of high and historic importance, which has to be dealt with in an objective and dispassionate manner so as to promote the welfare of the people of the areas concerned as well as of the nation as a whole. I earnestly trust that the work of this Commission will be assisted by all concerned in a spirit of harmony and understanding.

In two of our States, namely Travancore-Cochin, and Patiala and East Punjab States Union, general elections are taking place. In the latter State, the Constitution could not function properly and I had to take over charge till such time as fresh elections could take place.

* Now known as Sri Lanka.

** Now known as Myanmar.

Half the period of the first Five Year Plan is over. In some matters progress has not been as rapid as had been hoped, in others there has been significant progress. In particular, the Community Projects show promise and the National Extension Service, which was inaugurated in October 1953, is making satisfactory progress. The contribution of the people has been most encouraging. This is a particularly happy feature. Although there has been marked progress in industrial production and in other respects, my Government have been concerned at the existence of a considerable volume of unemployment. The Planning Commission have undertaken a revision of the first Five Year Plan, particularly to provide more employment.

There has been a continued improvement in the general economic situation. The output of foodgrains in 1952-53 was fifty lakh tons over the output of the previous year and this year's prospects are good. The improvement in the food situation has been highly satisfactory and the country is making rapid approach to the goal of self-sufficiency. Industrial production has continued at a high level, more particularly in cotton textiles, paper, chemicals, bicycles, cement, salt and most of the engineering industries. The index of industrial production rose to 134 in 1953 from 129 in 1952. This was the highest level of industrial production since the war. Plans for the expansion of steel production and for the establishment of a new iron and steel plant are now being finalised. The jute and tea industries, which were facing serious difficulties are now again doing well.

My Government attach special importance to the development of cottage industries. I regret, however, that progress in this respect has not been very satisfactory. It is hoped that the efforts of the All-India Khadi and Village Industries Board as well as the All-India Handloom Board and the All-India Handicrafts Board will yield substantial results in the near future.

Satisfactory progress has been made in the great River Valley Schemes and some of the projects have already been completed and are yielding results. Five new projects, namely the Kosi, the Koyna, the Krishna, the Rihand and the Chambal have been included in the Five Year Plan. Steps are being taken to expedite certain preliminary arrangements in regard to them, and, in the case of the Kosi, to have discussions with the Government of Nepal, with a view to starting work on these new projects during the next financial year.

The Air Services of India have now been reorganised and two State Corporations, one dealing with internal airlines and the other with external services, have been formed. It is proposed to extend the external services to the Far East.

In the course of the past year, two landmarks have been celebrated, namely the centenaries of the beginning of the Railway System and the Telegraphs in India. There has been steady progress on the railways and

special attention is being paid to the manufacture of locomotives and rolling stock. Some major projects of rail construction will be taken up shortly. Postal and telegraph facilities have expanded, especially in the rural and backward areas.

My Government attach importance to the problem of housing. A total expenditure of Rs. 72 crore has been incurred on housing for displaced persons since the Partition and loans and subsidies have been given for the construction of houses for industrial workers. With a view to encouraging the building of inexpensive and attractive houses, an International Exhibition on Low Cost Housing has recently been held and has attracted much attention.

A statement of the estimated receipts and expenditure of the Government of India for the financial year 1954-55 will be laid before you.

After the last session of Parliament, it became necessary to promulgate seven Ordinances. Of these, two deal with matters in respect of which Bills are pending before you. You will be asked to consider and pass such of these as require permanent legislation.

There are 28 Bills pending before you. Some of these have been considered by Select Committees; some others, which are still under the consideration of Select Committees, will be brought before you with their recommendations. Among these are the Bills dealing with reform of the Hindu Law to which my Government attach considerable importance. There are other legislative measures relating to matters of general public interest, which will be brought before you during the course of this session. My Government are anxious to proceed with certain reforms relating to judicial procedure with a view to expediting these processes and lessening the expenditure involved in them.

Early in this month a tragedy took place at the Kumbh Mela in Allahabad where a vast and unprecedented gathering of pilgrims had collected. The Uttar Pradesh Government had taken great pains to make satisfactory arrangements for this great concourse of human beings. But on the *Amavas* day an accidental mishap led to a large number of persons being crushed to death by the uncontrollable passage of others over them. This grievous tragedy, which marred a happy occasion, has brought sorrow to many and, on your behalf and mine, I extend my deep sympathy to the relatives of those who have suffered.

The new year begins with hope and fear evenly balanced. There is promise of achievement and of progress towards peace. There is also apprehension at the trials we and the rest of the world might have to face. In this crisis of human destiny, we can serve both our own country and the larger causes of the world only by adhering to the principles that have guided us in the past and by remembering the message of peace, tolerance and self-reliance of the Father of the Nation. I trust that, that message will guide you in your deliberations.

ADDRESS TO PARLIAMENT—21 FEBRUARY 1955

Lok Sabha	—	First Lok Sabha
Session	—	First Session of the Year
President of India	—	Dr. Rajendra Prasad
Vice-President of India	—	Dr. S. Radhakrishnan
Prime Minister of India	—	Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru
Speaker, Lok Sabha	—	Shri G.V. Mavalankar

MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT,

I am addressing you again after a full year. This past year has been, I am glad to say, one of considerable achievement for our country, both in the domestic and the international spheres. Parliament and our people have justification to view their labours with some satisfaction. There is no reason, however, for complacency. We have to face difficult problems in our own country and the threat of war again darkens the future of humanity.

I am happy to say that our relations with all other countries continue to be friendly and there has been growing understanding and co-operation with many of them. We have had distinguished leaders of many countries visiting India. During the past year, we have had visits from the Prime Ministers of Canada, Indonesia, China and Ceylon*. We have also welcomed in India the President of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia and the Governor-General of Pakistan. Our Vice-President has carried the message of our goodwill to the United States, Canada, Mexico, Argentina, Chile, Bolivia, Peru, Brazil, Uruguay and Italy. My Prime Minister paid friendly visits to China, Burma**, Indonesia, the States of Indo-China and Egypt. He has recently attended the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference in London, where matters of vital concern to the peace of the world were discussed in a frank and friendly manner.

I should like to mention especially the agreement between China and India in regard to Tibet. This agreement confirmed the friendship between these two great countries, which is so important for the peace of Asia and the world. In this agreement certain principles were laid down which are of even wider application and which have been recognised as such by many

* Now known as Sri Lanka.

** Now known as Myanmar.

other countries. These five principles, which are sometimes referred to as the Panch Shila, are mutual respect for each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty, non-aggression, non-interference in each other's internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit, and peaceful co-existence. I commend these principles to you and earnestly trust that they will increasingly form the basis of international relations, thus ensuring peace and security all over the world.

During this past year, another development of importance took place at the instance of the Prime Minister of Ceylon*. This was the meeting of the Prime Ministers of Ceylon*, Burma**, Indonesia, Pakistan and India at Colombo. Later a similar meeting was held at Bogor in Indonesia. These meetings gave organised expression to the views and urges of these countries, which are a large part of Asia, and undoubtedly served the cause of peace. As a result of these meetings, it is now proposed to hold a conference in Indonesia consisting of representatives of the independent nations of Asia and Africa. This conference marks another stage in the development of the countries of these two great continents and in their emergence in the sphere of world affairs. It will, I am sure, bring greater understanding and co-operation among them and further the cause of world peace.

An outstanding event of the past year, and indeed ever since the Second World War ended, was the Geneva Conference which brought an end to the war in Indo-China and laid the basis for a peaceful solution of the problems of the States of Indo-China. The Geneva conference dealt with problems of great importance and difficulty but the efforts of the Powers concerned to find a peaceful solution met with success. That conference thus set an example, which I hope will be followed in future, for settlement of other international disputes and conflicts.

As a result of the Geneva Conference, India has accepted heavy responsibilities in the three international commissions appointed in Indo-China. These Commissions, under India's chairmanship, have already done good work in implementing the decisions reached at Geneva and deserve praise.

Unfortunately, other conflicts still continue, endangering the peace of the world. Among these, the most serious at the present moment is that relating to the Far East and, more particularly, to Formosa and the offshore islands of China. My Government recognises only one Government of China, that is, the People's Republic and considers that the claims of this Republic are justified. I earnestly hope, however, that these difficult problems will be solved peacefully and by negotiation.

* Now known as Sri Lanka.

** Now known as Myanmar.

There is, indeed, no other way left for the solution of international disputes, if sanity is to prevail. Nuclear and thermo-nuclear weapons have been developed to such an extent that a war in which these are used would bring ruin to the world. No problem can be solved, no objective achieved, by this self-destruction of humanity. A hydrogen bomb not only destroys every living thing utterly within a large radius but also produces intense radio activity which will carry destruction to a much larger area. There is no defence against such weapons. Some eminent soldiers of different countries have stated categorically that a major war today, in which these weapons are used, has become unthinkable. I earnestly hope that the fearful nature of these weapons will lead not only to the total banning of their production but also to the realisation that war itself should be abolished as a means of settling any problem.

While atomic energy brings this threat of utter destruction to the world, it also gives a message of hope, provided it is used for peaceful purposes. Atomic energy provides the vast power necessary to raise the standard of living of the population of the entire world. It is of special importance for the development of the underdeveloped countries. We must welcome, therefore, that the United Nations has decided to call a scientific conference on the peaceful uses of atomic energy at Geneva. This conference will not only explore the possibilities of atomic power but will also consider the biological, medical and agricultural aspects.

Another example of a peaceful negotiated settlement of a difficult problem is the *de facto* transfer to the Indian Union of the French possessions in India. We are happy to welcome the citizens of these territories. I would like to express my appreciation of the statesmanship of the French Government in dealing with this problem. I hope that the problem of the Portuguese possessions in India will also be settled before long in a peaceful way.

The economic situation in the country has shown continued and marked improvement. Many of the targets laid down by the Five Year Plan were exceeded even in three years. The output of foodgrains in 1953-54 exceeded the Five Year Plan target by about 4.4 million tons. The index of agricultural production which was 96 in 1950-51 rose to 114 in 1953-54. The index of industrial production which stood at 135 in 1953, the highest figure since independence, increased to 144 in 1954. This index has increased at an average rate of ten per cent per annum during the last four years.

As a result of the improvement in production, many of the controls have been removed. The more abundant supply position of foodgrains created a tendency to depress prices unduly in certain surplus pockets. To prevent prices from falling to unremunerative levels, it has been decided to purchase certain foodgrains at specified prices.

My Government have decided to acquire effective control over the Imperial Bank of India in order, more especially to afford increasing banking facilities in rural and underdeveloped areas. The establishment of the Indian Industrial Credit and Investment Corporation is expected to prove of great benefit to the private sector of our industry.

Considerable progress has been made in the production of fertilizers at Sindri. The Hindustan Shipyard at Visakhapatnam delivered two eight thousand ton ships and launched another seven thousand ton ship in the course of the year. The Telephone Cable Factory at Rupnarainpur in West Bengal has gone into production. It has been designed to meet in full the requirements of the Posts and Telegraphs Department. The Penicillin Factory at Pimpri and the D.D.T. Factory at Delhi are about to commence production and it is proposed to establish another D.D.T. plant to meet the requirements of the Anti-Malaria campaign.

My Government attach great importance to increasing the iron and steel production in the country. With this end in view, two new steel plants, to be owned by the State, have already been decided upon. One is to be established at Rourkela. The other plant will be set up in the Bhilai region of Madhya Pradesh. A preliminary agreement, in regard to the latter, has been arrived at with the Government of the U.S.S.R.

My Government attach great importance, both from the point of view of production and of giving employment, to the growth of cottage and small-scale industries. With a view to introducing modern techniques in these industries, four regional institutes of technology are being established.

The great river valley schemes have shown considerable progress and a number of new projects are being started. In particular, I should like to draw attention to the public co-operation we are receiving in many of these projects. I would especially like to mention the great public response in respect of the Kosi project.

The Community Projects and the National Extension service programme have already covered, in a little more than two years since its inauguration in October 1952, about one-fifth of the rural population of India. At present, about 88,000 villages are being served by this programme which has achieved substantial results in agriculture and animal husbandry, public health, communications, education and irrigation. It is proposed to cover, by the end of the Second Five Year Plan, the entire country by the National Extension Service. The most remarkable feature of this programme is the response and enthusiasm of the people who are beginning to acquire a new faith in themselves and the habit of working together on joint programmes for the common good.

There has been steady improvement in the rate of development and of expenditure under the Five-Year Plan, both at the Centre and in the States. Special measures have been taken for permanent improvement in areas affected by scarcity, in rural and urban water supply schemes and in the electrification of rural areas and small towns.

The preparation of the Second Five Year Plan has now begun. It is expected that this Plan will be a more far reaching one than the First Plan, and that it will lay greater emphasis on the establishment of capital goods industries, on the provision of greater employment and on a re-orientation of the system of education.

A situation having arisen in Andhra State in which the Government of the State could not be carried on in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution, I have taken necessary action by Proclamation in accordance with Article 356 of the Constitution. Elections are now being held in the State, and it is hoped that normal constitutional machinery will be restored before long.

You will have to consider the Constitution Fourth Amendment Bill. These amendments have become necessary in order to further economic and social progress and to give effect to the Directive Principles of State Policy as embodied in the Constitution.

A statement of the estimated receipts and expenditure of the Government of India for the financial year 1955-56 will be laid before you.

Since the last session of Parliament, it became necessary to promulgate one Ordinance. A Bill dealing with this Ordinance will be placed before you. There are also a considerable number of other Bills pending, some of which have been considered by Select Committees.

The progress we have made during the past year has produced in our people self-reliance and hope for the future. That is the surest foundation on which we can build. It is for you, Members of Parliament, to give shape and form to this hope and to advance the country to its cherished goal of a Welfare State and a society conforming to the socialist pattern.

ADDRESS TO PARLIAMENT—15 FEBRUARY 1956

Lok Sabha	—	First Lok Sabha
Session	—	First Session of the Year
President of India	—	Dr. Rajendra Prasad
Vice-President of India	—	Dr. S. Radhakrishnan
Prime Minister of India	—	Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru
Speaker, Lok Sabha	—	Shri G.V. Mavalankar

MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT,

I am happy to address you once again and welcome you to the new session of Parliament. The past year has been one of considerable endeavour and achievement for us, both in the domestic and the international spheres. Our people and Parliament may, with reason, look upon them and their own labours with satisfaction and cautious optimism. There have been, however, events at home and abroad, and certain developments which must cause us apprehension. These we must meet with courage, patience and redoubled efforts and remind ourselves that there is room neither for complacency nor for despair.

Our relations with foreign countries continue to be friendly. During the year, greater understanding and co-operation have developed with many of them, and there is also increasing appreciation of the approach that we strive to pursue. We have had distinguished visitors from many countries visiting us, including many Heads of States and Governments, Prime Ministers and Foreign Ministers, and we have been happy to welcome them in our midst. My Prime Minister paid official and goodwill visits to the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Austria, Yugoslavia, Italy and Egypt.

We were deeply grieved at the death of His Majesty King Tribhuvan Bir Bikram Shah of Nepal, in whom our country has lost a good friend and Nepal an enlightened and courageous king. The recent visit of His Majesty King Mahendra Bir Bikram Shah and his gracious consort has further cemented the warm and friendly relations between the Indian and Nepalese peoples. I wish His Majesty a progressive and prosperous reign.

With Pakistan, negotiations to renew rail traffic between India and West Pakistan and to liberalise the Indo-Pakistan visa system have been successfully concluded, while negotiations in regard to the canal water

dispute are being continued. Agreement has also been reached in regard to moveable property of evacuees.

The exodus of population from East Pakistan* into India has lately increased in numbers and causes us much concern. This is a human problem of great magnitude, with tragic significance to large numbers of people. The State of West Bengal already heavily burdened, has to shoulder this additional burden. My Government will continue to hope that the Pakistan Government will take appropriate measures to alleviate the circumstances which lead to this exodus.

My Government regret that, inspite of our peaceful approach to the solution of the problem of the Portuguese colonies in India, the Portuguese Government have made no response and persist in their methods of colonialism, suppression and terrorism. My Government deeply regret the reference made by the Secretary of State of the United States to the Portuguese conquests abroad as 'provinces' of Portugal and the further implication that they are an integral part of the country of Portugal itself.

The Conference of the countries of Asia and Africa at Bandung, at which twenty-nine countries were represented has been hailed not only as an outstanding event in Asia, but is also recognised as one of world importance. The Bandung Declaration, which is a historic document and to which the world has paid much attention, commits the participating countries to the outlook and policy of peaceful approach for the solution of all problems and for the furtherance of world peace and co-operation.

In the continent of Africa, my Government hope that self-government and independence will soon be an established fact in the Gold Coast and that that country will be enabled to become an equal partner both in the Commonwealth and the United Nations. Somewhat similar developments are taking place in some other parts of West Africa, and my Government hope that this progress will gather momentum and that the example will spread to the other parts of Africa now under colonial rule. We welcome also similar developments in Malaya.

We welcome the emergence of the Sudan as a free and independent Republic and we pay tribute to the notable and historic part played both by Britain and Egypt in this development. My Government have established diplomatic relations with the Republic of the Sudan. We have also concluded a treaty of friendship with Egypt.

My Government have declared their sympathy with the struggles of peoples who strive for their liberation from colonial rule and, more particularly, in respect of the peoples of Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco. It is the firm belief of my Government that in the peaceful approach and negotiations for reaching agreed settlements is alone to be found the right and hopeful way for the solution of these problems.

* Now known as Bangladesh.

The recent session of the United Nations has been notable for breaking the deadlock in regard to the greater universality of its membership. Sixteen new nations have been admitted. We are particularly happy that among these are our close neighbours, Nepal and Ceylon*, as well as Cambodia, Laos, Libya and Jordan. It is a matter of deep regret, however, that Japan and Mongolia still await entry into that organisation. My Government will use their best endeavours to assist in resolving this problem, and also look forward to the admission of the Sudan in the near future.

My Government regret that the progress achieved as a result of the efforts of last year to bring about negotiations and to resolve differences between the United States and China has not made much headway, and observe with concern that the alternative to a negotiated settlement is fraught with grave possibilities. My Government will continue to use their best endeavours to advance the cause of peaceful negotiations.

In Indo-China, the work of the International Commissions in regard to supervision and control has been reasonably satisfactory, despite certain incidents. The political solutions agreed to at Geneva by the great Powers, as well as the parties concerned in Indo-China itself, however, stand challenged in respect of Vietnam and have encountered serious difficulties in Laos. The Commission is confronted with this problem even in its tasks of supervision and control. My Government hope that the parties concerned and the two co-Chairmen of the Geneva Conference, as well as the other powers involved, will use their best efforts not merely to maintain the armistice, but to further real political settlements which will contribute to the welfare of those countries and the stability of Asia and remove the menace of conflict, the bounds of which it is not easy to foresee.

In the Far East and Asia generally, the continued exclusion of China from the United Nations and the trade and other embargoes and discriminations imposed against her, make for instability and conflict. My Government will try their utmost, in common with like-minded governments, both at the United Nations and outside, to help remedy this situation which continues to be perhaps the gravest threat to world peace.

The world situation, as a whole has shown considerable improvement during the year, as a result of various developments and conferences and notably the Conference of the Heads of four Governments at Geneva. We regret that this progress has not been continued and there has been some deterioration. No actual progress has been made in respect of disarmament or the allaying of the hostilities and fears of the cold war. Our own country continues to have friendly relations with all countries, but this deterioration in the world situation has had adverse results in the development of peaceful relations and co-operation in our part of the world also.

* Now known as Sri Lanka.

More particularly, the policy of military pacts, based upon balance of power and mutual suspicion and fear, has led to deterioration in Western Asia, created division in the Arab world and resulted in the building up of armaments in Western Asia. This causes us concern even on our near frontiers. We deeply regret the conclusion of the Baghdad Pact as we did that of the SEATO.

The period of our first Five Year Plan will soon come to an end and my Government have been actively engaged in preparing the second Five-Year Plan. The success of the first Plan has produced confidence in our people and has laid the foundations for a more rapid growth of the national economy. The targets of the first Plan have been in many cases exceeded and the national income has risen by 18 per cent. Industrial production has increased by 43 per cent and agricultural production by 15 per cent. It is particularly satisfactory that the production of foodgrains has increased by about 20 per cent, even though there have been disastrous floods in North India and cyclones caused havoc in the south of India. I should like to pay a tribute to the work done by Government, and even more so by the people themselves, in repairing the damage caused by these calamities.

Our objective is to establish a socialist pattern of society and, more particularly, to increase the country's productive potential in a way that will make possible progressively faster development. The question of providing more employment is of vital importance. Special stress has been laid on enlarging the public sector and, more especially, on developing basic and machine-making industries. Three new major iron and steel plants and a plant for the manufacture of heavy electrical machinery have been decided upon. It is proposed to carry out mineral surveys on an extensive scale so as to discover and exploit the potential resources of the country. With a view to creating employment as well as the production of many types of consumer goods, reliance will be placed on labour-intensive methods of production and, more particularly, village and cottage industries. The Community Projects and the National Extension Service have already produced revolutionary changes in many of our rural areas. These will be continued and expanded and, it is hoped, that by the end of the second Plan period, they will cover nearly the whole of our rural area.

The second Plan is more ambitious than the first Five Year Plan and involves a far greater effort on the part of our people. We have a long way to go before we reach our objective of a socialist pattern of society and the national income has been raised to an adequate level and there is equal opportunity for all. But we are well set on the road to progress. The basic criterion for determining our lines of advance must always be social gain and the progressive removal of inequalities. We have arrived at one stage of our journey and we are now going to embark upon another and

more fateful one. The progress we have made during the past years gives us satisfaction and a sense of self-reliance and hope for the future. But our capacity to progress as well as to make any useful contribution to world peace and co-operation depends upon our economic strength and our unity. It depends on our sense of nationhood and our devotion to the basic ideals and principles which were laid down for us by the Father of the Nation. Without that indomitable sense of national unity and that spirit of dedication to the common cause, which enabled us to achieve independence, we can neither attain progress nor serve the larger causes of the world.

The targets of the second Five Year Plan include: new irrigation of 21 million acres, additional 10 million tons of foodgrains, an increase in power generation by 3.4 million kilowatts, an increase in the production of coal by 23 million tons so as to reach the target of 60 million tons in 1960, an increase by 3.3 million tons of finished steel, 5.2 million tons of cement, and an additional 1.7 million tons of fertilizers. It is expected that as a result of the new schemes, additional employment will be provided for 10 million persons in industry and agriculture.

Recent events in some parts of India have caused me great distress, as they must have pained all of you also. In our legitimate love of our languages some of us have forgotten for the moment that this great land is our common heritage and our common motherland. The reorganisation of States is an important matter and we must apply all our wisdom and tolerance to it; but, in the larger perspective of India and of India's future, it is a small matter what administrative boundaries we prescribe for a State. Above all, there can be no progress for our country if we do not adhere to non-violence and tolerance and to the basic integrity which makes a people great. We have witnessed, in recent years, great achievements by our people. We have also witnessed some of our old failings still coming in our way and encouraging the spirit of separateness and intolerance. Many a time in the past, we have had to face and have overcome severe crises, and again we are on our trial as a nation and as a people. We shall succeed only by adherence to our principles and ideals. I earnestly trust that you will consider these matters in a spirit of broad tolerance, always keeping in view the greater good of this great country of ours which we cherish and wish to serve. I hope also that, whatever Parliament, in its wisdom, decides will be willingly accepted by all our people.

As you are aware, the old Imperial Bank of India has been converted into a State bank and my Government, after careful consideration, have decided to nationalise the life insurance business. As a preliminary step and in order to safeguard the interests of the policyholders during the interim period, an Ordinance was issued last month vesting in the Central Government the management of life insurance business. A Bill will soon be

placed before Parliament to convert this Ordinance into an Act. I have no doubt that this step will prove to be in the interests of the public as well as of insurance and will be a step towards the socialist ideals we have before us.

My Government attach importance to the reorganisation of rural economy and to the development of co-operatives, both in agriculture and in small-scale industries. Legislation for the purpose of organising agricultural marketing, processing, warehousing and production through co-operatives will be introduced in Parliament.

My Government will introduce a Bill in regard to the reorganisation of States. There are a number of Bills pending before Parliament, some of which have been considered by Select Committees. There will be legislation to amend the lists of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in the light of the recommendations of the Backward Classes Commission and their examination by my Government. Legislative proposals in regard to the levy of sales tax on inter-State transactions and on essential goods, as recommended by the Taxation Enquiry Commission, will also be placed before Parliament.

Three Ordinances, which have been promulgated since the last session of Parliament, will be placed before Parliament. These are:—

- (1) The Representation of the People (Amendment) Ordinance, 1955;
- (2) The Life Insurance (Emergency Provisions) Ordinance, 1956; and
- (3) The Sales Tax Laws Validation Ordinance, 1956.

A statement of the estimated receipts and expenditure of the Government of India for the financial year 1956-57 will be laid before you.

We shall celebrate this year a very significant event. Two thousand five hundred years ago, one of the greatest sons of India, the Buddha, attained *parinirvana* leaving a deathless memory and an eternal message. That living message is with us still in all its truth and vitality. At no time in the history of the world was it needed more than now when we are confronted by the terrible threat of the atomic and hydrogen bombs. May this message of tolerance and compassion of the Buddha be with you in your labours.

ADDRESS TO PARLIAMENT—18 MARCH 1957

Lok Sabha	— First Lok Sabha
Session	— First Session of the Year
President of India	— Dr. Rajendra Prasad
Vice-President of India	— Dr. S. Radhakrishnan
Prime Minister of India	— Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru
Speaker, Lok Sabha	— Shri M. Ananthasayanam Ayyangar

MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT,

I am addressing you today after a full year, a year which has witnessed significant happenings in the world and considerable developments in our own country. We are meeting at a time when general elections are being held all over the country, and a new Parliament is coming into being as a result of these elections. This is the last occasion when I am addressing this Parliament. Some of you will come back to represent your constituencies in the new Parliament and some of you may not return. But I have no doubt that wherever your field of work may lie, it will be dedicated to the great task of building up this country of ours. I wish you success and good fortune in your field of activity.

Since I addressed you last, the world has seen a period of high tensions, particularly in the Middle East, and of conflict ending in the invasion of Egypt. The intervention of the United Nations and the impact of world opinion resulted in the withdrawal of the invading armies from Egypt; but the conflict has not only done great damage to Egypt but has also added to the tensions which were showing signs of relaxation, and has left in its wake many problems to be resolved. Our country, which is deeply involved both on account of her concern for world peace and co-operation and her own interest, has sought to assist in resolving these difficulties. India has accepted greater burdens including participation in the United Nations Emergency Force constituted by the decision of the General Assembly of the United Nations which called for the withdrawal of the invading forces.

In Central Europe, the events in Hungary have disturbed us greatly and here, as elsewhere, we have stood for the withdrawal of foreign forces and against their use against peoples and national movements. At the same

time, we have used our best efforts to assist in finding solutions to the problem at its various stages and extended our sympathy and our token of assistance to the people of Hungary.

The position in the Middle East casts its shadow over the prospects of co-operation and peace and the Suez Canal awaits opening for traffic. The policy of military pacts has divided the nations in this region and brought the apparatus of war more and more into Asia. We must, however, note with relief that the conflict in this region did not grow to greater dimensions.

Our Government and people rejoice in the fact that the former British colony of the Gold Coast, along with the former Trust Territory of Togoland under British administration, has now been constituted into the independent and sovereign State of Ghana and a full member of the Commonwealth of Nations.

We welcome the admission of Sudan, Morocco, Tunisia, Japan and Ghana to the United Nations. The continued exclusion of Mongolia and the denial to the rightful representatives of China of their place in the United Nations, cause us deep concern and we continue to devote our endeavours to remedy this situation.

We hope that Malaya will soon become a free and independent State and this will further limit the sphere of colonialism and extend the area of national freedom in Asia.

In the United Nations, the Indian Delegation, in the Eleventh Session of the General Assembly, has made effective and useful contributions in the prolonged debates on crucial issues in regard to the Middle East, Algeria and Cyprus, and contributed to peaceful solutions and procedures in respect of them. Disarmament has made no progress, but the United Nations unanimously resolved to continue its efforts to consider all proposals before it, including the proposals made by India. The Government of India are happy to have been able to assist in promoting this resolution.

Our country, which was a member of the Preparatory Commission of the International Atomic Energy Agency, can derive satisfaction that the Agency has now been established. May it fulfil the hopes that atomic energy will be harnessed for peaceful uses and also diverted from destructive purposes.

I had the happy privilege of visiting our near neighbour, Nepal; and the Vice-President represented our country at the Coronation of His Majesty King Mahendra Bir Bikram Shah. The endeavours of the Nepal Government and people for economic and social development have our full sympathy, and we are happy that we have been able to extend technical and economic assistance to them in the implementation of their Five Year Plan.

The Buddha Jayanti celebrations in India gave us the opportunity of welcoming in this country the Dalai Lama and the Panchen Lama, as well as leaders of Buddhism from different parts of the world. These celebrations reminded us and the world afresh of the great message of peace and compassion of the Buddha, which is so much needed in the world today.

We have been privileged to receive in our country many distinguished visitors to whom my Government and the people of India have extended their traditional hospitality. Among these eminent guests of ours have been their Imperial Majesties the Shahenshah and the Empress of Iran, His Imperial Majesty the Emperor of Ethiopia, President Shukri El-Kuwatly of Syria, His Royal Highness Prince Norodom Sihanouk of Cambodia, Prime Ministers of Burma*, Ceylon**, Indonesia, China, Nepal and Denmark, the Vice-Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany, the Deputy Prime Minister and Defence Minister of the Soviet Union, the Deputy Prime Minister of Sudan and the Foreign Ministers of the United States, France and the United Kingdom. The President of the United Nations General Assembly for 1956, Dr. Jose Maza, and the Secretary-General of the United Nations were also among our distinguished visitors. Parliamentary, cultural, trade and other goodwill delegations from Burma*, China, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, Germany, Indonesia, Japan, Norway, Poland, Sweden, Syria, and Uganda have also visited our country.

The Vice-President paid visits to the Soviet Union, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Rumania, Bulgaria, East Africa, the Central African Federation, Indonesia and Japan and received a very warm welcome everywhere.

My Prime Minister visited the United States at the invitation of President Eisenhower. The visit and the talks between the President of the United States and my Prime Minister have assisted in the promotion of understanding between our two countries and greater appreciation of each other's point of view. My Government feel confident that it will lead to increasing co-operation in all fields on the basis of mutual respect and understanding.

My Prime Minister also visited Canada at the invitation of Mr. Louis St. Laurent, the Prime Minister of Canada. His visit has helped to further enrich the relations between Canada and our country, which have always been very friendly and close.

My Government regret that no progress has been made in regard to the solution of the problem of 'apartheid' and discrimination against Africans and people of Indian origin in South Africa. This problem once again received the consideration of the United Nations at the instance of my Government. A further appeal to the Governments concerned to find a solution by negotiations has been made by the United Nations. The Government of India, as in the past, has readily subscribed to this resolution.

* Now known as Myanmar.

** Now known as Sri Lanka.

My Government deeply regret that Goa still continues to be an unhappy colonial outpost of the Portuguese Government, where every kind of liberty is suppressed and economic stagnation prevails. It is the firm policy of my Government that Goa should become free from colonial domination and should share in the freedom of the rest of India.

My Government regret that its relations with Pakistan continue to present difficulties and there has been no abatement in Pakistan of the campaigns of hatred and 'jihad'. The policy of the Government of India and the general approach of our people have been that we shall not respond to these with hatred, but shall continue our endeavours to promote friendly relations while defending our land and our legitimate interests. The exodus of people from East Pakistan* to India continued throughout this past year and assumed alarming proportions. Altogether, over four million people have come from East Pakistan* to India, and these persons have cast a heavy burden on our country and, more especially, on the State of West Bengal.

The problem of Kashmir was considered by the Security Council of the United Nations once again, at the request of the Government of Pakistan. The Government of India's position has been stated in clear and unambiguous terms, that the Jammu and Kashmir State is and has been a constituent State of the Indian Union since October 1947, like other States which acceded to the Union. The present situation in Kashmir has arisen from aggression and on illegal occupation of union territory by Pakistan in violation of international law and agreements and engagements reached in pursuance of United Nations resolutions. The Security Council has resolved last month to send its then President to Pakistan and India to confer with the two Governments. The Government of India, in accordance with its general policy, has agreed to receive and extend hospitality to Mr. Jarring of Sweden who is expected to arrive here soon.

The world situation as a whole, which was beginning to show some signs of improvement, gives us cause for less optimism at present. Our own country, however, continues to have friendly relations with all countries, but the deterioration in the world situation has adverse results on the development of peaceful relations and co-operation and economic development in our part of the world also. More particularly, the policy of military pacts based upon the balance of power, mutual suspicion and fear, has increased tensions in Asia and has led to the increase of armaments and extended the area of cold war. It continues to be the firm belief of my Government that only by a peaceful approach and agreed settlements can be found the right and hopeful way for solutions of the world's problems.

During the past year, the reorganisation of the States was completed, and this great task which had unfortunately roused much passion in some parts of the country, was accomplished. During the past year also, the First

* Now known as Bangladesh.

Five Year Plan was successfully completed and Second Five Year Plan begun. This Plan, while continuing to lay stress on greater food production, emphasises the need for industrial development, more especially in regard to heavy industry. The Community Projects and the National Extension Service have been extended with phenomenal rapidity over our rural areas and now cover two hundred and twenty thousand villages and a rural population of one hundred and twenty nine million. In the community development scheme, special stress is being laid on the development of small scale and cottage industries.

Mineral surveys have yielded promising discoveries of oil, and many new deposits of uranium ore have been located in Rajasthan and Bihar. The finds of thorium and uranium minerals in large quantities have more than doubled our known reserves of these minerals. The work of our Atomic Energy Department has made great progress, and India's first atomic reactor began operations last year. This is the first reactor to go into operation in Asia, outside the Soviet Union.

We are about to complete the first year of the Second Five Year Plan. Certain stresses and strains have emerged in the course of this year. Prices of certain commodities have risen and there has been a substantial drain on the foreign exchange resources of the country. These factors reflect the growing tempo of development in the country, in the public as well as in the private sectors. The growth of internal demand for consumption and for investment is a concomitant of rapid development and, up to a point, the emergence of such pressures is a sign that the resources of the country are being stretched in the interests of development. It is, however, essential to ensure that these pressures do not go too far. Government are determined to take appropriate measures to restrain the rise in prices and to reduce the drain on foreign exchange resources.

The major problem before the country in this context is that of conserving and increasing its foreign exchange resources. For a country which starts with insufficient facilities for producing machinery and equipment, a plan of industrialisation necessarily involves heavy foreign exchange expenditure. Since it is difficult in the short run to enlarge foreign exchange earnings substantially, developing economies require an inflow of external resources in the initial stages. It is, however, incumbent on the country concerned to earn the maximum foreign exchange it can and to exercise the utmost economy in the matter of imports. The recent agreement with the United States Government, under which large quantities of wheat, rice and cotton will be available to us on credit terms, will help in checking the rise in prices and will contribute to the furtherance of the Plan. Considerable external finance will, we expect, be forthcoming from international agencies like the World Bank and from friendly countries.

Nevertheless, the bulk of the resources required for development must come from within the country and the community has to be organised for a big production effort to make this possible.

The Second Plan gives high priority to industrialisation and to the diversification of the economic structure. This, in turn, requires a substantial increase in the production of basic necessities like food and cloth and of raw materials required for the developing industries. The Plan calls for more investment, and one of its principal aims is to enlarge employment opportunities. New incomes created by investment and employment are mostly spent on food and cloth and it is only if their supplies can be increased rapidly that the Plan can go forward without creating an inflationary situation. An increase in agricultural production thus constitutes the pivot of developmental effort and for this we need the fullest co-operation of every section of the community.

A statement of the estimated receipts and expenditure of the Government of India for the financial year 1957-58 will be laid before you for the purpose of passing votes on account authorising expenditure for a part of that year. In addition, a similar statement in respect of the Kerala State will also be laid before you for passing a vote on account for a part of the year for that State.

This session of Parliament will be a brief one and no major or controversial legislation will be taken up during this session. Some Ordinances which have been promulgated since the last session will be placed before Parliament.

Five years ago this Parliament came into existence representing the vast electorate of this great country, and it has laboured for the well-being and advancement of India and for peace and co-operation in the world. These labours have produced substantial results which we see all round us in the country, and I wish to offer you, Members of Parliament, my congratulations on the great tasks that have been accomplished. But there is no resting place for any of us and the great story of the building up of a new and prosperous India will continue to unfold itself, bringing happiness to all our people and serving the cause of world peace and co-operation.

I earnestly trust that the message of the Buddha, whose anniversary we recently celebrated, will ever guide us, and the spirit of the Father of the Nation will continue to inspire us.

ADDRESS TO PARLIAMENT—13 MAY 1957

Lok Sabha	— Second Lok Sabha
Session	— First Session after the 2nd General Election
President of India	— Dr. Rajendra Prasad
Vice-President of India	— Dr. S. Radhakrishnan
Prime Minister of India	— Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru
Speaker, Lok Sabha	— Shri M. Ananthasayanam Ayyangar

MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT,

You and the members of the legislatures of the States, chosen by an electorate of nearly two hundred million voters of our country, in accord with our Constitutional procedures, have called me once again to the high office of the President of the Republic. I am deeply conscious of the honour and I am grateful for the confidence which you have reposed in me. It shall be my endeavour to continue to deserve the trust and the affection of which I have been so long the happy recipient.

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you, as Members of the second Parliament in the history of our Republic. Some of you have been members of one or other of the Houses of Parliament, or come to Parliament with rich experience in your State legislatures. There are others among you who have been elected to Parliament for the first time. All of you will find, in your life and duties as Members of Parliament, both in the legislature and your constituencies, immense and varied opportunities and fields of constructive work in the service of our country and people. I wish you all good fortune and a very successful tenure of Parliamentary life.

We are in the second year of our Second Five Year Plan. There has been some inevitable slowing down in the first year of the Plan, resulting partly from the reorganisation of the States. This imposes a greater strain and calls for added effort both by the Government and the people during the remaining period of that Plan. My Government are fully conscious of this.

The economic situation, more particularly in relation to the Plan, confronts us with factors which, while they do not warrant grave apprehensions, are matters of serious concern and they are engaging the

attention of my Ministers. The deficit in the Central and State budgets and the strain on our foreign exchange resources occasioned by the requirements of the plan and of industrial development generally, as well as by external factors, call for determined and planned efforts. They call for both conservation and expansion of our resources by effecting real economies, by planned restrictions of certain imports, by expansion of export trade and by increasing national self sufficiency both in the fields of industry and agriculture. They will call for savings to be utilised for production and the abandonment of unproductive and anti-social habits of hoarding and speculation. These can only be effectively achieved by efforts and vigilance not only on the part of Government but also by the people as well.

It would be the easier, but not the gainful or constructive way, to bridge the gaps to which I have referred, by halting development. This will, however, provide no real or long term remedy. Our endeavour has to be to mobilise and conserve resources for greater productivity and for maintaining and improving development. My Government are fully aware of the problem and of the effort required. They are equally concerned that our temporary difficulties should not lead us in the direction of retarding progress and development, but that the difficulties should be overcome, where necessary, by reconsideration and revision of methods and by planned mobilisation of resources, and not by either the abandonment or slowing down of the progress towards our objectives.

Public opinion plays a large and well-nigh conclusive part in the success of such endeavours. The determination and fervour of our people, their readiness to accept discipline, to respond to the call for efforts and their resolve not to be led into anti-social behaviour, such as by hoarding or wasteful spending along will help the country to pass successfully through the present crucial period of our Second Five Year Plan.

Members of Parliament, the country looks to you a great deal for the sustained and special effort in support of the policies and endeavours which my Government will initiate in this behalf, which will help us surmount difficulties and achieve success.

While food production has increased, and the increases have been maintained, except for the results of natural calamities, more especially in certain parts of Bihar and the eastern districts of Uttar Pradesh, we have a considerable way to go before our country becomes fully self-sufficient in food. There are signs of slight abatement in the rising trend of food prices and my Government have taken several measures to bring about this trend. Intensive efforts have increased food production and improved crop prospects. Except in the case of some of the coarse grains adversely affected by climatic conditions, the crop yields and estimates not only do not indicate a shortfall but have also recorded appreciable increases.

My Government have also entered into arrangements for necessary imports of foodgrains and for building up reserves which will prevent price increases and bridge the gaps that still remain. A large storage construction programme has been undertaken. The behaviour of the public is a large and often determining factor in preventing rise in food prices which is caused by the apprehension of shortages resulting in the resort to hoarding as well as to the tendency to panic. The food situation, thanks to the increased production and the steps taken by my Government, does not warrant any lack of public confidence in regard to supplies. My Government propose to keep Parliament informed of the position in regard to food and the estimates of supply and requirements. It may be hoped that a knowledge of the true facts will help allay needless apprehensions and prevent artificial shortages and higher prices.

My Government are happy to state that their decision to lay stress on food production and agriculture generally in the Community Project plans has yielded handsome results. The Community Development and the National Extension Service programmes have made great strides in achievement. Higher targets in agriculture, health and sanitation have been achieved. The National Sample Survey shows that, at the end of the First Five Year Plan, the crop yields in the Community Development project and National Extension Service Blocks areas were approximately 25 per cent higher than for the country as a whole. The Community Projects and National Extension Blocks now cover 222 thousand villages.

State undertakings continue to make notable progress and new targets have been reached in almost every enterprise. There has also been expansion in the private sector. Khadi and Village industries will receive a further impetus with the setting up of 'The Khadi and Village Industries Commission' as a statutory body. Among the major new projects that will soon be inaugurated is the Nayveli Lignite Project where the first mine-cut will be made this month. My Government attach importance to the building up of a plant for the manufacture of heavy machinery and steps are being taken to this end.

To reduce the pressure on our resources of foreign exchange, my Government are making efforts to obtain deferred payment arrangements for major projects. Long term credits for certain projects are being negotiated.

Consequent on the reorganisation of the States, Advisory Committees have been set up for the Union Territories and Territorial Councils have been established in Himachal Pradesh, Manipur and Tripura. A Corporation for Delhi will be soon established. A new Union Territory of the Laccadives, Minicoy and Amindivi Islands has come into existence and the Five-Year Plan for the Andaman Islands at a total cost of Rs. 592.50 lakh will include the development of communication between the islands and the mainland.

Shipyard construction and the building of ships of modern design have made great progress at Visakhapatnam and plans for a second shipyard are now in hand.

My Government have initiated measures to relieve housing shortages and promote housing standards, slum clearances and Plantation Housing Schemes and housing for low-income groups and subsidised industrial housing. An urgent requirement of Delhi and the other great cities of India is the clearance of slum areas, and this problem is receiving the consideration of the Central and State Governments and the Corporations concerned.

Two Ordinances have been promulgated since the last session of Parliament. Bills dealing with these Ordinances will be placed before Parliament. These are:—

- (i) The Life Insurance Corporation (Amendment) Ordinance, 1957.
- (ii) The Industrial Disputes (Amendment) Ordinance, 1957.

My Government will also submit to Parliament a number of other Bills during the current session.

An interim statement of revenue and expenditure for 1957-58 was presented to Parliament during its last session and votes on account authorising expenditure for a part of the year were passed. That statement of revenue and expenditure will be presented again to Parliament in this session with such changes as are considered necessary, and Parliament will be asked to approve funds for the whole year.

Our relations with foreign countries continue to be friendly. Since I addressed Parliament last, we have had the pleasure of receiving as the guests of the Republic, Mr. Jozef Cyrankie Wiesz, Prime Minister of Poland, Dr. Heinrich Von Broutano, Foreign Minister of the Federal German Republic, and Mr. Oscaldo Sainte Marie, Foreign Minister of Chile.

My Prime Minister will attend the meeting of Commonwealth Prime Ministers in London at the end of June. During his absence abroad, he will take the opportunity of visiting Syria, Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden, the Netherlands, Egypt and Sudan.

While the situation in the Middle East continues to be unsatisfactory and charged with tension, it is a matter of gratification that the Suez Canal has been re-opened for navigation. My Government welcome the Declaration made by the Government of Egypt, prior to the opening of the Canal, which re-affirms the Convention of 1888 and the determination of Egypt to continue to abide by the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and of International Law. The Declaration provides for the reference of disputes arising from interpretations of the Convention and its application as well as certain other matters to the World Court and also to abide by its

decisions. The main provisions in the Declaration are, in the view of my Government, reasonable and adequate to safeguard the legitimate interests of the world community if they are worked in a spirit of co-operation and mutual understanding by all concerned. A notable feature of the Declaration is that, while it is made by the Government of Egypt, that Government has declared that it has the status of an International Instrument and this has been registered with the United Nations. My Government feel that this Declaration and its status as an International Instrument is a notable contribution to the lowering of tensions in that area and will provide a solution of the difficulties that followed the nationalisation of the Suez Canal.

Dr. Gunnar Jarring, a former President of the Security Council, visited Pakistan and India in pursuance of a Resolution passed by the Security Council on the 21st of February this year at the end of the debate on Kashmir. Dr. Jarring visited India twice and conferred with my Prime Minister. He has submitted a report to the Security Council.

The sub-committee of the Disarmament Commission has been sitting in London for some time, but no agreement appears to have been reached on any aspect of Disarmament, including the suspension of explosions of nuclear and thermonuclear weapons. The proposals of my Government in regard to Disarmament were once again referred by the General Assembly of the United Nations at the last session, along with all other proposals, to the Disarmament Commission.

Meanwhile, the United States, the Soviet Union, and now, the United Kingdom continue their experiments to explode these weapons of mass destruction. World opinion is increasingly concerned about the harmful effects of radiation which has been increasingly and more frequently felt in various parts of the world. The demand for the suspension of these explosions is widespread and continues to be impressed upon the nuclear powers, but hitherto without success.

My Government do not consider that the compromise proposals suggested from diverse quarters for the so-called limitation of these explosions or for their registration will ever rid the world of their harmful effects, or open the way to the abandonment of these weapons of mass destruction. On the otherhand, such regularisation of these tests tends to make thermonuclear war legitimate and as having the sanction of the world community. Reports of experiments with more and more deadly weapons of war continue to be received. It is however a matter of some gratification that the volume of world opinion against the continuance of experiments has reached a higher level than ever before. My Prime Minister in a Statement before the Lok Sabha in April 1954 put forward for consideration the proposal for a 'Standstill Agreement' to suspend these explosions. These proposals have since gained much support and the movement of world opinion in favour

of it has gathered momentum. My Government will continue to exert their influence with other nations and in the counsels of the world to bring about the abandonment of these test explosions and the prohibition of nuclear and thermonuclear weapons.

We meet here today one hundred years after the great rising which began in Meerut and spread over considerable parts of India. That was the first major challenge to foreign rule and it threw up notable figures, famous in India's history. The uprising was cruelly suppressed, but the spirit of freedom and the desire to be free from foreign domination continued and found expression on many subsequent occasions. Ultimately it led to a great national movement which followed peaceful methods and succeeded in achieving the independence of India and the establishment of this Republic of ours. We pay tribute now to all those who gave their lives or otherwise suffered so that India may be free.

India has been independent for nearly ten years now and during this period Parliament has laboured for the well-being and advancement of this country and her people and for peace and co-operation in the world. These labours have produced substantial results which we see all round us in the country. The progress we have made during these years in our own land has produced in our people hope and self-reliance. This is a substantial foundation on which we can build for the future.

Abroad, my Government have striven strenuously to help lower existing tensions of the world and to serve the cause of peace. The country has also accepted heavy responsibilities in the pursuit of this policy, in regard to maintaining the independence of its approach as well as in making contributions to the maintenance of peace, as in Korea, Indo-China and now in the Middle East.

The tasks that confront us both at home and abroad are not only considerable but at times also appear overwhelming. But these tasks have to be faced, difficulties surmounted and objectives achieved if the fruits of independence are to be ensured to our people and if we are to help the world being spared the continual stress and horror of impending catastrophe.

My Government will continue their strenuous endeavours in all these directions, to the best of their capacity conscious of the confidence reposed in them by the country and fortified by the conviction that despite clouds of war and even despair, the desire for survival and progress is inherent in humanity. Our capacities and resources are limited and our voice in the world may be but small. But neither our national interests nor our history and traditions, nor our convictions chart any other course for us. Happily for us, this is the common aim and the firm desire of all our people.

Members of Parliament, I wish you success in your labours.

ADDRESS TO PARLIAMENT—10 FEBRUARY 1958

Lok Sabha	—	Second Lok Sabha
Session	—	First Session of the Year
President of India	—	Dr. Rajendra Prasad
Vice-President of India	—	Dr. S. Radhakrishnan
Prime Minister of India	—	Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru
Speaker, Lok Sabha	—	Shri M. Ananthasayanam Ayyangar

MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT,

I am happy to welcome you once again to your labours in a new session of Parliament.

We are about to complete the second year of our Second Five Year Plan. Our economy, as you are well aware, has been under considerable stress since the beginning of the Second Plan period. In my address to you last May, I said that:

“It would be the easier, but not the gainful or constructive way, to bridge the gaps to which I have referred, by halting development. This will, however, provide no real or long-term remedy. Our endeavour has to be to mobilise and conserve resources for greater productivity and for maintaining and improving development. My Government are fully aware of the problem and of the effort required. They are equally concerned that our temporary difficulties should not lead us in the direction of retarding progress and development, but that the difficulties should be overcome, where necessary, by reconsideration and revision of methods and by planned mobilisation of resources, and not by either the abandonment or slowing down of the progress towards our objectives.”

My Government have taken, in many spheres of our economic and social life, steps that are very stringent to enable our economy and our planned development to absorb the shock of these stresses, thereby controlling to a great extent inflationary factors and meeting the situations resulting from the position in regard to foreign exchange resources and for the completion of the tasks under the Plan. The measures my Government have taken in this regard have yielded results and in recent months, I am

happy to say, there has been some improvement. The measures adopted by my Government to restrict imports and to earn more foreign exchange have resulted recently in some diminution in the rate at which our foreign assets were falling. My Government have also endeavoured and succeeded in some measure in obtaining foreign assets by way of loans, arrangements in regard to specific projects, deferred payments for essential capital goods and severe limitation of allocation of foreign exchange to all but the most essential capital or consumption requirements. I should like to express my gratitude to the countries from whom we have received assistance in this respect. In this connection I would like to mention the Soviet Union, Canada, Germany, Japan and, more particularly, the United States of America.

Increased production, which would both help reduce foreign exchange requirements and help earn it, and domestic savings, which help check inflation and provide the internal resources required for the fulfilment of our plan tasks are, however, imperative. These call for both understanding of problems and sacrifices from our people, for vigilance, economic and the support of public opinion.

The series of measures taken by my Government in regard to fiscal and foreign exchange matters have assisted in maintaining the stability of our economy. Prices which had been rising in 1956 and the early part of 1957, have not only remained steady but also registered a slight fall towards the end of last year, which is continuing. There has also been an appreciable decline in our Balance of Payments deficit. The credit position is considerably easier than it was last year. The resources of the banking system have improved and the increase in the advances has been moderate. The Reserve Bank proposes to watch the situation carefully with a view to keeping down any speculative tendencies.

The availability and price of foodgrains very largely govern our internal price levels and our external payment position. The damage to crops as a result of drought in certain parts of the country has been a very disquieting feature. My Government have at their disposal reserves of food which would be maintained at adequate levels by further imports; and have also imposed a degree of limited but essential controls on the movement of foodgrains. My Government have also regulated the supply of bank credit for foodgrains to prevent hoarding and arranged for distribution of large quantities of foodgrains from Government stocks through Fair Price Shops. These measures have appreciably helped restrain the upward trend in prices.

In 1956-57, even though the harvest was not good, the production of foodgrains almost touched the peak level reached in 1953-54. It was 68.7 million tons which was more than 5 per cent, higher than the figure for 1955-56. The all India index of agricultural production showed an increase of about 6 per cent over the previous year. The production of commercial crop also recorded a significant increase. This was 18 per cent in regard to

cotton, 13 per cent for sugarcane and 6 per cent for oil seeds. All possible efforts are being made to increase food production at a higher rate than hitherto. It is essential that self-sufficiency in food should be attained.

Industrial production has maintained steady improvement. One wholesome result of the severe restrictions on imports, necessitated by the paucity of foreign exchange, is greater employment of domestic resources and skills and their development. Progress in this direction, which is the aim of my Government to encourage and promote, both in regard to Governmental requirements and industry, generally, is essential, if productivity and the growth of our economy are not to be retarded. The success of these developments, although brought about by necessity, would have the effect of making our industry less dependent on outside sources.

The production of coal during 1957 reached a new limit of 43 million tons as against 39 million tons in 1956. Drilling and prospecting have been almost completed in many important new areas and it is expected that several new collieries will be working within a few months.

An agreement has recently been concluded with the Assam Oil Company for the formation of a Rupee Company in which Government will participate to the extent of $33\frac{1}{3}$ per cent for the production of oil from the Naharkatiya oil fields and for transportation of oil therefrom. Two refineries, one in Assam and the other in Bihar, are also to be set up. Prospecting and drilling for oil are taking place in other parts of the country also.

A non-lapsable Shipping Development Fund, with a view to finding an assured source of rupee finance for the rapid growth of Indian shipping has been established.

The multi-purpose river valley projects have made considerable progress. Maithon Dam in the Damodar Valley was inaugurated in September last. In the Bhakra project work is proceeding ahead of schedule. In Nagarjunasagar construction of the dam began in July last. Progress in regard to the other multi-purpose projects has also been generally satisfactory.

In the field of heavy industry, much progress has been made. In the public sector, a heavy machine building plant and a number of other projects will be financed out of a special credit offered by the Government of the U.S.S.R. A heavy foundry and forge will be set up with Czechoslovak collaboration. A fertiliser factory at Nangal is being built with the help of credit terms from the United Kingdom, France and Italy. It is proposed to build another fertiliser plant at Neyveli. The heavy electrical plant at Bhopal is being taken in hand with British collaboration. Good progress has been made in the construction of the three major steel plants at Rourkela, Bhilai and Durgapur.

The Malaria Control Programme, which was inaugurated in 1953, has made considerable progress and reduced greatly the incidence of malaria. From control, our efforts are now being directed to a complete eradication of malaria. In regard to filaria control also, good progress has been made. Provision has been made for slum clearance and development programmes.

Marked progress continues to be made in the field of science and technology, and our National Laboratories are directing their efforts to the solution of scientific problems related to industrial and national development plans. In particular, efforts are being made for the rapid increase of technical manpower.

The work of the Department of Atomic Energy has expanded greatly during the last year. Two more reactors and several new plants are under construction. Uranium metal of atomic purity and fuel element for the reactors will be in production before the end of the current year. My Government have under consideration the construction of one or more Atomic Power Stations during the current Five Year Plan period.

The State Bank of India, which was nationalised a little more than two and a half years ago, has made considerable progress. Measures are under consideration to integrate more closely with the State Bank of India certain other State associated banks of intermediate size, which will be managed as subsidiaries of the State Bank.

The Planning Commission is engaged in working out the annual plans for the States and the Centre and the necessary adjustments in the Plan as a whole, having regard to the available resources and, at the same time, to the imperative consideration of not permitting any impairment to the growth of our economy. My Government will place before you in the current session the results of these studies in regard to what is spoken of as the 'Core of the Plan'.

The Community Development and National Extension Service Projects have made significant progress. There are now 2,152 Blocks which comprise 2,76,000 villages and cover 15 crores of population. The National Development Council having decided that the Block should be the unit for planning and development and the common agency of all development departments, steps have been taken to integrate Departmental Development Budgets in the Block Budget. The Block Development Officer is being placed in operational control of this budget. The Development Council have also decided on greater decentralisation in regard to administration and the transfer of greater authority to people's organisations at the village block and district levels. The pattern of such devolution will be worked out by the States according to local circumstances. A scheme for training village farm leaders has been initiated to encourage the adoption of improved agricultural methods.

The recommendations of the Official Language Commission which are being studied by a Committee of 30 Members of Parliament are under examination. Members of Parliament, you will have an early opportunity of discussing this Report and the opinions of your Committee before any directives are issued.

Requisite action in pursuance of the Delhi Municipal Corporation Act of 1957 to establish a Corporation in the beginning of the next financial year has been taken.

Tripartite Wage Boards have been set up in the textile and sugar industries. My Government have under consideration the setting up of similar wage boards for other major industries in due course. With a view to securing the progressive participation of workers in industrial management, schemes to this end are being introduced initially in a few selected undertakings. The Employees' State Insurance Scheme is being extended and the Employees' Provident Fund Act of 1952 has been extended now to cover 19 industries. 6,215 factories and establishments are now covered under the Act. The total amount of contributions collected are about 100 crores of rupees.

The situation in the Naga Hills area has improved considerably. Government accepted the demands of the leaders of the Naga People's Convention held at Kohima in August 1957 and, as a result, a new unit comprising the Naga Hills and the Tuensang Frontier Division was created by Act of Parliament in November last.

Sixty-eight Bills were passed by Parliament during 1957 and eight Bills are pending before you. My Government propose to introduce legislation in the current session in regard to Merchant Shipping and Trade Mark and Merchandise Marks. Certain other amending legislation in regard to various matters will also be submitted to you.

A statement of the estimated receipts and the expenditure of the Government of India for the ensuing financial year will be laid before you.

Our relations with foreign countries continued to be friendly. Since I addressed Parliament last, we have had the privilege of receiving as guests of the Republic, the Presidents of Indonesia, the Republic of Vietnam, and the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, the Vice-President of the Yugoslav Federal Executive Council, the Prime Ministers of Burma*, Ceylon**, Czechoslovakia, Japan and the United Kingdom, the Foreign Ministers of France and Morocco, the Finance Minister of Ghana, the Education Ministers of Ghana and Mauritius, and cultural delegations from several countries.

My Prime Minister attended the meeting of the Commonwealth Prime Ministers in London at the end of June. He also visited Syria, Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden, Egypt, Sudan, Japan, Burma* and Ceylon**. The

* Now known as Myanmar.

** Now known as Sri Lanka.

Vice-President was also able to pay goodwill visits to China, Mongolia, Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos and Ceylon*.

The world situation, while it presents no aspects of an immediate crisis, is ominous with the ever present danger of deterioration into conflict which might become world wide, unless the present deadlocks and world tensions are eased and the way is found for peaceful co-existence of nations, more particularly between the Great Powers.

The launching of the earth satellites by the Soviet Union and the United States of America marks an epochal advance by man in the conquest of Time and Space. They are great scientific advances, but in the context of world tensions and the presence of intercontinental ballistic missiles and other weapons, every such scientific advance can well become another threat to world peace.

The efforts towards achieving progress in disarmament stand deadlocked. Any effective solution requires the joint participation of the two Great Powers—the United States of America and the Soviet Union—and their agreement in regard to any solutions. At the last General Assembly of the United Nations, some progress was made in this direction, but the deadlock continues. That General Assembly, however, passed a unanimous resolution on peaceful co-existence which, following as it did the deadlock over disarmament, gives some hope that a fresh approach may still be made.

My Government holds the opinion that a meeting at high level of the great States with any others, on whom they might agree, would help to ease tensions, would bring about an atmosphere of peaceful tolerance, as provided in the United Nations Resolution of December 14, 1957, and open the way towards the easing of tensions and some progress in the field of disarmament.

My Government have engaged themselves at the United Nations in continued efforts to help ease tensions and advance the view that on co-existence and respect of each other alone can solutions be found.

India has been elected as a member of the Disarmament Commission. The Commission can, however, meet effectively only if all countries concerned are willing to participate. My Government intend to do their utmost to help bring about a solution.

My Government continue to press in the United Nations and elsewhere for the suspension of nuclear explosions, the dangers of which are becoming more and more the concern of scientists and indeed of peoples all over the world. My Prime Minister made an appeal to the heads of the United States of America and the Soviet Union in regard to suspension of these tests as

* Now known as Sri Lanka.

a first step towards disarmament. My Government will continue their efforts in these fields.

The International Supervisory Commission in Indo-China, of which India is Chairman, have continued to function effectively despite difficulties, and peace in that area has been maintained. A welcome development has been an agreement reached in Laos between the Royal Laotian Government and the Pathet Lao leaders and a political settlement there is within sight.

My Government have heard with regret and surprise reports that some countries had sought at a recent meeting of the Baghdad Pact to be equipped with atomic weapons. We profoundly believe that none of the Great Powers will give encouragement to these desires and the outlook that persists.

For ourselves, my Government desire to make it clear beyond all doubt, that while we could, if we so decided, unwisely, produce atomic weapons, with the resources and skills that we have and can develop, we have no intention whatsoever of acquiring, manufacturing or using such weapons or condoning their use by any State. Our endeavours in the atomic field will remain confined to the peaceful use of atomic energy.

Members of Parliament, I wish you success in your labours, and trust that they may help bring greater prosperity and contentment to our people and peace and co-operation in the world.

ADDRESS TO PARLIAMENT—9 FEBRUARY 1959

Lok Sabha	—	Second Lok Sabha
Session	—	First Session of the Year
President of India	—	Dr. Rajendra Prasad
Vice-President of India	—	Dr. S. Radhakrishnan
Prime Minister of India	—	Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru
Speaker, Lok Sabha	—	Shri M. Ananthasayanam Ayyangar

MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT,

I welcome you once again to your labours in a new session of Parliament.

We are near the end of the third year of the Second Five Year Plan. In my address to you last February I drew your attention to the stresses and strains to which our economy is subject. I expressed the concern of my Government that our temporary difficulties should not lead us in the direction of retarding development and progress. Difficulties should be overcome by reconsideration and revision of methods and by planned mobilisation of resources.

In May, and again in November 1958, the National Development Council took into consideration the problems of resources, of production and of phasing relevant to the Second Plan and decided that the Plan outlay should be Rs. 4,500 crore and this total should be reached by conservation of and addition to resources.

The economic policy of my Government has this end in view. Measures have been adopted to limit and phase foreign exchange commitments and expenditure, to arrest rise in internal prices and to increase foreign earnings. Export duties on a number of commodities have been reduced or abolished and export quotas have been liberalised. In August 1958, as a result of a comprehensive review of regulations export control was removed from as many as 200 commodities and the number of commodities subject to quota restrictions severely curtailed.

My Government have made successful attempts to secure foreign assistance by way of aid and loans to tide us over our temporary difficulties. Negotiations for further aid are in progress. Aid or loans from foreign countries for which my Government and our people are duly grateful are not governed by the attachment of any political conditions to them. Negotiations in regard to future assistance will also be on the same basis.

Our Second Plan is only part of the whole process of planned development of our economy. The steps we now take are but stages along the long and arduous road to planned prosperity and my Government, through the Planning Commission, have already initiated consideration and studies of the Third Plan. It is hoped that by the end of the Third Plan, a sound foundation will have been laid for future progress in regard to our basic industries, agricultural production and rural development, thus leading to a self-reliant and self-generating economy.

Planning is a national undertaking requiring the efforts of the whole nation and the co-operation of all at every stage. My Government have therefore called for, and look forward to a constructive, even if critical, approach by all and contribution in ideas from the different shades of opinion in Parliament and outside. To this end, my Prime Minister and the Planning Commission are seeking the co-operation of all parties.

It is proposed to prepare a preliminary Draft Outline or Plan Frame for the Third Plan by the end of this year. After the preliminary Draft Outline has been discussed and approved, detailed consideration of Central and State Plans will commence. The principal objectives which we have accepted are: a substantial increase in national income, rapid industrialisation, expansion of employment on a sufficient scale, and a reduction in inequalities of income and wealth. The Government will continue to aid and support small and cottage industries. The tempo of development already attained must be maintained and accelerated.

Food and food prices are the most important factors in the regulation of our economy. On these largely depend other factors vital to our planning and progress, such as availability of foreign resources for development, the balance of payments position, the maintenance of internal price levels and the arrest of inflation, if and when it tends to set in.

To check the rise in prices of foodgrains, in early 1958, following failure of rains and widespread damage to crops, my Government imported 2.74 million tons of foodgrains in the first eleven months of 1958, regulated internal movement of foodgrains and made supplies available to the consumer through fair price shops. The Reserve Bank enforced its policy of restraint on availability of Bank credit for buying up of foodgrains by private parties.

In this respect self-sufficiency in food alone can provide a satisfactory solution. Increased yields, by greater and sustained efforts and the adoption of improved methods in agriculture combined with the necessary agrarian reforms, which would make agriculture both gainful and economic, are imperative. To this end, my Government will seek to promote agrarian reforms, co-operation and devolution of functions to village units.

The crop prospects for 1959-60 are in refreshing contrast to our plight the previous year. Nature is being kinder to us this year, and the outlook both in regard to food and commercial crops is promising. We have a very

good rice crop and prices of rice have already recorded a marked fall. It is intended to build up considerable stocks and to widen the scope of State trading. Wheat and gram prices have risen, but, according to present indications, the *Rabi* crop will be good. Our developmental efforts, in regard to the major crops, by intensive production campaigns, greater stress on minor irrigation projects, proper utilisation and maintenance of existing works, increased momentum in the establishment of seed farms, more promising tendencies to adopt better methods, and extension of soil conservation programmes, account in a considerable measure for the more hopeful horizon in agriculture.

The Community Development programme, on which largely depend the effective extension and implementation of democracy in meaningful terms to the large masses of our people, now covers 300,000 villages and roughly a rural population of 165 million. Measures for more effective participation of the people in this vital development are being implemented. The basic unit of our democracy, the Panchayat, is being provided with increased resources and functions. Village Co-operatives are being organised and developed so as ultimately to cover the entire rural area.

Industrial production, as a whole, showed progress, but some industries, notably textiles, have suffered a set-back. Among the industries, both in the public and private sectors, which achieved a substantial increase in output were machine tools, penicillin, insecticides, paper and board, diesel engines, electric motors, sulphuric acid, caustic soda, tyres, sewing machines, bicycles and electric fans. New schemes of development and expansion in the public sector, which are in progress, cover machine building, fertilizers and drugs. Plants to build heavy electrical equipment, heavy industrial machinery and mining machinery are being set up at Bhopal, Ranchi and Durgapur. New fertilizer plants are being established at Nangal, Rourkela and Neyveli, while Sindri has been expanded. Projects for the manufacture of drugs and antibiotics are also among the new development schemes in progress.

I had the pleasure of inaugurating the two large steel plants at Rourkela and Bhilai last week, where production of pig iron has now started. It is expected that steel will be produced in these plants before the end of the year. It is also expected that the first blast furnace at Durgapur will begin to function before the end of the year. The programme of expansion of the steel plant at Jamshedpur has been almost completed and full production will be achieved within a few months. The steel works at Burnpur will complete their expansion programme by the end of the year.

Coal production has increased. Further steps have been taken towards implementing the Neyveli Lignite Project. The Project Report of Neyveli Thermal Power Station has been accepted and action for construction initiated.

There have been advances in the development of mineralogy by way of intensive surveys and exploration, and the National Mineral Development Corporation has been established. New deposits of coal, copper and gypsum have been discovered.

The search for oil and natural gas was intensified and has yielded promising results. Drilling for oil has been continued at Jwalamukhi and Hoshiarpur in the Punjab, and will be started soon in the Shibsagar area in Assam. The most significant development has been in the Cambay area of Bombay* where oil under considerable pressure has been discovered, and there are indications of several promising oil horizons. It is hoped that by an intensive programme of test drilling, the extent of the potential oil reserves of the Cambay area will be established during this year. Considerable reserves of natural gas have also been found in Naharkatiya Oil Fields.

An agreement has been concluded with the Government of Rumania for the supply of equipment and assistance in the construction of an oil refinery in Assam.

The National Laboratories have played an important part in the plans of industrialisation. They have harnessed the results of their research to production by erection of pilot plants, particularly for the development of coal resources for the steel plants, raw materials for refractories, and in assisting the private sectors in certain problems. The Laboratories have in a number of cases made possible the use of indigenous in place of imported material, and also assisted in the utilisation of low grade ores.

My Government have taken steps in several directions to implement the purposes contained in the Scientific Policy Resolution of the 4th of March 1958. Close liaison exists between the National Laboratories and Industry. Laboratory training courses, and grants-in-aid schemes for research promote these relations as well as the scientific approach and the availability of scientifically skilled manpower. It has been decided to establish National Laboratories for research and development in Mechanical Engineering at Durgapur and Public Health Engineering at Nagpur.

Two more Higher Technological Institutes will be opened this year, one in Bombay* with the aid of the U.S.S.R. and UNESCO and the other in Madras with the aid of the Federal Republic of Germany. A College of Engineering is being established in Delhi with United Kingdom aid. The foundation-stone of this institution was laid by His Royal Highness Prince Philip, The Duke of Edinburgh, during his recent visit.

A new Atomic Energy Commission, with executive and financial powers, within the limits of the expenditure sanctioned by Parliament, has been established. Considerable advance and expansion in the field of atomic energy, and exclusively for peaceful purposes, has been made and continues

* Now known as Mumbai.

satisfactorily. The aim of planning in this field is the production of all the basic materials required for the utilisation of atomic energy for power. While large-scale achievement in this field of nuclear power must await the later stages of the Third Plan, my Government have decided to install nuclear powered plants to produce electricity of a minimum capacity of 250 thousand kilowatts.

In my address to you last year I said that uranium metal of atomic purity and fuel elements for the reactors will be in production before the end of the current year. I am glad to say that the construction of the uranium metal plant has been completed and has undergone trial runs successfully. The first ingot of atomically pure uranium metal was produced on January 30th, 1959. The construction of the facility for producing fuel elements is also far advanced.

The work on the River Valley Multi-Purpose Schemes has progressed during the year according to schedule. The Report of the High Level Committee on Flood Control is under consideration of my Government.

The ports of Calcutta* and Madras** are to be improved at a cost of 20 crores of rupees, for which the Port authorities have entered into financial agreements with the World Bank.

My Government have met with success in their endeavours to promote industrial relations on a voluntary and agreed basis. A 'Code of Discipline', which stresses the need for recognition by employers and workers of both the rights and responsibilities of either side, has been ratified by all Central Organisations of Employers and Workers. This Code also prescribes certain norms of behaviour. It provides that unilateral action by either side should not be taken, lock-outs and strikes should be avoided and the machinery for the settlement of disputes should be utilised expeditiously. The Code also prescribes sanctions to be invoked by the Workers and Employers Organisations in regard to their respective defaulting members. A Tripartite Committee has been constituted to assess the extent of the non-implementation of Labour Enactments and Awards and also to secure their proper implementation. The Employees' State Insurance Scheme, which already covers nearly fourteen lakhs of workers, is being further extended. A beginning has been made in workers' participation in management and Joint Councils have been set up in several industrial undertakings, both in the public and private sectors.

There has been a substantial increase in the output of the Ordnance Factories which has enabled my Government to effect appreciable savings in foreign exchange. There have also been advances in scientific and industrial research and development, and the expansion of facilities in this respect. This has enabled progress in the indigenous production of the materials required for the manufacture of Defence equipment.

* Now known as Kolkata.

** Now known as Chennai.

The Committee of Members of Parliament constituted in accordance with Article 344 of the Constitution to examine the recommendations of the Official Language Commission has submitted its Report. You will have the opportunity of considering it during the current session.

The situation in the Naga Hills shows appreciable improvement. Cases of violence and lawlessness have markedly declined. The Nagas, generally, have appreciated the policy of my Government. In May 1958 the All-Tribal Convention reinforced the decisions of the Kohima Convention of August 1957. Large numbers of Nagas who were previously hostile and had gone underground are now pursuing normal and peaceful avocations.

The Sikkim Development Plan, which is financed by India, is making good progress. The road from Gangtok to Nathu La has been completed and is open to vehicular traffic. This road passes through a very difficult mountain terrain and our engineers are to be congratulated on the success of this undertaking. A tripartite agreement to which Nepal, the United States of America and India are parties for the construction of 900 miles of road was signed in January last year. An agreement for the construction of the Trisuli Hydro-Electric Project has been concluded and work begun. This Project will generate 12,000 kilowatts of electricity for the Kathmandu Valley.

Considerable progress has been achieved in the rehabilitation of displaced persons from Pakistan. So far as the displaced persons from West Pakistan are concerned, it is hoped that the last stage of rehabilitation, that is payment of compensation, will be completed during this year. In regard to displaced persons from East Pakistan*, about sixty thousand have moved from camps to rehabilitation sites during the past year. It has been decided to close the camps in West Bengal before the end of July this year. It is expected that the remaining thirty-five thousand displaced families will have moved by that time from the camps either for work and rehabilitation in Dandakaranya, or to rehabilitation sites in other States.

My Government have recently made certain important changes in regard to arrangements for budgeting and financial control over expenditure from the Civil estimates. In order to secure a speedier implementation of our development plans, the administrative Ministries have been given wider financial powers to issue expenditure sanctions to schemes which have been included in the Budget Estimates after scrutiny by the Finance Ministry.

An Ordinance, namely 'The Indian Income Tax (Amendment) Ordinance, 1959', has been promulgated since the last session of Parliament. A Bill dealing with this Ordinance will be placed before Parliament.

Forty-nine Bills were passed by Parliament during the year 1958. Thirteen Bills are pending before you. My Government intend to introduce a number

* Now known as Bangladesh.

of legislative proposals both by way of new Bills and amendments. Such proposals will include:

- (1) The Companies (Amendment) Bill.
- (2) The Estate Duty (Amendment) Bill.
- (3) The State Bank of India (Subsidiary Banks) Bill.
- (4) The Coal Mines Labour Welfare Fund (Amendment) Bill.
- (5) The All-India Maternity Benefit Bill.
- (6) Bill to provide for compulsory notification of vacancies by employers to Employment Exchanges.
- (7) The Geneva Convention Bill.
- (8) The Savings Bank (Amendment) Bill.
- (9) The Banaras Hindu University (Amendment) Bill.
- (10) The Children Bill.
- (11) A Bill for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.

A statement of the estimated receipts and the expenditure of the Government of India for the financial year 1959-60 will be laid before you.

My Government note with concern the continuance of world tensions and that basic improvements in the world situation are not yet on the horizon. My Government, however, continue to pursue their policy of non-alignment with the great power Blocs and of making their contribution wherever possible for the relaxation of tensions.

The vast advances in science and technology have enabled man to dare to explore interplanetary space and have opened up before him great vistas which are full of possibilities for human progress. My Government share with others the concern that these great scientific developments have hitherto been used principally for the making of weapons of mass destruction which threaten the world with annihilation.

My Government note with regret that while some progress has been made at Geneva in regard to the termination of nuclear and thermonuclear explosions, neither in this nor in the more fundamental problem of the prohibition of these weapons of mass destruction or in the general field of disarmament, real progress, much less a settlement, is in sight.

In September last year, my Prime Minister reached agreements with the then Prime Minister of Pakistan in regard to certain border disputes and border problems. These included an agreement for the exchanges of Cooch-Bihar enclaves in Pakistan with Pakistan enclaves in India. My Government will place before you legislation to implement these agreements.

Our own relations with the countries far and near have continued to be friendly.

On the invitation of the Emperor of Japan, I visited Japan at the end of September 1958 and received a warm welcome from the Emperor and the people of Japan.

In December 1958 I paid visits to Indonesia and Malaya on the invitation of the President of Indonesia and the Paramount Ruler of Malaya. In both these countries I was accorded a generous welcome by the Government and the people.

My Prime Minister, in September last year, visited Bhutan with which country we are in special Treaty relationship. He met with an affectionate welcome from the Ruler and the people of Bhutan. He has assured them of our deep and abiding friendship and our determination not to interfere in their internal affairs. We may hope that improved communications between Bhutan and India will provide closer links between our two peoples.

My Government accorded diplomatic recognition to the new regimes in Sudan, Iraq, Guinea and Cuba soon after they were established.

We had the privilege of welcoming in this country as our honoured guests during the year: His Majesty the King of Afghanistan; Their Majesties the King and Queen of Nepal; the President of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam; the President of Yugoslavia; the Prime Ministers of New Zealand, Turkey, Cambodia, Pakistan, Canada, Ghana, Norway, Rumania and Afghanistan; the German Federal Minister of Economics; Mr. Henry Cabot Lodge, Head of the U.S. Delegation to the United Nations, and the Duke of Edinburgh.

The International Commission for Supervision and Control in Vietnam and Cambodia continued during the year. In Laos, however, the Commission adjourned *sine die* with the provision that it may be reconvened in accordance with normal procedures. My Government deeply regret that the situation in Laos has worsened and that the hopes to which I gave expression last year of a welcome development in that country have not been justified by events. My Government continue, however, to believe that the peace established by the Geneva Agreements will continue to endure and that the members of the International Commission will co-operate fully with one another and obtain the co-operation of the Laotian Government in the maintenance of peace.

India participated in the United Nations Observation Group in the Lebanon and was able to make its modest contribution in the termination of a potentially grave situation in that area.

The happenings inside the Union of South Africa, resulting from the policy of apartheid relentlessly pursued by the Government of the Union, inflicting suffering and indignity on the majority of the people of that

country and involving the violation of human rights under the United Nations Charter, is of deep concern to us. We may, however, note with some gratification that these policies have been met with overwhelming disapproval by the United Nations. We continue to nurse the hope that the Union Government will respond to the call of world opinion and also recognise that such policies in a resurgent Africa will lead to increased racial bitterness and ultimately to conflicts which may become widespread.

My Government have welcomed the opening of the office of the High Commissioner of New Zealand in India last year.

A number of International Conferences have been held in this country in the past year. My Government have been happy to accord the hospitality and welcome of our land and people to our visitors and to contribute in a small measure to world understanding and the mutual exchanges that arise from such meetings.

Members of Parliament, I have placed before you some of the main events and achievements of the past year. We have reason to congratulate ourselves to some extent in regard to our national development and progress. We have, however, even more than ever before, the duty and the opportunity to endeavour with greater determination, discipline and sense of purpose to make our democracy a reality in terms of the masses of our people.

It is the policy, and it will continue to be the endeavour of my Government, to seek in all possible ways to uphold the dignity and independence of our land and people and to promote our unity and social well-being and to build a democratic and socialist society, in which progress is sought and attained by peaceful means and by consent.

Members of Parliament, I bid you to your labours and wish you success. May your endeavours, your unity of ultimate purpose and your high sense of public duty bring increasing prosperity and contentment to our people, stability and security to our motherland, and assist to promote peace and co-operation in the world.

ADDRESS TO PARLIAMENT—8 FEBRUARY 1960

Lok Sabha	—	Second Lok Sabha
Session	—	First Session of the Year
President of India	—	Dr. Rajendra Prasad
Vice-President of India	—	Dr. S. Radhakrishnan
Prime Minister of India	—	Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru
Speaker, Lok Sabha	—	Shri M. Ananthasayanam Ayyangar

MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT,

Once again, it is my privilege to welcome you to your labours in a new session of Parliament.

In the year we leave behind, my Government and our people had been engaged, more than ever before, in their endeavours in nation-building. The needs and achievements in economic and social advance are understood by our people, in town and village, in increasing measure, as basic and vital to the improvement of their conditions and standards of living and as important to their daily lives.

The incursions into parts of the territory of the Union of India, across our traditional and well understood borders, by elements of Chinese forces have, however, deeply distressed our people and evoked legitimate and widespread resentment. They impose a greater strain on our resources and our nation-building endeavours. We regret and deplore these developments on our border. They have resulted from the disregard by China of the application of the principles, which it had been mutually agreed between us, should govern our relations. My Government have taken prompt and calculated measures, both defensive and diplomatic to meet the threat to our sovereignty.

My Government particularly deplore the unilateral use of force by our neighbour on our common frontier, where no military units of the Union were functioning. This is a breach of faith; but we may not lose faith in the principles which we regard as basic in the relations between nations.

Members of Parliament, You have been kept informed by the release, from time to time, of correspondence between my Prime Minister and the Prime Minister of China, of the respective positions of our two countries in

this matter. My Government have made it clear, beyond doubt, that they seek a peaceful approach in the settlement of outstanding matters. They have also stated and reiterated, equally clearly, that they will not accept the course, or the results of unilateral action or decisions, taken by China. My Government, therefore, pursues a policy both of a peaceful approach, by negotiation under appropriate conditions, and of being determined and ready to defend our country.

This and the weight of world public opinion which is adverse to her action should, we hope, persuade China sooner than later to come to agreements in regard to our common frontiers which for long have been well established by treaties, custom and usage. Thus, and thus alone, can friendly relations with our great neighbour which my Government and our people desire, become a reality and endure for our common good. The actions taken and the policy pursued by my Government, it may be hoped, will be adequate to convince China of both our policy and our determination.

Members of Parliament, I have referred at some length to the situation that has developed on our border and to the consequences and problems thereof. I need hardly say that in doing so I have reiterated the sentiments of our entire country and our people and their determination to defend our territory. Defence, however, is effective only with national unity and strength. Our economic and industrial advance, the gearing of our production and our plans to greater endeavour and larger and speedier results, which will enable the country to make available to itself the means and the resources for modern defence and, at the same time, help the nation become strong and disciplined, can alone render her secure.

Distressing as these Sino-Indian border developments have been, we may not, and we do not, relax our efforts for the planned development of our economy and our country. In point of fact, because of this situation, my Government are taking steps to speed up further, organise and streamline our economic development.

The work on the preparation of the frame and the outline of the Third Five Year Plan with its longer perspective and higher targets is making good progress. The objective of the Third Five Year Plan is to seek almost to double the national income, taking 1950-51 as the basic level, and to pay much greater attention to agricultural production and to our food requirements, to heavy machine building and to the development of basic resources such as steel, fuel and power. Small-scale and rural industries, the speedier and healthy development of our rural economy and the healthy relationship between rural areas and industrial centres are among the main aims of the Plan.

The Third Five Year Plan represents a critical period in our national development. It aims at making our economy more self-reliant and capable of increasing and generating resources for its further and larger development.

It calls for sustained efforts and endurance of our people. Thus, our Third Plan will keep well in view, both its own developmental aspects as well as the requirements and the perspective of the Fourth Plan to follow. While we are grateful for external aid and loans, as necessary in the present stage of our development, we should, in our own interests, in consideration of those who have been our good and generous friends, and the needs of the underdeveloped areas of the world, strive to shed our dependence.

The country's foreign exchange position while it shows no deterioration, remains more or less unchanged. My Government therefore, pursue a policy to create a more favourable balance of trade and to earn more foreign exchange by strict control over imports and efforts to increase exports. It will be the endeavour of my Government to conserve our foreign resources and add to the volume of our invisible exports in which there still exists unutilised a vast and increasing field.

Our industrial production shows a pronounced upward trend, and for the first ten months of the year, an increase of over ten points has been recorded, from 138 to 149.3, over the last year's figures. This is an all-round increase to which all industries have contributed, but special mention may be made of the rise in the output of metallurgical industries. The three steel plants at Rourkela, Bhilai and Durgapur have gone into production in 1959. There has been a fifty per cent, increase in the production of pig iron and a somewhat lower, though considerable, increase in the output of steel.

The iron and steel output would help advance the Heavy Machine building projects. My Government have already sanctioned a number of machine building and other projects for the Third Five Year Plan. These include the doubling of the Heavy Machinery Project at Ranchi and the steel production at Bhilai, the expansion of the Heavy Electrical Project at Bhopal, a number of new projects for power, fertiliser plants and Heavy Machine Tools.

The chemical industry has also witnessed appreciable advance. An Intermediate Plant to provide the basic raw materials for the manufacture of dye stuffs, drugs, explosives and plastics is being established.

The endeavours of our Railway organisation to attain self-sufficiency in regard to essential equipment have enabled it not only to meet all the requirements of steam locomotives, coaches, wagons, signalling and lighting equipment, but also to yield a surplus for export.

Mining activities in the public sector have increased considerably. The Geological Survey of India has been expanded to undertake search and intensive investigation in virgin areas in minerals essential to our expanding economy.

A statutory Oil and Natural Gas Commission has been established. The search for and discovery of oil in different parts of the country continues. Sixty oil wells have been drilled in Nahorkatiya for the production of crude oil required for the two State-owned refineries in Assam and Bihar and the construction of the refinery in Assam is in progress.

My Government have entered into an agreement with the Government of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics for the supply of equipment for the construction of the refinery at Barauni in Bihar.

My Government are alive to the requirement of scientists, technicians and technologists for our expanding economy. Measures are being taken to step up progressively the output in these cadres and to provide increasingly better career opportunities and a higher status for the old and new entrants. In our developing economy, there are ever growing opportunities of service in these fields, which are so important to our planned development on modern lines.

Our Atomic Energy organisation has recorded commendable progress. Increased production of isotopes, the fabrication of fuel elements, the Uranium Metal Plant at Trombay, the extraction of plutonium from the used fuel elements and the mining of uranium are among the achievements of this organisation. The preliminary work for the setting up of the first Nuclear Power Station is well in hand. The uranium which is sought to be mined in Bihar will supply sufficient raw material to feed the first Nuclear Power Station.

An additional tonnage, of one lakh gross, was added to the Indian Merchant Fleet. A National Shipping Board and a statutory non-lapsing Shipping Development Fund have been established. Indian shipping, which has suffered many handicaps in the pre-Independence period, will continue to receive all possible assistance in its modernisation and development. My Government is fully aware of the place of Merchant Navy in our economy, in the conservation and earning of foreign exchange and in its auxiliary and reserve roles in the defence of our long sea coast.

The Code of Discipline evolved in 1958 has improved the climate of industrial relations in the country and created more favourable conditions for the maintenance of industrial peace and increase of efficiency. Compared to the previous year, there has been an appreciable reduction in the loss of man days of work in 1959.

The Employees State Insurance Scheme has been extended to further areas and now covers about fourteen and a half lakhs of factory workers, while medical care under the Scheme has been extended to about twelve lakhs of members of the workers' families.

In the field of National Education, the teaching of science subjects, expansion of girls' education and the training of women teachers have made good progress and are gathering momentum. All eligible college students belonging to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes are receiving stipends.

Advance in the production of food is vital to the sustenance, expansion and strength of our economy. Foodgrains production attained a record level of 73.5 million tons and cash crops also recorded satisfactory yields resulting in the overall increase in the Index of Agricultural Production to 131.0, an increase of 14.3 per cent over the previous record in 1957-58. We cannot, however, feel satisfied, much less complacent, about the food production in our country. Each year, we are obliged to import considerable quantities of foodgrains for consumption and for reserve stocks, causing great stress on our slender foreign exchange resources and rendering our economy far from self-reliant. Our production per acre falls short of the yields in many of the countries of Asia, Europe or America. My Government are giving greater attention to the increased production of fertilisers and to the supply of good seeds. It is, however, by better cultivation, avoidance of waste through pests, better animal husbandry, the advance of cooperation both in production and in marketing, and by the determination of the people to be self-reliant, that individual and national prosperity can be achieved.

To enable greater participation in the conduct of affairs and the development of our economy by the people of the country as a whole, my Government have encouraged schemes of devolution of authority to statutory institutions of the people at the basic level of our great and growing democracy. This scheme of 'Panchayati Raj' has already been inaugurated in Rajasthan and in Andhra Pradesh and is making progress in other States. To make the working of the 'Panchayati Raj' efficient, a comprehensive programme of training non-officials of all categories has been undertaken.

Defence production has made satisfactory progress. Plans of expansion in this field, both of production and of capacity, are under consideration and will be progressively implemented.

My Government have taken steps to expand the National Cadet Corps in the coming year and to form units of nursing and auxiliary services for girls. The Territorial Army and the Lok Sahayak Sena will also be expanded in numbers, and certain changes introduced in regard to their training and reserve liabilities.

A number of measures for the improvement of the conditions of service in the various categories in the Armed Forces have been implemented.

The resettlement of ex-servicemen and the utilisation of the reservoir of disciplined manpower that they provide is continually engaging the attention of my Government. Schemes of technical and vocational training

and guidance and of self-help by co-operatives are promoted. Welfare and resettlement of ex-servicemen are integral to defence considerations and provide a necessary incentive and a legitimate measure of hope and security for those who serve the Armed Forces.

Members of Parliament are aware that in the Proclamation issued in relation to the State of Kerala on the 31st of July, 1959, which was approved by Resolutions passed by the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha, it was provided that the general election for constituting a new Legislative Assembly for that State shall be held as soon as possible. The general election was accordingly held and polling took place in the entire State on February 1, the number of voters exercising their franchise being one of the highest recorded in any election. The Proclamation will be revoked and the normal constitutional machinery restored in the State shortly.

Parliament decided during the last session to extend the safeguards provided in the Constitution for the reservation of seats for members of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in the Lok Sabha and the State Legislatures by a further period of ten years and the Constitution (Eighth Amendment) Act embodying this decision has received my assent. Government also propose to appoint a Commission as required under Article 339 of the Constitution to examine and report on the administration of the Scheduled Areas and the welfare of the Scheduled Tribes in the States.

Sixty-three Bills were passed by Parliament in 1959. Fifteen Bills are pending before you. My Government intend to introduce a number of legislative proposals both by way of Bills and amendments. Such proposals will include:

- The Atomic Energy Bill;
- The Indian Telegraph (Amendment) Bill;
- The Agricultural Produce (Development and Warehousing) Corporation Bill;
- The Forward Contracts (Regulation) Amendment Bill;
- The Indian Patents and Designs Bill;
- The Employees' Provident Fund (Amendment) Bill;
- The Dock Workers (Regulation of Employment) Bill;
- The Plantation Labour (Amendment) Bill;
- The Central Maternity Benefit Bill;
- The Indian Sale of Goods (Amendment) Bill;
- The Religious Trusts Bill;
- The Two-Member Constituencies (Abolition) Bill; and
- The Payment of Wages (Amendment) Bill.

My Government also propose to introduce a Bill for the reorganisation of the present Bombay* State and to reconstitute it as two separate States.

My Government have already announced their decisions on the major recommendations of the Pay Commission. The other recommendations are under their active consideration. The additional commitments on account of the pay, allowances and pensionary charges alone are estimated to be about thirty-one crores per annum, in respect of the Services directly covered by the Jagannadha Das Commission Enquiry.

A statement of the estimated receipts and expenditure of the Government of India for the financial year 1960-61 will be laid before you.

My Government note with gratification the relaxation in world tensions and the prospect of high level meetings of the Heads of Governments for the promotion of World Disarmament and Peace. The initiative of great statesmen, notably the President of the United States of America and the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Soviet Union, deserve the attention and appreciation of our country and people. My Government, while welcoming the continuance of the voluntary unilateral suspension of nuclear test explosions and the increasing endeavours of both the United States of America and the Soviet Union to solve this problem, reiterate their view that the testing of weapons of mass destruction should be abandoned.

We welcome these trends and the direct contacts between the leaders of the Great Powers and wish success in their efforts, which we feel assured are inspired with sincere desire to halt the armaments race and for world peace.

We also welcome wholeheartedly, in the midst of the awesome growth of armaments and the fear and passions from which they spring and on which they rest, the newer development of the projection of the picture of a warless world, wherein nations will not only lay down their arms but also reject war as a method of settling disputes and devote their energies and resources to building a peaceful world.

Devoted as my Government and people are to world peace and co-operation, they are determined to adhere to a peaceful approach and the policy of non-alignment, to both of which our country stands fully committed by history and outlook, faith and conduct, and by the overwhelming desires and convictions of our people. Parliament has expressly endorsed this policy on several occasions.

I have had the privilege and pleasure of visiting Cambodia, the Republic of Vietnam, the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, Laos and Ceylon** and to receive the generous welcome and joyous greetings of their Governments and peoples.

* Now known as Mumbai.

** Now known as Sri Lanka.

I was happy to welcome to our Capital the President of the United States of America, and later the President of the Soviet Union, who in their persons represent not only the greatness and power of their countries but also the fervent desires of their peoples for world peace. We are looking forward to the visit of the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Soviet Union, Mr. Khrushchev, another messenger of peace in the world today. The goodwill and moral support of this country will be behind the efforts of these two great countries, and those of others, in full measure in their search for disarmament and peace.

My Government were glad to welcome the Prime Ministers of Afghanistan, Australia, Cambodia, Ghana, Nepal and Sweden. We look forward to the visits of President Nasser of the United Arab Republic, His Majesty the King of Morocco and the Prime Minister of Finland.

The Vice-President visited the Philippines, Norway, Sweden, Denmark and Finland, receiving cordial welcome from the Governments and the people there.

My Prime Minister visited Afghanistan, Iran and Nepal, and was welcomed with an abundance of goodwill.

The exchange of visits of my Prime Minister and the Prime Minister of Nepal has further strengthened the bonds of affinity and friendship and proclaimed the desire and determination for co-operation in the interests of our two countries.

Our relations with Commonwealth countries and our participation at various Commonwealth gatherings have served to create greater understanding of our internal and external policies and, in an appreciable measure, served also to assist our economic development.

I am happy to note that further agreements have been reached with Pakistan in regard to our boundary disputes. It is the hope of my Government that these arrangements with Pakistan will lead to a successful delimitation of our boundaries along our frontiers with our neighbour with whom we have always desired to remain in friendly relations.

Progress has also been made in regard to the settlement of financial issues pending between India and Pakistan, and it is hoped that the long-standing Canal Waters dispute will be settled soon. I welcome these developments which bring promise of closer relations between our two countries.

The Government and the people of India were deeply grieved and shocked to learn of the assassination of the Prime Minister of Ceylon*, the late S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike, on September 25, 1959. He was a great friend of India and visited us several times. Our heartfelt sympathies went out to the Government and people of Ceylon*, as well as to Mrs. Bandaranaike and her children.

* Now known as Sri Lanka.

In the United Nations, our delegation reflected the deep feelings of our people in regard to the problem of the liberation of colonial countries and, more particularly, in regard to Algeria, in the sustained struggle of the Algerian people for their national independence.

We welcome the independence of the Cameroons, till recently under French administration. We look forward to the emergence to nationhood in the coming years of several other colonial areas in Africa.

The policy of apartheid, pursued by the Government of the Union of South Africa, inflicts untold suffering and indignity on the majority of the people who are subjects of that Government. These include large numbers of people of Indian origin. This policy constitutes a violation of Human Rights under the Charter of the United Nations, and it has again met with overwhelming disapproval by the United Nations in the last session of the General Assembly.

My Government have decided to exchange diplomatic representatives with Cuba, Venezuela and Colombia in South America and Guinea in Africa.

Members of Parliament, I have placed before you the main events and achievements and our concerns of the past year. I have also projected before you some of the great tasks and burdens that are in front of us. They must engage your dedicated attention. Your understanding and co-operation, in regard to problems of our economic planning, the defence of our country and our contribution to world peace, are required by our Government and people in increasing measure. Thus will Parliament fulfil its historic role in our Constitution.

We have celebrated this year the tenth anniversary of our young Republic. Our Constitution which we gave unto ourselves, wherein all power and authority are based upon and spring from the people, has endured and grown in strength. The policies and achievements of my Government and of our people have strengthened our democracy and continue to import into it economic and social content in increasing measure.

We are fortunate in the historic background that our national struggle developed and the inspiration that the life and example of the Father of the Nation gave to us. In this eleventh year of our young Republic, we may look back as well as forward, with pride and confidence, though not with complacency. The tasks ahead of us are stupendous. They call for constant vigilance, greater determination and discipline and a sense of purpose both among our people and in our administration. This alone will make our democracy a reality in terms of the masses of our people.

Our vast resources and the qualities of our people have become engaged in the tremendous tasks of construction and progress that lie ahead of us. In these, the quality of our administration into which must be imported an

ever-increasing sense of urgency, rationalisation of procedures, the emergence and development of greater confidence at all levels, and the avoidance of waste of manpower and time, must be an urgent consideration.

It will continue to be the constant endeavour of my Government to initiate and further efforts and plans to bridge the gaps between the time of formulation of policies and their implementation to enable our people to participate at all levels in our economic and social developments, and for them to feel a sense of function and dignity which Independence has brought to us.

My Government seeks to uphold the dignity and independence of our land and people, to promote our unity and social well-being, and to build a democratic and socialist society in which progress is sought and attained by peaceful means and by consent.

Members of Parliament, I bid you to your labours in this new session and wish you all success. I earnestly trust that wisdom and tolerance and a spirit of co-operative endeavour will guide you. May your labours bear fruit for the good of our country and people and the world whom we are all privileged to serve.

ADDRESS TO PARLIAMENT—14 FEBRUARY 1961

Lok Sabha	—	Second Lok Sabha
Session	—	First Session of the Year
President of India	—	Dr. Rajendra Prasad
Vice-President of India	—	Dr. S. Radhakrishnan
Prime Minister of India	—	Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru
Speaker, Lok Sabha	—	Shri M. Ananthasayanam Ayyangar

MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT,

I welcome you to your labours in a new session of Parliament.

The year we have left behind has been one of considerable stress and strain both internally and externally. My Government have faced the problems that arose by their strenuous endeavours and by firm adherence to the principles of their basic policy, and with confidence in the future. Though many and stubborn problems still await solution, or are in the process of being solved, the situation both at home and abroad shows signs of improvement and justifies hope and cautious optimism.

The problems of aggression on and incursions into the sovereign territory of the Union have yet to be resolved, but my Government is well alert to them and to all their implications. Defensive arrangements, including the opening up of areas by better communications and development, receive their continuous and careful attention.

While China has withdrawn from the military post it had established at Longju and not attempted any further violations of Union territory, her intransigence continues. It is the constant endeavour of my Government to maintain our defensive strength in the face of this continuing hostility from across our frontier. My Government will, however, seek to adhere firmly to the principles which this Nation regards as basic in our relations with nations. They cannot accept the results of unilateral action or decisions taken by China.

This peaceful but firm policy and progressive preparedness for defence, has the support of our people and has also profoundly influenced world opinion. We firmly hold that the frontiers between India and China have been for long well established by treaties, custom and usage. In spite of

present unwillingness, or even intransigence, my Government hope that, sooner rather than later, China will persuade herself to come to a satisfactory agreement with our country in regard to our common frontiers. Friendly relations with our great neighbour, which my Government have always sought to promote, can then become a reality which will endure and contribute to our common good and to stability in Asia and the world.

In pursuance of the agreement announced in the joint communique, issued in April last at the end of the meeting in Delhi between the Prime Minister of China and my Prime Minister, designated officials from their respective Governments have been engaged in talks in New Delhi, Peking and Rangoon. These talks have now concluded. The report submitted to my Government by their officials will be laid before Parliament.

My Government have welcomed the emergence of many independent countries in the continent of Africa to full statehood and their admission as full members in the United Nations. This awakening of Africa and the emergence of many sovereign republics is a matter of gratification to us. We welcome especially their declarations to remain unaligned and not to become involved in the cold war conflict. This constitutes a welcome vindication, on merits, of the policy consistently followed by my Government in regard to international relations.

The situation in the Congo continues to cause my Government deep concern, involving as it does the freedom and integrity of this recently liberated country, the progress and development of the African continent itself, as well as both the prestige and potency of the United Nations as an instrument for settling international problems and the protection of the weak against aggressive countries. The pressure of Belgian arms, military and semi-military personnel, and their aid to some of the rival groups in the Congo, in defiance of reiterated decisions of the United Nations, are the main disturbing factors in the Congo situation.

My Government will continue to follow a policy based upon their dedication to the purposes of the United Nations and their desire to see the Congolese people in the full enjoyment of their newly-won freedom. To this end, my Government have consistently urged the withdrawal of the Belgians, the release of political personalities and more particularly those who have parliamentary immunities, the neutralization of factional forces and armed groups and the summoning of Parliament and the restoration of constitutional authority.

Nearer our own country, in Laos also, a situation has developed that causes grave concern. My Government continue to use their best endeavours for the reactivation of the International Commission with the consent and authority of all concerned, to prevent further deterioration of the situation. Spread of conflict there might have serious repercussions in Asia and the world, and it is the policy of my Government to endeavour to avert it.

Goa continues to be under the colonial domination of Portugal. My Government stand committed to the peaceful liberation of this part of India where a decadent colonialism still survives.

India's relations with her neighbours and other countries have continued to be peaceful. My Government, firmly adhering to the policy of peaceful co-existence and good neighbourliness, seek to promote these relations without becoming entangled in military alliances with one country or another.

To promote goodwill, there have been exchanges of visits with other countries. I visited the Soviet Union to return the courtesy of the visit of the President of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics to India. I am grateful for the warm welcome which the President, his Government and the people of his country extended to me. The Vice-President visited the United States of America and France.

My Prime Minister paid visits to the United Arab Republic, Lebanon, Turkey and Pakistan. Other Ministers and some special representatives of Government have visited various countries either on missions of goodwill or for definite purposes. These countries include Ceylon, Mexico, the countries of Western and Eastern Europe, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Ghana and the Mongolian People's Republic.

Diplomatic representation was established last year with the Republics of Uruguay, Paraguay, the Congo and the Malagasy Republic.

My Government welcomed the emergence of Cyprus as an independent Republic, thus terminating the long period of colonial domination.

Her majesty Queen Elizabeth II and His Royal Highness the Prince Philip/Duke of Edinburgh, kindly accepted my invitation to visit India. We have been happy to have them with us, and they are the honoured and welcome guests not only of myself, but of my Government and our people.

We have also had the privilege of welcoming to our country Their Imperial Highnesses the Crown Prince and Princess of Japan, representing His Imperial Majesty the Emperor of Japan, Mr. Khrushchey, Prime Minister of the Soviet Union, His Majesty the King of Nepal, President Nasser of the United Arab Republic, President Soekarno of Indonesia, President Sekou Toure of Guinea, Professor Theodore Heuss, former President of the Federal Republic of Germany, Vice-President Macapagal of the Philippines, and the Prime Ministers of China, Burma*, Poland, Nepal and Ceylon*. We are also happy to receive Their Highnesses the Maharajas of Bhutan and Sikkim as our distinguished guests. The visits of all these high dignitaries have been a great honour to us.

The main issue before the world today is that of disarmament. My Government have persevered on every occasion, more particularly in the United Nations, to assist to formulate a basis of agreement among nations,

* Now known as Myanmar.

** Now known as Sri Lanka.

more especially among the Great Powers, in this regard. To this end, my Government have placed proposals before the General Assembly of the United Nations, the purpose of which is that disarmament negotiations should be definitely directed to the outlawing of war as an instrument for settling disputes between countries.

The Union of South Africa persists, much to our regret and in spite of every effort that we make, to discriminate against her nationals of Indian origin and to build her society on the basis of total racial discrimination, that is, apartheid. The disregard of human dignity, the violation of human rights and the policy and practice of apartheid have shocked the world more than ever before.

The outline of the Third Five Year Plan has been completed by the Planning Commission with the co-operation of the State Governments and has been approved in principle by the National Development Council. As soon as the Draft Report is ready, it will be placed again before the National Development Council, and later before Parliament.

The national income for 1959-60 is estimated to be Rs. 12,210 crore at 1952-53 prices, as compared with Rs. 10,920 crore in 1955-56. The annual rate of increase has not been as much as we had hoped. This was due to severe set-backs suffered by agriculture in 1957-58 and 1959-60. This year's crops, however, are expected to be good, and industrial production is rapidly rising.

Price levels have registered a rise of about 6 per cent, as compared to the previous year. Various measures that my Government have taken have checked this rise and, in some cases, such as cloth, prices have shown a downward movement because of Government action. In spite of the difficulties encountered and the decline in our foreign exchange reserves, the outlook, both in agriculture and industry, is definitely promising.

Panchayati Raj, or village democracy, has made rapid strides. My Government hope that before the end of 1961 Panchayati Raj institutions would have been introduced in all the States. An elaborate programme for the training of non-officials to help these institutions efficiently has been inaugurated. Service Co-operatives have increased their membership by approximately 18 million and are expected to disburse loans to the extent of 190 crores of rupees.

Agricultural production has again shown definite improvement in 1960-61. The production of *Kharif* cereals in 1960-61 is now estimated to be more than two million tons higher than that in 1959-60, and it is expected to be higher than even in 1958-59 when our production figure was the highest on record. The prospects of the *Rabi* crop are also bright. On the whole, 1960-61 may turn out to be a very good year from the point of

view of agricultural production. The increase in internal production, along with the measures taken by my Government to build up substantial reserve stocks, has already brought about a healthy trend in foodgrain prices. The targets of minor irrigation and seed multiplication farms, laid down in the Second Five Year Plan, are expected to be realised almost fully. Intensive cultivation is being encouraged throughout the country, and, more especially, in selected areas. Under the Third Five Year Plan, agricultural development is being given a high priority, so as to provide a strong base for the economic development of the country. The aim is to achieve self-sufficiency in foodgrains, and to increase considerably other forms of agricultural production.

Industrial output has risen, in some cases, spectacularly. For the first ten months of 1960, the production index was 167 as against 149 for the corresponding period of the previous year. The three steel plants in the public sector have been almost completed and are now in progressive production. The manufacture of industrial machinery and machine tools has made satisfactory progress. New sources of oil have been discovered, notably in Ankleshwar in Gujarat and in Sibsagar in Assam. It is expected that trial production will commence this year. Work on two refineries is proceeding, and a third refinery is also going to be established.

The prospects of the use of atomic energy for industrial purposes, as well as for medical and agricultural uses, have advanced by the inauguration of the third reactor, the Canada-India reactor, which came into operation recently.

Among multipurpose river valley projects, the Chambal River Project, the Gandhi Sagar Dam and the Kotah Barrage were inaugurated, and two of the five units of 90,000 kilowatts each have been commissioned at Bhakra. The remaining three units are likely to be commissioned in the course of the next few months.

Labour relations, apart from the recent regrettable strike by Government Employees, have improved. The Code of Discipline has exercised a healthy influence, and there is an appreciable fall in the number of days lost. The Employees State Insurance Scheme has been extended to further areas to cover about 15.8 lakh factory workers. Tripartite wage boards have already dealt with major industries of cotton textiles, cement and sugar and have been set up for jute and tea plantations. Pilot schemes for workers' participation in management have been introduced in some industrial units.

Progress has been made in regard to the introduction of Hindi in the administration. A Central Hindi Directorate has been constituted to carry out the decisions of Government regarding the development and propagation of Hindi.

As Members of Parliament are aware, in July last my Government decided in consultation with the Naga leaders to constitute a separate State of Nagaland within the Indian Union. As a first step, I have promulgated a Regulation under which representatives have been elected to an Interim Body to assist and advise the Governor in the administration of Nagaland during the transitional period. My Government are determined to put down the hostile elements which are creating so much hardship and suffering for the people there.

A statement of the estimated receipts and expenditure of the Government of India for the financial year 1961-62 will, as usual, be laid before you.

Two Ordinances, namely 'The U.P. Sugarcane Cess (Validation) Ordinance', and 'The Banking Companies (Amendments) Ordinance', have been promulgated since the last session of Parliament.

Members of Parliament, since I addressed you last, your two Houses have passed 67 Bills. There are 16 Bills pending before you from the last session. My Government will take steps to seek the passage of these Bills during this session.

My Government propose to take appropriate steps for the convening of a joint session of Parliament for the consideration of the Dowry Prohibition Bill in regard to which the two Houses have differed in some respects.

My Government will place before you the following Bills, among others, for your consideration:

1. The Income Tax (Amendment) Bill
2. The Extradition Bill.
3. The Indian Patents and Designs Bill.
4. The Essential Commodities (Amendment) Bill.
5. The Sugar Export Promotion (Amendment) Bill.
6. The Narcotics Bill.
7. The Apprenticeship Training Bill.
8. The Himachal Pradesh Abolition of Big Landed Estates and Land Reforms (Amendment) Bill.

Members of Parliament, I have drawn your attention to some of the main events and achievements, for the past year. I have also projected before you my Government's programme for the coming year. I have drawn your attention to the great tasks and burdens that are in front of us all. I have no doubt that these will engage your dedicated attention. Your understanding, vigilance and co-operation in respect of the many problems

of our economic planning, our defence, world peace and the struggle of still dependent peoples, will, I feel sure, be available to my Government and help reassure our people. The resources of our country and the qualities of our people stand engaged in the historic and tremendous tasks of national reconstruction and progress that are part of our destiny.

My Government will constantly endeavour to initiate and promote efforts and schemes to shorten the time between their decisions on policies and the implementation thereof. They will seek to enable our democracy to share and participate at all levels in the great economic and social developments that must progress, if we are to survive as an independent nation with dignity and a sense of fruitful function. The unity and the social well-being of our entire people, the rapid progress to a democratic and socialist society, wherein changes must be timely and progress grow from more to more, must be attained peace-fully and by consent.

Members of Parliament, I now bid you to your arduous labours and wish you success in them. I am confident that wisdom and tolerance and the spirit of co-operative endeavour will be your guide. May your labours yield a rich harvest and thus advance our country and people and the world which we are all pledged to serve.

ADDRESS TO PARLIAMENT—12 MARCH 1962

Lok Sabha	—	Second Lok Sabha
Session	—	First Session of the Year
President of India	—	Dr. Rajendra Prasad
Vice-President of India	—	Dr. S. Radhakrishnan
Prime Minister of India	—	Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru
Speaker, Lok Sabha	—	Shri M. Ananthasayanam Ayyangar

MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT,

This is the last occasion on which I am addressing you in this Parliament.

Members of the Lok Sabha, you are about to end your five year tenure of membership of your House. A new Lok Sabha will meet very shortly after the conclusion of your present labours. Many of you have been returned by the people to serve the country again. Some of you will cease to be Members of Parliament consequent on the dissolution of the Lok Sabha and the election. I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate all of you and to convey to you the gratitude of the nation for your dedicated service as Members of Parliament. I have also no doubt that wherever your field of work may be hereafter you will remain dedicated to the great task of nation-building and that your wisdom and experience will continue to be engaged in the service of our country and people.

Members of Parliament, When I addressed you last, our Third Five Year Plan with its larger perspectives and higher targets was under preparation. The Plan has now been well launched. The experience of previous plans, the momentum that they have generated, and the greater nationwide understanding and appreciation of planned effort in nation-building augur well for the success of this Plan and will take us nearer our goal—a self-sustaining economy capable of increasing and generating resources for larger and further development.

In spite of the heavy damage inflicted by floods in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Mysore, Madras* and Kerala, the agricultural yield for 1961-62 is encouraging. The development of agriculture has been accorded a high priority in the Third Five Year Plan. The aim has been not merely to achieve self-sufficiency in foodgrains but to step up the production

* Now known as Chennai.

of commercial crops as well as to ensure adequate supplies of raw material for our growing industries and to help export to earn foreign exchange. The overall index number of agricultural production rose to 139.1 in 1960-61 compared to 128.7 in 1959-60, thereby showing an increase of 8.1 per cent. This increase was shared both by foodgrains and commercial crops. Compared to the index for 1955-56, the base year of the Second Five Year Plan, the overall index of production for 1960-61 was higher by about 19.1 per cent.

By soil conservation measures and dry farming practices some 33 million acres of land will be brought under improvement. Minor irrigation schemes will bring 12.8 million acres of additional land under cultivation during the Third Plan. My Government have decided to set up an Improved Seed Corporation to organise on a nation-wide scale the production, distribution and marketing of seeds of higher yield and disease-resisting quality. The demand for fertilisers far exceeds supply. More fertiliser factories are therefore being set up to meet partly the increased needs. Local manure resources and the use of green manure are also being promoted.

An extensive Agricultural District Programme has been put into operation in selected districts in seven States. Crop production campaigns have been launched in all States during the year. Panchayats, Cooperatives and other institutions in the village are closely associated in these campaigns. Four new Agricultural Colleges and two new Veterinary Colleges and more Agricultural Universities are to be established during the Third Plan.

Industrial production has registered considerable increase in volume and greater diversity in categories of projects. The output in iron and steel, machinery, electrical goods and fertilisers has been significantly higher than last year. The attainment of targets and the increase in our national income in 1961-62 are expected to accord with those set out in the Plan.

There is, however, no room for complacency or any slackening in effort. There are considerable strains and stresses, as for example, in regard to transport and supplies of coal. These are no doubt due to the sharp rise in economic development.

A determined effort to implement the physical programmes as set out in the Plan would require care in regard to economy and efficiency and the endeavour to keep to time schedules and priorities, all of which are the continuing concern of my Government, will alone help the country to overcome these obstacles.

My Government have decided to expand the steel plants at Bhilai, Rourkela and Durgapur and to establish a new integrated iron and steel plant at Bokaro, and a new alloy steel plant at Durgapur.

The augmented target for coal production of 97 million tons in the Third Plan calls for plans of development in this industry. Major schemes are being launched in the public sector with assistance from the U.S.A., France, Poland, West Germany and the U.S.S.R. The private sector in coal will be able to utilise a 35 million dollar loan from the World Bank to meet its foreign exchange requirements.

At Neyveli, the lignite bed was exposed in the August of last year. The first thermal power station using lignite is expected to be commissioned soon.

In Gujarat at Ankleshwar, appreciable and gainfully exploitable sources of oil have been found. In addition to the refinery at Nunmati which went on stream in January 1962, it is also proposed to establish a refinery of two million tons capacity in Gujarat.

Our trade deficits show a welcome decline from Rs. 364 crore to Rs. 218 crore as compared with the previous twelve month due to the fall in imports and a slight rise in exports. My Government by their continuous and strenuous endeavours to promote exports have added new items of export and newer markets, and established new incentives to augment export trade. While the increase in export is a moderate Rs. 34 crore worth in the year past we may justifiably feel encouraged that a favourable trend in our trade balance can now be a feature of our economy.

The Code of Discipline in industrial relations evolved in May 1958 on a voluntary basis is being increasingly observed and has resulted in the settlement of a large number of disputes which might otherwise have led to direct action by one side or the other. Joint Management Councils in industrial undertakings set up on a voluntary basis have shown that the effective consultation which they promote has led to improved industrial relations and increased productivity.

The development and growth of Panchayati Raj and co-operation are integral to progressive agricultural and rural development. The efforts of my Government in this direction have already resulted in large scale extension of village self-government in eight States and it is estimated that this covers 65 per cent of the country's population.

My Government have made provision for education for all children in the age group of 6-11 during the Third Plan which will enable 90 per cent of the boys and about 62 per cent of the girls to be at school making a total of 76 per cent of the total population of all children in the age group 6-11. Legislation to make attendance of children compulsory will be recommended to various State Governments.

The study of Sanskrit is expected to make considerable advance in the next few years by the establishment of a Central Sanskrit Institute at Tirupati which will also conduct research in specialised branches of Sanskrit learning.

The demand for trained personnel in the fields of Engineering and Technology continues to grow. To meet this demand, apart from strengthening the existing institutions, more institutes were set up in different parts of the country.

To assist poor but meritorious students a large number of scholarships have been instituted.

The policy of my Government accords priority in promoting measures for the eradication of communicable diseases. This has resulted in the near eradication of malaria and the widespread control of tuberculosis and venereal diseases. My Government have recently initiated a programme for the eradication of smallpox in the country.

To overcome the scarcity of pure drinking water which exists in the majority of our villages, assistance will now be made available to the extent of 50 per cent on a grant-in-aid basis on approved rural schemes and on a 100 per cent loan basis in regard to urban schemes.

Irrigation has made significant advances. The Rs. 43 crore Narmada Project inaugurated in April 1961 will irrigate one million acres of land and yield an effective half a million kilowatts of power.

The first channel of the Rajasthan Canal system was opened by the Vice-President in October last. This canal when completed and operated will convert the deserts of Rajasthan into the largest grain bowl of India.

The new broad-gauge line to Siliguri *via* Malda has re-established a broad-gauge rail connection between Calcutta* and North Bengal, which had been severed by the Partition. Over 700 route kilometres of railway lines serving the industrial East have been electrified.

Two important centenaries were celebrated during the year and nationally observed. The Tagore Centenary attracted distinguished writers from all over the world to its International Literary Seminar. The Centenary programme includes the erection of a Tagore Theatre in every State Capital.

The Archaeological Survey of India also celebrated its centenary which attracted to its International Conference of Asian Archaeology savants from different parts of the world. The exhibition in Delhi made live to our people in graphic form the historic continuity of our civilisation and made the past not a story of ruins and fossils, but a source of national pride and inspiration.

* Now known as Kolkata.

India's uneasy relations with China remain unsolved. The Officials Report, which was placed by my Government before Parliament in 1961, has not yet been published in China.

The Indo-Tibetan Agreement of 1954 is due to expire on the 2nd of June 1962. The Government of the People's Republic of China have offered to negotiate a new Agreement to replace the 1954 Agreement. My Government responding by way of reply have asked for a reversal of the aggressive policies pursued by our neighbour and for the restoration of a climate of peace on the basis of the strict observance of the Five Principles.

In the Congo, as Parliament is aware, my Government at a critical period took a crucial decision to send adequate armed forces to assist the United Nations, although it was and continues to be a great strain upon us to do so. Our men and officers have behaved with remarkable bravery, discipline and restraint and above all with understanding. They have received the plaudits of nationals of all countries not to speak of the United Nations authorities. While we would like to bring these troops home in view of our own necessities, my Government feel that the essential tasks for which India sent troops remain unfulfilled and, therefore, have agreed to continue the assistance which was given, even though our men are working in difficult conditions, and have taken the necessary steps for the relief of personnel that have been too long in Africa. My Government are also gratified that in this matter there are some indications of a co-operative United Nations outlook between the Western Powers and the Soviet Union.

My Government note with great relief and gratification the moves towards reconciliation on the basis of the independence of Algeria. They are deeply distressed at the continued violence which is taking a heavy toll of life, and they await with expectation the successful outcome of the present Algerian-de Gaulle efforts. My Government have repeatedly proclaimed their position that the only firm basis for a peaceful settlement is the independence of the Algerian people, and enduring peace is best brought about by peaceful methods.

India has been elected to the 18-Nation Disarmament Committee. My Government have accepted this onerous role in the hope that the policies to be pursued and the contribution which we have made in the past may help healthy developments, and that as a peace-minded country and with the growth of peace areas in the world India may be able to participate and assist the process of reconciliation and peaceful settlement. Meanwhile my Government will use their best efforts in every direction to lower tensions in the world. My Government hope that the disarmament negotiations will, in spite of difficulties, lead to a warless world which is our aim and policy.

My Government continue their participation in the International Conference on Laos at Geneva and the International Commission for Supervision and Control. We have adhered to the policy that the Laotian problem can only be solved on the basis of national independence and of the full freedom of the people and Government of Laos to maintain neutrality which should be assured by all concerned. Although the problem awaits solution, the indications are that we may look forward to a Laotian Government wedded to these principles under the Premiership of the distinguished statesman, Prince Souvanna Phouma. We are continuing to participate in the International Commissions for Supervision and Control in Vietnam and Cambodia in the interest of peace.

My Government also continue their participation in the U.N. Emergency Force in Gaza, to which India has contributed a contingent.

We welcome to the comity of independent nations several African States including many States in the former French Colonial Africa, Sierra Leone, formerly British, and Tanganyika, a former Mandated Territory under British Administration.

We have appointed diplomatic representatives to Syria, Senegal and Tanganyika, and established trade relations with Kuwait and with North and South Korea whose representatives also visited this country.

We welcome the emergence of Western Samoa as an independent country.

My Government have concluded an agreement with the Soviet Union on the Peaceful Uses of Atomic Energy.

The President of the Soviet Union, the King and Queen of Malaya, King Mahendra of Nepal, President Frondizi of Argentine, President Zawadski of Poland, the Vice-Presidents of the U.S.A. and the U.A.R, the Prime Ministers of Denmark, Hungary, Japan, Trinidad and Burma* paid visits to India and had discussions with my Prime Minister on a variety of topics of mutual interest. The Foreign Minister of France and the Secretary of State of the United States also visited India and had discussions with my Prime Minister.

Indo-Pakistan relations have shown no signs of improvement. We have repeated our offer to the Pakistan Government to sign a 'No War' Agreement. The Pakistan Government requested the Security Council recently to debate the Kashmir issue again although they had not in any way implemented or honoured the agreements which they made with us and the United Nations in regard to withdrawal of forces, etc. or stopped aggressive activities across the cease-fire line or aiding subversion inside Kashmir. The Security Council has, however, deferred its consideration of the Pakistan request.

* Now known as Myanmar.

As Parliament is aware, after fourteen years of patient negotiations and waiting and giving an opportunity for the friends of Portugal to resolve the problem of the Portuguese colonialism on our mainland, the Government of India, in the interests of peace, the unity of India and on account of the irresistible volume of public opinion in our country, had to take action to bring an end to Portuguese colonialism on the mainland. This issue was precipitated by acts of flagrant aggression by Portugal including firing upon our merchant shipping, the killing of our nationals and intrusion into our territory. While there has been ill-informed criticism from some countries, the rest of the world has applauded this action and indeed the populations of all countries appear to welcome the end of Portuguese colonialism in at least a part of the world.

I am very happy, as you Members of Parliament are, that the operation in regard to Goa was practically bloodless, and certainly entirely so in regard to civilian populations including our compatriots and all others. Goa is administered by a Military Governor under civil law and legislation will be introduced in the present Parliament to regularise the position of these territories as integral part of the Union of India. We have however repeatedly assured the peoples in Goa and the world that the personality that this area has acquired as a result of history would be respected, within the limits of the fundamentals of our Constitution, and that any changes would be constructive and smooth. The people of the former Portuguese colony have the protection of the fundamental rights and the basic principles of our Constitution. My Government propose to submit a Bill to Parliament in this session on this matter.

My Government have agreed to help finance the first Five Year Plan for economic and social development in Bhutan to the tune of Rs. 17 crore. Communications in this area are receiving priority consideration by the Bhutanese Government itself and under the Border Roads Development programme. It is hoped that during this year it will be possible to establish motor traffic in Bhutan. My Government are happy that the initiative for all these developments has been taken by the Bhutanese Government, in which my Government are cooperating.

A statement of the estimated receipts and expenditure of the Government of India for the financial year 1962-63 will be laid before you for the purpose of passing votes on account authorising expenditure for a part of that year.

As this session of Parliament will be a very brief one, only essential legislation will be taken up during this session. Some Ordinances which have been promulgated since the last session will be placed before Parliament.

General Elections are now complete. Members of Parliament, I would like to echo your sense of rejoicing that this vast democratic exercise has been peaceful, orderly and in accordance with our constitutional processes.

We have set an example to ourselves and indirectly assisted the confidence in the world in the institution and the processes of Parliamentary Government.

As a result of the elections my Government have received a significant vote of confidence in their internal and external policies and a renewed mandate to strive strenuously and with speed for the establishment of a democratic socialist society and for the extension of the democratic institutions and processes on the basis of universal suffrage to the remotest of our villages, making democracy a reality. The policies of national integration and world peace through non-alignment, peaceful approach to problems, lowering of tensions and negotiated settlements have also received the endorsement of the nation. This renewed assurance and confidence placed by the great majority of our people in my Government and the avowal of their support for policies, internal and external, that have been repeatedly endorsed by Parliament and widely discussed by the country prior to the election, reinforce these policies and place on my Government a nationally mandated obligation and added strength to implement these policies.

Members of Parliament, I now bid you farewell. I feel confident that those of you who do not return here as legislators, will pursue useful and constructive roles in various fields of national activity so essential for the advancement of our democracy and for the building of our socialist society and for the furtherance of peace in the world. Those of you who have received the mandate of the electorate to continue your legislative activity will join with others who will come here for the first time to continue the arduous but constructive and fruitful labours for nation-building.

In a short time a new Parliament will be inaugurated and as in years past, but with renewed vigour and galvanised strength, you and they can strive for establishment and further implementation of the principles of our Constitution, namely:

Justice, social, economic and political;

Liberty of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship;

Equality of status and of opportunity;

And to promote among all the citizens;

Fraternity assuring the dignity of the individual and the unity of the Nation.

These have been fully placed by my Government before our nation during the vast and educative process of our election and in its full implications.

I wish you all success and good fortune wherever you may be.

ADDRESS TO PARLIAMENT—18 APRIL 1962

Lok Sabha	—	Third Lok Sabha
Session	—	First Session after the 3rd General Election
President of India	—	Dr. Rajendra Prasad
Vice-President of India	—	Dr. S. Radhakrishnan
Prime Minister of India	—	Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru
Speaker, Lok Sabha	—	Sardar Hukam Singh

MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT,

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you, Members of the Third Parliament of our Republic, to its inaugural session. Amongst you are a large number who have been Members of Parliament in years past and who once again sought the suffrage of your respective electorates and received at their hands a renewal of confidence. There are others among you who, though not new to public life or perhaps even to legislatures, have been elected to Parliament for the first time.

I congratulate you all and welcome you to united endeavour in the service of our common motherland. Each one of you will find in your tenure as Members of Parliament, whether it be in the legislature itself or in your constituencies, vast and varied opportunities and compelling necessities, for sustained and constructive work in the service of our country. The task of nation-building for which Parliament has both the continuing and ultimate responsibility, calls for the full exercise of your capacities of deliberation, analysis, constructive criticism, vigilance and dedication.

About a month ago I addressed the last session of the Second Parliament and bade them farewell. I then surveyed briefly the progress that was being achieved in different fields of our national life and effort. The country has made progress in many fields even during the short period between that occasion and now when I have the privilege to welcome you.

Our planned economy is the basis of our material development and of the maintenance of a dynamic, social and economic equilibrium. The Third Five Year Plan is in its second year and has made a good start. It is envisaged as a large-scale effort to build up our national economy, to

increase productivity and employment and to ensure the development of society on the basis of justice, social, economic and political, as enjoined by our Constitution. The Plan must increasingly bring within its scope of implementation larger numbers of our people as participants in production with both skills and understanding of the national objective.

Pilot projects for the utilisation of rural manpower were initiated some time ago. This rural works programme is being expanded and now covers 200 development blocks. Pilot projects for the intensive development of village and small industries in selected rural areas are also being taken up, the ultimate aim being to bring about a diversified and balanced economy in all rural areas.

My Government have also taken steps for setting up an Institute of Applied Manpower Research in Delhi. A scheme for the establishment of unemployment relief and assistance as set out in the Third Five Year Plan has been drawn up. A Central Institute of Labour Research is to be set up at Bombay*. A substantial portion of the working force is also expected to be covered during the Third Plan period under the scheme of workers' education. This is meant to promote the appreciation of our national objectives, as well as the understanding of the basic principles and the acquisition of the knowledge and skills which would help workers to organise themselves.

Agricultural production is steadily moving up and the food situation in general is quite satisfactory. Industrial production maintains an upward trend despite power shortages in some areas.

In the field of Atomic Energy, the production of Radio Isotopes for use in agriculture, biology, industry and medicine has registered an increase. Radio cobalt produced at Trombay is now made available to hospitals in the country. Agreements of collaboration and development in the use of atomic energy for peaceful purposes were concluded last year with Hungary, Sweden and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

Panchayati Raj which has caught the imagination of our people, it being so well in accord with our traditions and our way of thinking, is to be implemented in four more States, bringing the total number to twelve.

The work on a second refinery in the public sector at Barauni is in progress. It will process two million tons of crude oil per annum. The first one million ton units is scheduled to be commissioned within the next twelve months.

It is proposed to have a chain of pipelines from Nunmati to Siliguri and from Calcutta** to Delhi *via* Barauni. In the Western part of the country pipelines will link the oil fields with the proposed refinery, and a product

* Now known as Mumbai.

** Now known as Kolkata.

pipeline will run from the refinery to Ahmedabad; also small gas lines from the oil fields to different power stations for transporting petroleum products in the east and crude oil, gas and finished products in the west. These pipelines are scheduled to be completed within the Third Five Year Plan period. They will afford considerable relief to our railway transport system.

India has been elected a member of the Disarmament Committee of 18 Nations and also of the Committee for the implementation of the Resolutions of the United Nations. No appreciable progress has yet been effected in the deliberations on disarmament at Geneva. The Conference is continuing its efforts, pending achievement of general and complete disarmament, to deal with specific issues such as cessation of nuclear test explosions, avoidance of surprise attacks thereby increasing confidence among nations, agreement on nuclear-free zones, a halt in the armament race. The Conference is also engaged on reaching agreement on the draft of a Disarmament Treaty. Its preamble is now under consideration. My Government will use their best and dedicated endeavour for speedy progress and the successful outcome of the Conference. In particular and as a matter of most immediate concern, along with other Nations, our Delegation will help to initiate and support proposals for the cessation of nuclear tests.

An interim Budget for 1962-63 was presented in the last Parliament and votes on account authorising expenditure for a part of the year obtained. A Budget will be presented again to the new Parliament in this session, with such changes as may be considered necessary, and Parliament asked to approve funds for the whole year.

My Government propose to introduce the following Bills:

1. Bills to implement some of the recommendations of the Law Commission.
2. The Constitution (Amendment) Bills.
3. The Atomic Energy Bill.
4. The Electricity (Supply) Amendment Bills.
5. The Patents Bill.
6. The Indian Tariff (Amendment) Bill.
7. The Industries (Development and Regulation) Amendment Bill.
8. The Port Trusts Bill.
9. The Oil & Natural Gas Commission (Amendment) Bill.
10. The Minimum Wages (Amendment) Bill.
11. The Factories (Amendment) Bill.
12. The Payment of Wages (Amendment) Bill.

13. The Workmen's Compensation (Amendment) Bill.
14. The Industrial Disputes (Amendment) Bill.
15. The Working Journalists (Amendment) Bill.
16. The Employees' Provident Fund (Amendment) Bill.
17. The Employees' State Insurance (Amendment) Bill.
18. The Wealth Tax (Amendment) Bill.
19. The Finance Bill (No. 2).

Members of Parliament, this is the last occasion on which I shall address you as the President of the Republic. It has been a great joy and privilege for me to serve our motherland as the elected head of the people for over twelve years. I have had my share of Parliamentary life and duties prior to acceptance of this high office and cherish the highest regard for and confident hopes in our parliamentary institutions and ways. I have no doubt that you will maintain the high traditions established by your predecessors.

It is also our good fortune that our Parliament enjoys the respect of our people and it has become rooted in our political sentiments. While it derived its basic norms and procedure from the British Parliament, it has developed its own dynamism and it continues to do so, establishing its own conventions and methods born in the context of our own experience and needs.

As I said in my last address it is the objective and purpose of my Government to follow steadfastly firm policies and to implement effective measures to establish in our land a democratic and socialist society. Thus alone will national progress and increase in productivity be synonymous with social justice, and dynamic progress will be peaceful and our country will march with firmness and speed.

I now bid you farewell and leave you to your labours, confident that with your experience, your patriotic fervour and your sense of dedication to duty, the imperative call of the urgent tasks that await us will always and in full measure command your skill and dedication.

I wish you well. May all of you and our Parliamentary institutions progress in strength and stability, inspire our people to more and more democratic endeavour and assist in the process of the growth of peace and international co-operation.

Dr. S. RADHAKRISHNAN



ADDRESS TO PARLIAMENT—18 FEBRUARY 1963

Lok Sabha	—	Third Lok Sabha
Session	—	First Session of the Year
President of India	—	Dr. S. Radhakrishnan
Vice-President of India	—	Dr. Zakir Husain
Prime Minister of India	—	Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru
Speaker, Lok Sabha	—	Sardar Hukam Singh

MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT,

I welcome you to your labours in a new session of the Third Parliament of our Republic.

Ever since the constitution of our Republic, our Parliament has had to face difficult problems and to shoulder heavy responsibilities. Under the guidance of Parliament, we have laboured for the fulfilment of the objectives laid down in our Constitution, namely to secure for all our citizens social, economic and political justice; liberty of thought, expression, belief, faith, and worship; equality of status and of opportunity; and to promote among them all, fraternity, assuring the dignity of the individual and the unity of the nation. We have directed all our energies towards the establishment of a structure of society wherein these objectives might be effectively realised. We have also, in accordance with our past traditions, laboured for world peace and endeavoured to cultivate friendly and co-operative relations with all countries, avoiding military alliances. We venture to think that we have been of some service in this respect to the international community.

Soon after the constitution of our Republic, we began our long pilgrimage to reach our objective of a democratic and socialist order and adopted planned approaches to this end. Two Five Year Plans succeeded one another, and now we are in the middle of the Third Five Year Plan. During this period, we have made substantial progress in many sectors of our economy, even though we have not always been satisfied with the progress made.

Agriculture, which is the most important sector of our economy, has undergone material developments and agricultural production has increased considerably. Industry, both large-scale and small-scale, as well as village industries, have shown marked progress, and gradually an industrial base

of our economy is being established. The nation's health has improved greatly, and the expectation of life, which used to be 32 in the forties, has reached 47 and is rising still. Striking results have been obtained in the programme for the eradication of malaria. Education, even though a great deal more has to be done to improve its quality and content, has spread rapidly. By the end of March 1962, there were over fifty million boys and girls in our schools and colleges. Stress has been specially laid on scientific and technical education and a large number of new technological institutions are functioning now.

Engrossed though we were in our internal development, we continued to take purposeful interest in international affairs, always laying stress on the vital importance of world peace. On some occasions, our participation made a difference and helped the cause of peace. We had hoped not only that world peace would be progressively assured, but that we also would continue to live at peace with our neighbours, and that any problems that arose would be settled by peaceful methods. We settled some of our important problems with Pakistan, but unfortunately other important ones still remain. We are anxious to settle these also peacefully so that India and Pakistan should, in accordance with our common history, culture and traditions, live as friendly and co-operative neighbours.

Some years ago China commenced its surreptitious aggression in Ladakh which later resulted in some incidents between the two countries. This matter has often been discussed in Parliament. We hoped that we would succeed in solving this question also through peaceful methods. On the 8th September last, however, a new aggression started across the border in the North East Frontier Agency and, after some probing attacks, China on the 20th October, mounted a massive attack on both the NEFA (North East Frontier Agency) and the Ladakh sectors of the India-China boundary. In the middle of November, a second massive attack followed and our forces received a set-back. Subsequently, the Chinese Government ordered unilaterally a cease-fire and a withdrawal.

These massive attacks and further aggression on our territory had a powerful effect on our people and resulted in a widespread and spontaneous display of unity all over the country. All the petty internal differences were hushed and stopped in the face of this peril to the nation's integrity and freedom. Parliament gave a lead to the nation in this matter in November last and our people, throughout the length and breadth of India, wholeheartedly followed this lead.

Any attack on the integrity of India would have been painful, but an attack coming from a country with whom we had tried to be friendly, and whose cause we had espoused in international councils, was a gross betrayal and came as a great shock to our people. Inevitably, the first duty of the nation in these circumstances was to meet this aggression effectively and to prepare the country to that end.

At present, no actual fighting is taking place. But the experience of the last few months has warned and steeled us and made us resolve to protect ourselves from this menace and to strengthen our defences and economic structure to the utmost. Our Government is devoting itself to this urgent and vital task.

Soon after the Chinese aggression, our Government appealed to the countries of the world asking for their sympathy and support. We are grateful to the large number of them who responded and extended their sympathy. A number of them have also given practical support and we are grateful to them. In particular, I should like to express our gratitude to the United States of America and the United Kingdom for the speed with which they gave their support to us in a moment of crisis.

The last session of Parliament discussed fully certain proposals which were put forward by the Governments of Ceylon* and five other non-aligned countries. These proposals did not deal with the merits of the basic dispute between India and China but suggested some method of creating an atmosphere which would enable these basic questions to be discussed. After full consideration and reference to Parliament, our Government conveyed their acceptance of these proposals, as clarified by the Colombo Powers, without any reservation. The Chinese Government has thus far not accepted them and we cannot say at present what developments may take place in the future. Our country, committed as it is to peaceful methods, will always endeavour to solve disputes peacefully, provided this is in consonance with our honour and freedom. But whatever may happen, we cannot and will not submit to dictation backed by military force.

The issue of the Chinese aggression has been, and is today, the overriding issue before us and everything else has to be considered in that context. The freedom and honour of a country must be given the first place and, if a country cannot defend them, then other matters lose significance. The nation's activities have thus been concentrated on this basic issue. A National Defence Council has been formed and a National Defence Fund started. This Fund has met with a generous response from our people. Many Citizens' Councils have been formed in the different States and a Central Citizens' Council, to co-ordinate the activities of the other Councils, has also been instituted.

Many steps have been taken in order to expand our armed forces and increase production in our ordnance factories and other defence establishments. The assistance of civil factories is also being taken to this end. I should like to express our Government's gratitude to the workers of all these factories. They have responded wonderfully to the cause of the nation. This is true of others working in fields and factories and in Government undertakings all over the country, and it has been a heartening experience for all of us to see this mighty response of a great people in the face of peril to the motherland.

* Now known as Sri Lanka.

Soon after the declaration of Emergency, the central organisations of labour and management unanimously adopted an industrial truce resolution aiming at the total elimination of industrial disputes, and increase of production and reduction of cost to the maximum extent possible. In pursuance of this, Emergency Production Committees have been set up at the Centre, in the States and in many industrial establishments.

In view of the great burdens cast on us by the Chinese aggression and the steps taken to meet it, the question arose as to how far our Third Five Year Plan could be carried through without considerable change. On full consideration of the matter, our Government came to the conclusion that a very great part of the Plan was essential for strengthening the nation and its implementation was, therefore, necessary even from the point of view of defence. Economic development and industrial growth are the very basis of our defence preparedness. To stop or slow down this process of economic development would result in weakening the country. It has therefore been decided to continue implementing the Third Five Year Plan with such minor modifications as may be necessitated by the circumstances, and by reorienting our industrial pattern so as to give priority to defence needs. Thus, in the field of agriculture, industry, transport, communications, power, technical education and research, we have to continue to do our utmost. A strong agricultural base is a prerequisite of national security. Industry is essential for defence, so also the growth of power and transport and technical education.

Intensive agricultural programmes have led to increases in per acre yields of rice from 15 to 21 per cent, of wheat from 8 to 15 per cent, and of barley from 11 to 25 per cent, as compared to the previous year. The upward trend in industrial output has continued and the increase in industrial production, in the first nine months of 1962, is estimated to be around seven and a half per cent. The production of iron and steel is steadily increasing and steps have been taken for the expansion of the steel plants in the public sector, and the setting up of an alloy steel plant at Durgapur. Further progress has been made in the development of our mineral and oil resources. Coal production has been steadily increasing and it is hoped that the target for production of 61 million tons will be achieved this year.

In December 1962, the Indian merchant fleet reached a tonnage of one million gross registered tons. The target for acquiring additional tonnage of five hundred and fifty thousand gross registered tons, to be attained by 1966, is well within sight three years ahead of the close of the plan. Two hundred thousand tons have already been acquired and firm orders have been placed for acquisition of more than two hundred thousand tons.

Economy in expenditure, the elimination of waste conservation of our limited material resources, and restraint on consumption, always important, are of particular importance today. The basic necessities of the people

should be fully secured and price line maintained. It is a tribute to the sense of discipline and solidarity of our people that, immediately after the declaration of Emergency, there was a spontaneous and general recognition of the need for preserving the stability of the economy. The general level of wholesale prices at present is no higher than it was at the beginning of Third Five Year Plan. In order to put an end to the strain on our foreign exchange resources through smuggling of gold into India; certain rules have been framed to bring gold under control.

Our atomic energy programme has shown rapid progress. A uranium mine is being opened in Bihar and a uranium mill is under construction. The first nuclear power station at Tarapore will be followed by a second such station near Rana Pratap Sagar in Rajasthan; a third one will be located at Kalpakkam on the east coast in Madras State. It appears, on further enquiry, that the cost of electric power from the Tarapore Station will be less than from a coal power station of the same size in the same locality. These power stations will also lighten the pressure on our railway and transport system.

The Community Development programme now almost covers the entire country, and Panchayati Raj is now functioning in nine States. In view of the Emergency, a special programme has been started for the full mobilisation of rural India to meet the challenge of national defence. Village Volunteer Forces will be organised in every Panchayat with a three-fold programme—production, mass education, and village defence. An integral part of the scheme is the creation of a Defence Labour Bank based on the donation of free labour at the minimum rate of one day's labour per month by every adult. The co-operative movement in the rural areas has made considerable progress and membership of primary agricultural credit societies, which is 20 million now, is expected to rise to 24 million in 1963 and to 28 million next year. More than a thousand co-operative farming societies have been organised so far.

I am glad to inform you that the Government of France has ratified the Treaty of Cession in respect of the former French establishments. This completes the *de jure* transfer of these establishments to India.

Our relations with Nepal continue to be friendly. Indian aid to Nepal, both in the field of economic help and technical assistance, has achieved satisfactory results. India has promised Nepal economic aid to the extent of eighteen crores of rupees during the Third Five-Year plan period, apart from the Kosi and Gandak projects, the benefits from which will accrue both to India and Nepal.

India has also given substantial aid to Bhutan and Sikkim for their economic development. India sponsored the membership of Bhutan to the Colombo Plan, and Bhutan participated in the Colombo Plan Consultative Committee at Melbourne in November 1962.

The Government of India has welcomed the independence of Algeria, Burundi, Jamaica, Rwanda, Trinidad, Tobago and Uganda, which have been admitted as members of the United Nations. We wish these newly independent countries every success. Nyasaland is also to have self-government soon.

In the Congo, our troops functioning under the United Nations, have helped greatly in solving some of the difficult problems that had arisen there. Our troops will remain there until the United Nations is able to release them without putting their peace-keeping operations into jeopardy.

In the course of the past year, we have had goodwill visits, which we have welcomed, from many Heads of States and Prime Ministers and others from many countries. Among them were, Their Majesties the King and Queen of Nepal, President Lopez Mateos of Mexico, Mr Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, President of the People's Republic of Rumania, President Makarios of Cyprus, Dr. Heinrich Lubke, President of the Federal Republic of Germany, His Royal Highness Prince Norodom Sihanouk of Cambodia, Their Majesties the King and Queen of Greece, Prime Minister Mr Lee Kuan Yew of Singapore, Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman of Malaya, Mr Edward Kardelj, Vice-President of Yugoslavia, and Dr. Rachid Karame, Prime Minister of Lebanon.

While our efforts are directed to meeting our grave problems and mobilisation of our human and material resources, both for defence and economic development, we welcome the slight improvement in the international situation. Cuba afforded us an example of the world hovering over the very brink of nuclear war, which, however, was avoided by the restraint and goodwill of the Great Powers involved. There have been some indications of relaxation of tension and the possibility of agreements being reached in regard to the banning of nuclear weapons.

A statement of the estimated receipts and expenditure of the Government of India for the financial year 1963-64 will be laid before you.

Among the Bills that will be placed before you for your consideration, will be:

- (1) A Bill to provide for the representation for the Union territory of Pondicherry, Karaikal, Mahe and Yanam in Parliament.
- (2) The Union Territories Bill.
- (3) The Slum Areas (Improvement and Clearance) Amendment Bill.
- (4) The Indian Emigration (Amendment) Bill.
- (5) The Industrial Disputes (Amendment) Bill.
- (6) The Factories (Amendment) Bill.
- (7) The Electricity (Supply) Amendment Bill.
- (8) The Delhi Development (Amendment) Bill.

Members of Parliament, we are meeting today at a grave moment in our history. Committed as we are to build a democratic socialist society in which progress is sought and attained by peaceful methods and by consent, we have to face the menace of foreign aggression. I earnestly trust that this Parliament which is ultimately responsible for our policies and for guiding the nation, will face these great tasks with courage and wisdom, and a spirit of tolerance and co-operative endeavour. May your labours bear fruit for the good of our country and people and the world. Awake, arise, understand the opportunities you have and stop not till the goal is reached—

Uttisthata jagrata prapya-varan nibodhata.

ADDRESS TO PARLIAMENT—10 FEBRUARY 1964*

Lok Sabha	—	Third Lok Sabha
Session	—	First Session of the Year
President of India	—	Dr. S. Radhakrishnan
Vice-President of India	—	Dr. Zakir Husain
Prime Minister of India	—	Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru
Speaker, Lok Sabha	—	Sardar Hukam Singh

MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT,

I am happy to welcome you once again to your labours in a new session of Parliament.

In the year which has just ended, the Government and the people of India have had to face problems which were vast in magnitude and complex in character. In spite of difficulties and distractions, we have continued to move forward towards our objective of a democratic and socialist order at home and for peace and co-operation in international affairs.

The mid-term appraisal of our Third Five-Year Plan under-taken by the Planning Commission has revealed that the ground to be covered in the remaining two years is considerable and an all-out effort would be required to realise our expectations.

While attention in the re-appraisal has necessarily been focused on the sectors where we seem to be lagging behind the targets which had been set, it is important not to overlook or minimise the progress that has been made and the achievements which are in sight. The upward trend in industrial production has been maintained. The general level of industrial output in 1963-64 is expected to be 7 to 8 per cent higher than in the previous year. Basic industries, like coal and steel, have made further progress and production in the steel plants is running at near capacity. While power shortages have been felt in certain parts of the country, the total availability of power has improved and the transport position is easier. There has been an improvement in export earnings and with continuing external assistance from friendly countries, our foreign exchange reserves and the country's balance of payments position have not been under the same kind of pressure as in the previous year.

* Delivered by Dr. Zakir Husain, Vice-President, discharging the functions of the President of India.

Public sector undertakings have made significant progress. The first Indian-manufactured A.C. electric locomotive rolled out of the Chittaranjan Locomotive Works on 16 November, 1963. The Heavy Electrical Plant at Bhopal has increased its output. The National Mineral Development Corporation has practically completed the development of Kiriburu iron ore mines. The Oil and Natural Gas Commission has established the existence of substantial reserves of oil and gas in Gujarat. The Atomic Energy Establishment at Trombay has begun exporting radio isotopes.

A number of new projects are in various stages of implementation and will add fresh strength to our economy in the years ahead. The expansion schemes of the three public sector steel plants are well under way. Work on the Alloy and Tool Steel Plant at Durgapur is in progress. Action has been initiated for the setting up of the Steel Plant at Bokaro. Agreements have been signed with the United States of America and with Canada for the setting up of atomic power station at Tarapore and Rana Partap Sagar in Rajasthan respectively. With the other plants under construction for which the necessary external assistance has already been secured, we shall not be far short of our Third Plan target and advance action on additional power plants to take care of our needs in the early years of the Fourth Plan has been initiated.

Despite these satisfactory trends, the overall rate of economic growth has lagged behind the Plan target. This is mainly due to the shortage in agricultural production which in 1962-63 showed a fall of 3.3 per cent. There have been successive bad agricultural seasons in the course of the Third Five Year Plan. A steady increase in agricultural production is the most important task before us today.

There has been a steady expansion in the overall agricultural effort during the first two years of the Third Plan. About six million acres of additional area have been brought under irrigation. Efforts are being made to extend irrigation facilities to over 5.5 million acres during the current year. Additional allocations of Rs. 19.15 crore have been made to the States for stepping up minor irrigation, soil conservation and agricultural production.

Shortfalls in the production of foodgrains have had a disturbing effect on price levels. Through larger releases of foodgrains from Government stocks, the setting up of additional fair-price shops wherever feasible and appropriate, regulation of movements, and through credit policies, every effort has been made to prevent prices of foodgrains from shooting up. Control over the ex-factory price and distribution of sugar was reimposed in April, 1963.

In the long run, however, the stability of prices, whether of agricultural or industrial products, can only be achieved through higher production to match the rising level of consumption. I have referred to some of the

measures which we have taken to strengthen the agricultural sector and increase agricultural production. These and other measures, together with the policy of price support for major agricultural crops, should raise the levels of production and productivity in agriculture.

To accelerate the pace of development in industry, various administrative changes have been introduced, procedures are being simplified and certain controls have been relaxed. Finance, both for agriculture and industry, particularly the co-operative sector and small-scale industries, is being made available on an increasing scale.

To improve the tone of administration and to deal effectively and promptly with complaints of corruption or lack of integrity, it has been decided to set up a Central Vigilance Commission which will have a status in its own sphere broadly corresponding to that of the Union Public Service Commission. Its annual reports will be placed before both Houses of Parliament.

Legislative Assemblies with Councils of Ministers were constituted in July, 1963, in the Union Territories of Himachal Pradesh, Manipur, Tripura and Pondicherry and a similar set up was established in the territories of Goa, Daman, and Diu in December last. The State of Nagaland was formed on 1 December, 1963, and elections to the Legislative Assembly were held in January, 1964.

The Chinese threat has continued throughout the year, though there has been no actual fighting along our borders. China still maintains its intransigent attitude on the Colombo proposals and Chinese military build-up along our borders has increased.

Dedicated as we are to peace and to the policy of peaceful settlement of all international disputes, we cannot afford to neglect our defences. During the course of the year, many steps were taken to improve and expand our Army and Air Force. The response to our demand for recruits to the Armed Forces has been satisfactory in all branches, but we are facing a dearth of qualified personnel for our Technical Services. The conditions of service of armed personnel have been improved in many ways. The more important measures include revision in the rates of pension of Commissioned Officers, liberalisation of pensionary benefits to widows and other dependents of deceased personnel below officer rank and *ad hoc* increases in small pensions.

In the matter of equipping our Forces, appreciable assistance has already been received from the Governments of the United States, the United Kingdom and a number of Commonwealth countries and further assistance is on its way. The Government of the U.S.S.R. have supplied us with a number of transport aircraft and other equipment and are assisting us in

establishing a supersonic aircraft factory in the country. We are grateful to all these countries for the help they have extended to us.

To keep our Defence Forces well-equipped, we are anxious to rely on domestic production to the maximum possible extent. We are trying to secure a strengthening of our production base for strategic industries by getting the necessary plant and machinery under the external assistance provided for our Defence. Production in the Ordnance Factories in 1963-64 is expected to exceed Rs. 100 crore as compared with Rs. 63 crore in 1962-63 and Rs. 41.45 crore in 1961-62.

In accordance with our declared policy, we have continued to seek friendly and co-operative relations with all countries in the world and we have been adhering to the policy of non-alignment and peaceful co-existence, which is receiving growing support and appreciation at a number of international gatherings and from the countries of West Asia and North Africa.

Our President had the privilege and pleasure of visiting the United States of America, the United Kingdom, Nepal, Afghanistan and Iran and of receiving the warm and generous welcome of their Governments and peoples. With a view to further promoting goodwill and friendship, I visited Ethiopia, Sudan and the United Arab Republic. In addition, a number of our Ministers and other high personalities visited various countries of the world, with the same end in view.

Our Government had the privilege of welcoming in this country as our honoured guests during the years: His Majesty the King of Laos; Their Majesties the King and the Queen of Nepal; His Majesty the King of Jordan; the Vice-President of the Republic of Cyprus; the President of the Executive Council of the United Arab Republic; the Prime Minister of the Somali Republic; the Premier of the Northern Region of the Federal Republic of Nigeria; the Premier of New South Wales; the U.S. Secretary of State; Earl Mountbatten of Burma; H.R.H. Crown Princess Margrethe of Denmark; and the Soviet cosmonaut Valentina Tereshkova Nikilaeva and her two colleagues.

We were shocked and grieved to learn of the assassination of President Kennedy. In his death, India lost a genuine friend and, the world, a great champion of peace and amity. We welcome the declaration made by President Johnson that he would continue the policies of the late President Kennedy in the great and difficult task of reducing tensions and maintaining world peace, as well as contributing to the economic development of the less-developed countries of the world.

One of the most encouraging developments in international affairs has been the acceptance by the United States and the Soviet Union of the principle, subsequently adopted by the United Nations, of banning nuclear

weapons from outer space. This and the Test Ban Agreement are significant first steps on the road to disarmament and genuine peace, which can be achieved only in a climate of mutual confidence and co-operative co-existence. We broadly agree with the principle underlying the proposal for an international agreement renouncing the use of force in settling territorial or border disputes made by Chairman Khrushchev, and hope that the principal power concerned will be able, in a spirit of mutual confidence, to work out a satisfactory and acceptable agreement on this important suggestion.

Our relations with Nepal are most cordial and friendly and there is full understanding and sympathy in each country for the problems and aspirations of the other. We are continuing to extend assistance for Bhutan's economic and social development.

Members of Parliament are aware of the tragic loss that both India and Sikkim have sustained by the death of the late Maharaja of Sikkim. His son, His Highness Palden Thondup Namgyal, acceded to the "Gaddi" in December, 1963.

We are happy that Kuwait has now secured her rightful place in the United Nations. We rejoice in the independence of Kenya and Uganda and the early advent of freedom and independence to other territories in Africa. We look forward to developing closer relations with all these countries and to co-operating with them in tackling the many tasks of development which freedom brings in its wake.

We extend our full sympathy and support to the African people who are still under Portuguese colonial rule in their struggle for freedom and independence and in the efforts being made by all people of Africa and other countries of the world to put an end to the policies of apartheid and racial discrimination practised by the Government of South Africa.

As regards our relations with Pakistan, I regret to say that there has been no desire on the part of Pakistan to reach any settlement. The Minister-level discussions on "Kashmir and other related matters" that began in December, 1962, broke up after five rounds of talks on May 16, 1963, on an acrimonious note. Hopes for the success of these talks were, in fact, shattered by Pakistan concluding a border agreement with China, ceding to China a large area of Kashmir which was under Pakistan's military occupation. In spite of this and other acts of collusion with China against India, our Government patiently pursued the negotiations, but the five rounds of talks clearly showed that Pakistan has no intention to reach a settlement on a rational and realistic basis and that its sole object in entering into these bilateral discussions was to gain propaganda advantage against India.

Despite these unfortunate developments, India continued to seek avenues for peaceful solution of Indo-Pakistan problems and to ignore, as far as was possible, the "Hate India" campaign that had been mounted in Pakistan.

A renewed call was made by our Prime Minister for a, “No War Declaration” between India and Pakistan, and for simultaneous efforts to solve Indo-Pakistan differences through peaceful methods. The Prime Minister’s appeal was disregarded and the year ended with Indo-Pakistan relations in a far worse condition than during 1962.

The heinous sacrilege committed by some anti-social elements in Kashmir who stole the holy relic from the Hazratbal shrine in the last week of December, 1963, caused serious concern to all people in Kashmir as well as the rest of India. The prompt action taken by our Government in assisting the local authorities in Kashmir in the investigations resulted in the recovery of the holy relic which was a matter of great joy and satisfaction to people all over India. The Pakistan authorities, however, exploited this incident to fan anti-Indian and communal feelings in Pakistan which led to serious disturbances and complete breakdown of law and order in various areas of East Pakistan including Dacca itself, resulting in the loss of several hundreds of lives of the minority community in East Pakistan* and considerable loss of property belonging to the minority community. These incidents had repercussions in Calcutta® and certain areas of West Bengal and Government took prompt and firm action against the miscreants and gave full protection to the life and property of all citizens of India, irrespective of their caste or creed. Our President also made a proposal for a joint appeal by the Presidents of India and Pakistan to restore peace and harmony amongst the various communities living in the two countries and suggested certain practical steps to follow up this appeal. Pakistani response to these proposals has so far been negative. The disturbances in East Pakistan* have taken a heavy toll of the lives and properties of the members of the minority community in various areas of East Pakistan*. As a result, we are faced with a large influx of the members of the minority community from East Pakistan* into India.

Members of Parliament, I have placed before you an account of our main achievements and problems of the past year. I have also given you a brief picture of the tasks and burdens that face us. They need your dedicated attention, understanding and co-operation in increasing measure. It will continue to be the endeavour of our Government, in all possible ways, to uphold the dignity and independence of our land and people, to promote our unity and well-being and to build a democratic and socialistic society in which progress is sought and attained by peaceful means and by consent.

Fifty-eight Bills were passed by Parliament during 1963. Nineteen Bills are pending before you. Among the Bills that will be placed before you for your consideration will be:—

- (1) The Companies (Amendment) Bill.
- (2) The Indian Crop Insurance Bill.

* Now known as Bangladesh.

® Now known as Kolkata.

- (3) The Standards of Weights & Measures (Amendment) Bill.
- (4) The Indian Railways (Second Amendment) Bill.
- (5) Bill to repeal the Bombay Co-operative Societies Act, 1925, as applicable to the Union Territory of Delhi and to extend the Punjab Co-operative Societies Act, 1961, with certain modifications, to Delhi.
- (6) The Foreign Exchange Regulation (Amendment) Bill.
- (7) The Constitution (Eighteenth Amendment) Bill.
- (8) The Banaras Hindu University (Amendment) Bill.
- (9) The Aligarh Muslim University (Amendment) Bill.

A statement of the estimated receipts and expenditure of the Government of India for the financial year 1964-65 will be laid before you.

Members of Parliament, I wish you success in your labours. I earnestly trust that wisdom and tolerance and a spirit of co-operative effort will guide you. May your endeavours bring increasing prosperity and contentment to our people, stability and security to our Motherland and assist in promoting peace and co-operation in the world.

ADDRESS TO PARLIAMENT—17 FEBRUARY 1965

Lok Sabha	—	Third Lok Sabha
Session	—	First Session of the Year
President of India	—	Dr. S. Radhakrishnan
Vice-President of India	—	Dr. Zakir Husain
Prime Minister of India	—	Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri
Speaker, Lok Sabha	—	Sardar Hukam Singh

MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT,

I welcome you once again to your labours in a new session of Parliament.

During the year which has just ended the nation went through its severest trial in recent years when the people lost their beloved leader Shri Jawaharlal Nehru, their friend, philosopher and guide. There were other stresses and strains also. We were greatly distressed by the serious loss of life and property unfortunately caused in South India by unprecedented cyclonic conditions. Relief measures were promptly taken. Some of our difficulties continue and we have to face them with courage and determination. At the same time the country has made significant progress in many directions.

Looking back on the past twelve months, notice can be taken of several achievements which should inspire hope and confidence. National income had increased at the rate of only 2.5 per cent per annum during the first two years of the Third Plan. In 1963-64, with an increase of 9.2 per cent in industrial output, the figure rose to 4.3 per cent. An increase of about 8 per cent in industrial production is expected during the current year.

Many public sector undertakings in which heavy investments have been made during the Third Plan, have commenced production. They include the Heavy Engineering Plant at Ranchi, the Mining Machinery Plant at Durgapur, the Refinery at Barauni and the Machine Tool Factories at Pinjore and Kalamasseri. Although production in some of these establishments is still at a pilot stage, we can look forward to a steady increase in their contribution to our economic development in the years to come.

In power and transport, the country has been making steady progress. The number of electrified villages has gone up from 4,000 at the beginning

of the First Plan to nearly 40,000. Power generation by the end of the Third Plan is expected to amount to 11.7 million K.W. as against 5.6 million K.W. at the end of the Second Plan. Shipping tonnage at about 1.4 million GRT has already exceeded the Third Plan target. Railways have adequate capacity to meet our current needs and further development is in progress.

New oil discoveries were made in Gujarat and Assam and India has secured rights of exploration in the offshore islands of Iran. New and workable deposits of uranium have been found and our reserves of uranium are substantial. A Plutonium Plant, entirely designed and built by the scientists and engineers of the Trombay Establishment is now in operation. The construction of Atomic Power Stations at Tarapur and Rana Partap Sagar has commenced. The use of atomic energy for peaceful purposes will steadily expand in the future based increasingly on indigenous supplies, technology and research.

Another significant feature has been the greater availability of certain consumer goods of interest to the common man. The production of mill-made cloth alone rose by another 210 million metres in 1964.

As you are aware the production of foodgrains did not show any appreciable increase during the three preceding years. In a number of States the availability of foodgrains became inadequate and there were periods of deep anxiety. To meet the situation the import of foodgrains was increased and other measures were taken to ensure as equitable a distribution of the available supplies as possible. There has recently been some easing of the situation and food prices have registered some decrease. Government are keeping a close watch on the situation and they propose shortly to review the food distribution policy.

Apart from the measures adopted to deal with the food problem that emerged in recent months, a long term policy of increasing food production has been adopted. A number of steps have already been taken and some are in the process of implementation. The farmer has been assured of minimum prices which have been fixed at economic levels and an Agricultural Prices Commission has been set up to keep the situation under constant review. Special attention is being given to the timely supply of fertilizers and other requirements to the farmer. Quick maturing minor irrigation schemes will be implemented on a priority basis.

We are beginning this year with the biggest *Kharif* harvest on record. The *Rabi* crop also is expected to be appreciably better than in previous years. With these favourable trends and the efforts being made to increase production, our Government are taking all possible steps to achieve long term stability in agricultural prices to guard against all eventualities however, a programme of building up buffer stocks in the country out of domestic production and imports has been formulated. The Food Corporation, which

has been set up in the public sector will help to ensure orderly marketing and check anti-social trends in the trading community.

In the industrial sector, although our past record is an impressive one, a fresh momentum is required. This is necessary not only in the interest of stability of prices, but even more for accelerated growth.

While higher production is the best answer to the threat of inflation, the monetary pressures on the price level and on our external payments cannot be ignored. Part of this pressure comes from unaccounted and undisclosed money. Stringent measures are being taken to unearth such money and there can be no relenting in this effort. At the same time, those who are prepared to mend their ways and make a full disclosure of their illegal earnings, should be encouraged to do so.

Further, our Government have already announced that there will be no more deficit financing. This will necessitate curtailment of public expenditure. The expansion of bank credits will also have to be kept in check. A tighter monetary discipline is essential not only to achieve stability of prices but also to secure a better balance between our imports and exports.

In recent months, Government have had to make substantially large repayments of loans and interest and also to pay large amounts for imports. This has led to a decline in our reserves of foreign exchange despite an increase of nearly 50 crore of rupees in our export earnings during 1964, Measures for remedying the situation are being considered by Government.

We are now engaged in the formulation of the country's Fourth Five Year Plan. This will be a crucial task. It will cover a vital period. A memorandum on the Plan has been considered by the National Development Council and has been laid on the Table of Parliament. The most important objective of the Fourth Five Year Plan would be a substantially higher rate of growth with the most effective utilisation of resources. For this task, the Government propose to strengthen the machinery of planning. Emphasis in the Plan will be on agriculture, a balanced development of heavy and other industries, creation of large employment opportunities, advancement of the rural sector and narrowing down of social and economic disparities. Special attention is proposed to be given to schemes which will mature quickly. We have to aim at a minimum level of living for every family in this vast country. The implementation of such a Plan will need a dedicated and sacrificial response from all sections of society. I am sure such a response will be forthcoming under your guidance.

Public sector projects will be implemented with greater speed and they will be designed to give quick returns to the community in the shape of production and profits. Advance action in respect of many Fourth Plan

projects will be taken in the course of this year. To meet shortages in the supply of cement, a Corporation for the production of cement has been set up in the public sector. The role of the private sector in the Fourth Plan will also be important. It will be Government's endeavour to provide reasonable facilities to the private sector to enable it to fulfil its assigned role efficiently and effectively.

The importance of accelerating the rate of growth in both agriculture and industry is heavily underlined by the increase in our population. Between 1951 and 1961, the population of the country increased from 360 million to 440 million. At the present rate of growth the population will be 490 million by the end of the Third Plan and 550 million by the end of the Fourth Plan. Family Planning has become an urgent necessity for the nation. An integrated family planning service involving family planning and maternity and child welfare measures has been evolved. About 12,000 Family Planning Centres have already been set up.

Sound planning is extremely important. It is, however, the result that matters so far as the common man is concerned and results can be obtained in a satisfactory manner only if the administrative machinery for the implementation of plans and policies functions with efficiency, speed and integrity. Improvement of the administrative machinery will, therefore, be one of the principal objectives of Government's endeavours.

The Government are conscious of the need to expand and improve the social services, particularly for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. An Educational Commission has been set up to advise the Government on the national pattern of education at different stages. Steps are being taken to expand the housing programme through allotment of more funds and by co-ordinated action for which Housing Boards are being set up. It is also proposed to make land available at reasonable rates to lower income groups.

Our Government attach the greatest importance to the maintenance of industrial peace through the code of discipline and through the various instruments of negotiation, conciliation and adjudication which exist. Fullest attention is also being paid to measures to promote labour welfare by setting up new Wage Boards for industries and deciding on the recommendations of the Bonus Commission, and by the establishment of consumer co-operatives and fair price shops in industrial establishments and the expansion of the workers' education programme. It is unfortunate that industrial relations in certain sectors during 1964 were somewhat disturbed. It is our Government's earnest hope that both employers and employees will recognise the supreme importance of maximising output by working together with a sense of national purpose.

We are greatly distressed by the events in South India. We deplore the acts of violence which have occurred and extend our deep sympathy to

those who have suffered. Doubts about the language issue seem to have agitated the minds of the people there. We wish to state categorically that the assurances given by the late Shri Jawaharlal Nehru and re-affirmed by our Prime Minister will be carried out without qualification and reservation. This is essential for the unity of the country. While Hindi is the official language of the Union, English will continue to be an associate official language. This will continue as long as the non-Hindi speaking people require it. We earnestly hope that this will allay the apprehensions of the people and lead them to return to their normal work. Members of Parliament will no doubt consider this whole policy which has been affirmed and re-affirmed often, in all its aspects, legal, administrative and executive. The Chief Ministers will be meeting at an early date to consider the situation.

The Chinese threat on our northern borders continues unabated. To strengthen our defences, a Five-Year Defence Plan covering the years 1964 to 1969 is being implemented. New Divisions are being raised and equipped according to schedule. The output of Ordnance Factories last year was nearly double of what it was three years ago. Our Air Force is being expanded to provide better protection against hostile air attacks and ground and logistical support to our troops. Steps to strengthen our Naval defences have also been initiated.

The increase in defence expenditure imposes an additional burden on the community and diverts our resources from development. We are not engaged in an arms race with any country. At the same time, we are determined to be strong enough to repel any attack on our borders.

The explosion of a nuclear device by China has shocked peace-loving people all over the world. Another explosion in China may not be far off. We have decided that despite this development, we shall not embark on the manufacture of atomic weapons. We shall, instead, continue to strive for international understanding which will eliminate the threat of nuclear war.

Our relations with countries near and far, large and small, in the East and in the West, continue to be friendly. Only China continues to adopt a hostile attitude. There has also been unfortunately no improvement in our relations with Pakistan.

Non-alignment and co-existence remain the essential planks of our foreign policy. We have always firmly believed that peace is essential for the progress of mankind. It is even more necessary for the developing nations of the world who have to tackle enormous problems. For these reasons and because of our natural interest in our neighbourhood, we have felt greatly concerned over the recent events in South-East Asia. Our Government have suggested that a Geneva type conference should be held early, to arrest the dangerous trends which have been developing in Vietnam,

in particular, so that a political solution to the problem can be found. We are also in touch with friendly countries in regard to this matter.

The election of Mr. Harold Wilson as the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, of Mr. Kosygin as the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the U.S.S.R. and of Mr. Johnson as the President of the U.S.A. have been significant events. All the three leaders are old friends of India. For the first time, a French Prime Minister has visited India and understanding between the two countries has grown as a result. The visits to our country of the Prime Minister of Ceylon*, the Chairman of the Revolutionary Council of Burma[§], the King of Bhutan. Their Majesties the King and Queen and the Foreign Minister of Nepal bear testimony to the growth of friendship between India and her neighbours. We have also had the privilege of welcoming Their Majesties the King and Queen of Belgium, the President of the Republic of Iraq, the President of the Supreme Council for the Armed Forces of the Republic of Sudan, the President of Finland, the Prime Minister of Singapore, the Crown Prince and Prime Minister of Kuwait and the Premier of Mauritius.

Special mention has also to be made of the visit of His Holiness Pope Paul VI who came to Bombay[®] in December 1964 to participate in the Eucharistic Congress. In the spirit of our traditions, people belonging to all religions gave him a rousing reception during his short stay in the country.

As a nation fundamentally opposed to colonialism, we have rejoiced in the emergence of Malawi, Malta, and Zambia as sovereign countries. Tomorrow, the Gambia will be a welcome addition to this list.

During the past year, I paid State visits to the U.S.S.R. and Eire. The warm reception I had in both these countries was an ample tribute to the goodwill that exists for India and her people in these countries.

The Prime Minister led the Indian delegation to the Conference of non-aligned Nations at Cairo. A fundamental unity and similarity of approach manifested itself in the Conference and gave overwhelming evidence of the continuing validity and relevance of the policy of non-alignment.

Twenty-two Bills are already before the Parliament for your consideration. Among the new Bills which the Government propose to introduce during the year, are the following:

- (1) The Payment of Bonus Bill.
- (2) The Factories (Amendment) Bill.

* Now known as Sri Lanka.

§ Now known as Myanmar.

® Now known as Mumbai.

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- (3) The Import and Export Control (Amendment) Bill.
 - (4) The Indian Tariff (Amendment) Bill.
 - (5) The All-India Handloom Board Bill.
 - (6) The Seamen's Provident Fund Bill.
 - (7) The Rice Milling Industry (Regulation) Amendment Bill.
 - (8) The Patents Bill.
 - (9) The Income Tax (Amendment) Bill.

A statement of the estimated receipts and expenditure of the Government of India for the financial year 1965-66 will be laid before you.

Members of Parliament, you have a full and strenuous programme ahead of you. The development of a prosperous socialist society and the expansion of friendly co-operation with other nations of the world remain the basis of our policies. Our objectives are known and our goals are clear. To their attainment you have to guide the nation with unflinching faith and firm resolve.

ADDRESS TO PARLIAMENT—14 FEBRUARY 1966

Lok Sabha	—	Third Lok Sabha
Session	—	First Session of the Year
President of India	—	Dr. S. Radhakrishnan
Vice-President of India	—	Dr. Zakir Husain
Prime Minister of India	—	Smt. Indira Gandhi
Speaker, Lok Sabha	—	Sardar Hukam Singh

MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT,

Once again, I welcome you to a new session. A month ago the nation lost its Prime Minister, Lal Bahadur Shastri. He was truly a man of the people who never lost the common touch. He combined firmness of purpose with flexibility of approach. He was a man of deep humility, gentle in his ways, soft of speech and devoted to peace. In hours of crisis, he was calm, courageous and unflinching.

While deeply distressed by the turn of events which forced us into an armed conflict with Pakistan, he gave an inspiring lead to the nation. Our brave and gallant armed forces have written a new chapter of glory in our history. We honour our heroes, comfort the bereaved and lament the loss of precious lives. The people of India have once again demonstrated their unity and solidarity. Communal harmony was preserved throughout the country. Labour showed an exemplary spirit.

When the fighting ceased, Lal Bahadur Shastri bent his energies towards the establishment of good neighbourly relations with Pakistan. Before his sudden untimely death, he had the satisfaction of signing the Tashkent Declaration with President Ayub Khan of Pakistan in the presence of Mr. Kosygin, Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the U.S.S.R., whose good offices and friendly approach, more than anything else, made the agreement possible. It was Lal Bahadur Shastri's hope and belief that the Tashkent Declaration would lay the foundation for an enduring peace and friendship between India and Pakistan. More even than the letter, it is the spirit of the Tashkent Declaration that is important. Both sides have to fulfil it with faith and vision.

We are fortunate in having very friendly relations with almost all countries in the world. We are particularly happy that the friendly ties and understanding with our neighbours have been further strengthened. Unfortunately, our relations with the People's Republic of China still continue to be strained. The country has to be vigilant and strong.

Our Government will continue to work for peace in the world. Peace is essential for our own development and progress and for the well-being of all peoples. To this end, we shall strive to strengthen international co-operation, based on the principles of peaceful co-existence, non-interference in the internal affairs of others, non-alignment which implies freedom to judge issues on their merits and, above all, the abandonment of the use of force to settle disputes. If the resources of prosperous nations which are now spent on armaments, could be diverted to the service of mankind, the people living in poverty and ignorance would have a new hope of achievement in their life time.

One by one, countries in Africa and Asia, which were under colonial domination, have achieved independence and taken their rightful place in the comity of nations. It is unfortunate that some countries are still under Portuguese domination and we sympathise with those who are fighting for their independence. In South Africa, we support the struggle against apartheid.

One of the most unwelcome developments which has taken place is the Unilateral Declaration of Independence by Rhodesia and the seizing of power by a racial minority which is seeking to establish its domination over the people of Rhodesia. We have cut off all relations with Rhodesia, diplomatic and economic, and will continue to give our full support to the people of Rhodesia in setting up a truly democratic Government.

We are deeply concerned about the present situation in Vietnam. Any effort to resolve this conflict by peaceful methods will receive our support.

Last year, I visited Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, Rumania and Ethiopia. In all these countries, I was warmly received and I found evidence of deep friendship and goodwill towards India and her people. The Vice-President visited Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Turkey and Greece, where he was received with great cordiality and friendliness. The same friendliness was displayed by the Governments and peoples of Nepal, the Soviet Union, the United Arab Republic, Canada, Great Britain, Yugoslavia and Burma* during the visits which the late Prime Minister Shastri paid to those countries. We have also had the pleasure of welcoming to our country the King and Queen of Nepal, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, the Prime Ministers of Afghanistan, Czechoslovakia, Laos and Uganda and many other high dignitaries from all over the world. Many Heads of Governments and other high personages came to Delhi last month to pay their homage to Lal Bahadur Shastri and we were greatly touched by their presence.

* Now known as Myanmar.

The year 1965-66 is the last year of our Third Five Year Plan. The growth of national income, which was slow in the first two years of the Plan, was speeded up with the rise of 4.5 per cent in the third year and 7.3 per cent in the fourth year. Ordinarily, it should have been possible to maintain a comparable rate of growth during the current year. Unfortunately, a number of adverse factors have slowed down production. The unprecedented drought which we experienced, the armed conflict in which the country was involved and the suspension of promised economic aid from outside have reduced the rate of growth.

On account of the failure of monsoons, the production of foodgrains in 1965-66 is likely to be only 76 to 77 million tonnes, as against 88 million tonnes in the previous year. The shortfall in the availability of foodgrains, as well as, of fodder and water, has created serious scarcity conditions in many States, particularly in Maharashtra, Gujarat, Mysore*, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Andhra Pradesh. The State Governments and the Centre have already taken steps to provide relief to the people affected by the scarcity. We take this opportunity to acknowledge the assistance readily given by international organisations and the Governments and people of various friendly countries. In particular, we would like to thank the President of the United States and his administration for their generous help at this time of need.

Measures have to be taken to ensure equitable distribution of the available supplies between State and State and man and man. Statutory rationing has been introduced in Calcutta[®], Madras[§], Coimbatore and Delhi. It will be introduced in a number of other cities in the coming months.

The Government is aware of the distress caused in Kerala where the availability of rice now admits of a daily ration of 140 grams only per head. This is supplemented by an equal quantity of wheat. There has been considerable discontent and agitation on account of the reduced availability of rice. Steps are being taken to increase the supply of rice by imports from abroad and by additional procurement internally. We trust that States with a surplus will co-operate fully in making more rice available for the people of Kerala.

The present difficulties only re-emphasize the need to concert and implement measures to increase the production of foodgrains in the shortest possible time. Only by the application of modern science and technology can agricultural production increase in an adequate measure. In the new agricultural strategy of our Government, the greatest emphasis has been placed on the use of improved varieties of seeds which are particularly

* Now known as Karnataka.

® Now known as Kolkata.

§ Now known as Chennai.

responsive to the application of fertilizers. These new varieties should cover 4.5 million acres of land in 1966-67, and over 32 million acres by the end of the Fourth Plan.

The internal production of fertilizers is being stepped up. The Trombay fertilizer plant has already been commissioned. Neyvelli is expected to go into production in the near future. In 1967, four plants will be commissioned at Namrup, Gorakhpur, Baroda and Visakhapatnam. Recently certain decisions have been taken to attract private capital also, both foreign and indigenous, for investment in this field. Till such time as domestic production is adequate, the Government proposes to import the requisite quantities of fertilizers for the agricultural programme.

Irrigation projects are being speeded up. It is expected that through major and medium irrigation projects, water for an additional 3 million acres will become available during the coming financial year. Minor irrigation projects are also receiving attention. About 7 lakh pumping sets are expected to be energised during the Fourth Plan. Considerable emphasis will be laid on rural electrification.

Finance will be required by the farmer to make greater use of fertilizers and of the water from our irrigation projects. Steps are being taken to ensure that credit is made available to the farmer quickly and at relatively low rates of interest.

The high priority we are giving to agriculture is necessary not merely to ensure self-sufficiency in foodgrains, but also to enable us to increase our exports of agricultural and industrial products. Exports showed a marked increase during the first three years of the Third Five Year Plan. In the last two years, however, they have remained relatively stagnant. There has been an impressive rise in our exports to East European countries in general and to the U.S.S.R. in particular. However, our balance of payments position with the rest of the world has continued to be under strain. While external assistance has been making a welcome contribution to the country's development and while we must thank the many countries and international institutions from whom we receive aid, we must intensify our efforts to increase export and to make the country self-reliant as quickly as possible.

A number of public sector plants have started production in the recent past. Fresh capacity has been added in the machine building sector, in oil refineries and in the production of alloy steels. Adequate provision will be made in the Fourth Plan for the expansion of industries in the public sector. Special mention has to be made in this context of the steel plant to be set up at Bokaro with Soviet collaboration and of the enterprises intended to put atomic energy to peaceful, constructive uses. The Atomic Energy Commission and indeed the world of science has suffered an irreparable loss in the tragic death of Dr. H.J. Bhabha. The work which he had started must continue with unabated vigour.

The investment which we make in the public sector has to give adequate returns. Our Government proposes to pay special attention to the efficient management of public sector enterprises.

Industries in the private sector have also to expand their output and capacity. While certain curbs and controls are inevitable in a planned economy and in the context of scarcity, conditions have to be created in which private initiative and private savings can be harnessed to make the maximum possible contribution to growth and development within the framework of the Fourth Five Year Plan.

The success we have achieved in improving the health of our people and raising the average expectation of life gives us cause for satisfaction. The number of doctors available is now nearly 90,000 as against 70,000 in 1960-61. Hospital beds have increased by nearly a third over the same period. Mortality due to malaria has practically been eradicated over the last decade. Side by side with the fall in the death rate, we must bring about a reduction in the birth rate. If our population goes on increasing at the rate of about a million a month, it will be difficult to raise our standards of living and to end our chronic dependence on imports to feed our people. Family planning programmes have to be intensified and brought within the reach of all.

The number of school-going children at the primary stage has gone up from a little above 40 per cent at the commencement of our First Plan to nearly 80 per cent this year. The percentage at higher levels has nearly trebled over the same period. The annual out-turn from our Technical Training Institutions has doubled during the Third Plan.

Prices continued to rise during the year, although the rate of increase was not as high as in the previous year. In view of the set back in agricultural production this year, steps have to be taken to keep inflationary pressures in check. Curtailment of public expenditure has an important role in this.

Our Government is trying to prune non-Plan expenditure and to concentrate our resources on development. There are, however, certain areas where higher expenditure is unavoidable. We have to provide for the rehabilitation of people affected by the recent conflict. We have to undertake relief measures in the drought stricken areas. With the increase in recent months of tension on our northern borders, we can not but provide for a higher outlay on defence. In the circumstances obtaining, a higher financial discipline, internal and external, is unavoidable.

Monetary and financial curbs, however, necessary they may be in the short run, do not provide an answer to the basic problems of our economy. To fight poverty, we must have higher production. Towards this end, both the public sector and the private sector have important tasks ahead of them.

The preparation of the Fourth Plan has unfortunately been delayed, due to certain unforeseen developments. The Plan for the year 1966-67 is ready. The State Governments are mobilising resources to implement it. Although the total outlay on the 1966-67 Plan will be lower than what we had earlier hoped for, every effort will be made to make good the shortfall in the remaining years of the Fourth Five Year Plan.

Members of Parliament, a new Government has come into power, led by one you all know and who belongs to the younger generation of freedom fighters. The reorganisation of Departments and Ministries reflects the priorities to which I have just referred.

Thirty-eight Bills are already before you for your consideration. Amongst the new Bills which the Government proposes to introduce are:

- (1) Rice Milling Industry (Regulation) Amendment Bill 1966;
- (2) The Crop Insurance Bill 1966;
- (3) The Indian Tariff (Amendment) Bill to replace the Ordinance;
- (4) The Essential Commodities (Amendment) Bill 1966;
- (5) The Contract Labour (Regulation and Abolition) Bill 1966;
- (6) The Forward Contracts (Regulation) Amendment Bill 1966;
- (7) The Armed Forces (Special Powers Continuance) Bill 1966; and
- (8) The Import and Export Control (Amendment) Bill 1966.

A statement of the estimated receipts and expenditure of the Government of India for the financial year 1966-67 will be laid before you.

Members of Parliament, I wish you success in your labours. Our objectives are known and our goals are clear. We have to strive for a better life for our people at home and to assist in promoting peace and co-operation in the world. Towards these objectives, you have to guide the nation with courage and wisdom and a spirit of co-operative endeavour.

ADDRESS TO PARLIAMENT—18 MARCH 1967

Lok Sabha	—	Fourth Lok Sabha
Session	—	First Session after the 4th General Election
President of India	—	Dr. S. Radhakrishnan
Vice-President of India	—	Dr. Zakir Husain
Prime Minister of India	—	Smt. Indira Gandhi
Speaker, Lok Sabha	—	Dr. N. Sanjiva Reddy

MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT,

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to this joint session of the two Houses of Parliament. I offer my congratulations to the newly elected and re-elected Members and my good wishes to those no longer with us.

Earlier, it was intended that the third Lok Sabha should have a final session this month mainly to pass a Vote on Account. Shortly after most of the election results were announced, many Honourable Members from different political parties approached us with the request that it should be the new Lok Sabha which should meet at this juncture to pass the Vote on Account and to transact other essential business. The Government agreed with this view and, on their advice, the third Lok Sabha was dissolved on the 3rd of March.

Our fourth General Elections have once again demonstrated the vigour and vitality of our democracy. There was a larger turn-out of voters than on any previous occasion, as well as a substantial increase in the number of women who cast their votes. Despite a few unfortunate incidents of violence and disturbance which have been universally condemned, the elections were orderly and peaceful. The Chief Election Commissioner and his staff deserve our congratulations. So do the people, for the enthusiasm, maturity and dignity with which they have re-affirmed their faith in democracy and representative institutions.

For the first time since Independence, Governments of political complexions different from that of the Government at the Centre have been formed in several States. In a federal democratic polity, this is to be expected. Our Constitution has provisions defining and regulating the

relationship between the Union and the States and their mutual obligations. Further, over the years, we have developed certain institutions for promoting co-operation, understanding and harmonious relations between the Union and the States and between one State and another. The National Development Council, the Zonal Councils and periodic conferences of Governors and Chief Ministers are the more conspicuous examples of this nature.

The Union Government will respect the constitutional provisions in letter and in spirit without any discrimination and endeavour to strengthen the arrangements for a co-operative approach to our national problems. We are sure that all States will extend their co-operation in preserving these institutions and in making their deliberations increasingly fruitful and beneficial both to the Union and to themselves. Strengthening the unity of the country, safeguarding its security, preserving democratic institutions, and promoting economic development and the well-being and happiness of all our people are the common objectives towards which the Union and the States must strive together.

Our Government have just taken office. While they will take a little time to place before you all the policies and programmes which they will pursue in accordance with the mandate of the electorate, they have already decided upon four major objectives in the economic sphere.

- (1) They have resolved to end our dependence on food assistance from abroad by the end of 1971.
- (2) They have resolved to do all that is possible to ensure that the rising trend in prices of the basic necessities of life is halted and conditions of stability achieved in the shortest possible time.
- (3) They have resolved to attain and sustain an adequate rate of economic growth so as to eliminate the need for external economic assistance by 1976.
- (4) And they have resolved to pursue the national programme of family planning with the objective of reducing the birth rate from forty per thousand to twenty-five per thousand as expeditiously as possible.

These tasks are of such magnitude that they can be accomplished only with the active support, participation and involvement of the people and the co-operation of all parties. To secure these will be one of Government's primary objectives.

The food situation will be dealt with on an emergency basis. The measures already set in motion to fight the drought will be strengthened. We have to ensure that the available foodgrains in the country, whether indigenous or imported, are distributed equitably. Government are already in touch with State Governments, seeking their views and their co-operation in regard to the further steps that have to be taken on the food front.

Simultaneously, Government intend, in collaboration with the States to make every effort to augment agricultural production. Our food import requirements must be reduced in each successive year. Towards this end, Government will pay special attention to the adequate availability of fertilizers and improved seeds and to the credit needs of the farmer. Greater emphasis will be placed on minor irrigation and energisation of wells. Efforts will be made to expedite the completion of major irrigation projects that are in an advanced stage of construction and to ensure the fullest utilization of the irrigation potential already created.

The upsurge in prices, particularly during the last two years, was primarily the result of the shortfall in agricultural production due to the failure of the monsoons. Industrial production too was affected by the failure of the monsoons and the shortage of foreign exchange to import necessary raw materials. Deficit financing at the Centre and overdrafts by the State Governments on the Reserve Bank further aggravated the inflationary pressures. To deal with the situation, everything possible must be done to increase production in both agriculture and industry. The considerable potential and capacity in various sectors of the economy built during the past years must be more fully utilized. Simultaneously, a stricter financial discipline must be maintained. Economy is not inconsistent with efficiency and we must seek genuine economy in every field and in every sector of public expenditure.

Our Five Year Plans have had the objective of making the economy self-reliant and capable of further development. To achieve this target by 1976, special attention will be paid in the Fourth Plan period to those industries which will contribute most to rapid development in the immediate future, particularly industries which will be helpful to our agriculture and exports. The greatest emphasis will have to be laid on higher efficiency in both the public and the private sectors. Substantial investments have been made in industry by the public sector in the first three Plans and it is important that these are now made to yield greater profits to sustain further development. The Draft Outline of the Fourth Plan was published some months ago. It is being reviewed in the light of adverse effects of the drought, the latest price trends, and the prospects of mobilising additional resources, internal and external, and it is proposed to take an early opportunity to discuss the Plan fully in the National Development Council and thereafter in Parliament.

Our population has crossed the five hundred million mark, this is a danger signal which we can ignore only at our peril. Family Planning Programmes will be strengthened at all levels with the co-operation of the States.

Although economic difficulties are at the root of much of the prevailing discontent, other factors too have contributed to a sense of frustration,

particularly among the young. The new generation which has grown up since Independence has new aspirations and new ideas. We must respond to them. The educational system needs re-shaping in the light of the recommendations of the Education Commission, on which we are awaiting the comments of the State Governments. A new scheme of national service at the University level is under active consideration.

The success of all our Plans and projects depends upon the efficiency and integrity of the administration. To ensure efficiency in performance, changes will be made in the administrative set up. The Planning Commission will be re-organized. The working of controls will also be reviewed; those found unnecessary will be withdrawn and others re-adjusted as may be required to make them more purposeful and efficient. The Administrative Reforms Commission is expected to submit its recommendations on the re-organization of the Central Government fairly soon.

Integrity and impartiality in public life, and in the conduct of the public servants, are the foundations of true democracy. The Administrative Reforms Commission has made an interim report bearing on this subject. Government agree, in principle, with the Commission's approach on the need for adequate and satisfactory institutional arrangements to deal with problems of corruption in high public office, whether political or administrative. They expect to finalize their proposals and place them before Parliament at an early date. They have already referred to the State Governments the recommendations of the Commission which concern them.

A National Commission on Labour has been set up under the chairmanship of Shri Gajendragadkar. The Commission will review and make appropriate recommendations on the whole field of the working and living conditions of labour of all categories, including rural labour, since Independence. Legislation to give statutory recognition to the assurances given in regard to the official language of the Union will be shortly introduced in Parliament. A high-level committee will be set up to examine the question of a ban on cow slaughter in terms of the announcement already made. A committee will also be set up, as announced, to examine further the proposal for the re-organisation of the State of Assam in the light of the discussions held with the leaders of Assam. The question of changing the financial year will be considered in consultation with the State Governments.

In a shrinking world, no country can remain isolated. India has a role to play in the counsels of the world. Our membership of the Security Council casts on us an onerous responsibility which we shall do our best to discharge.

The foreign policy of India has stood the test of time. The concept of peaceful co-existence, which India had done so much to sponsor, is now accepted by the leaders of the two groups. With both the United States and

the Soviet Union we have the friendliest of relations. Our policy of non-alignment stands vindicated. Government will do everything possible to strengthen non-alignment and pursue the positive aspects of this policy with vigour and determination.

There are two dangers which confront humanity today. One is the widening gulf between the poor nations and the rich nations. The other is the rejection of the principle of peaceful co-existence by some countries.

Government's foreign policy will serve the twin objectives of furthering our national interests—economic, political and strategic—and of promoting international co-operation. Towards this end, we have succeeded in building up and maintaining the friendliest of relations with most countries of the world. It will be Government's special endeavour to strengthen India's relations with our Asian neighbours.

It is a matter of deep gratification that our Government have been able to sign an Agreement with the Government of Burma* about the formal delineation and demarcation of our traditional boundary with that friendly country.

Government adhere to their policy regarding Vietnam which has been enunciated on several occasions.

Government most sincerely desire the friendship and co-operation of the Government and people of Pakistan. Nothing has distressed us more than the bitterness and conflict which have sometimes divided our two countries which have many common interests. Government will make every effort to achieve a relationship of the fullest understanding, goodwill and amity with Pakistan.

With China too we would like to live in peace. But the aggressive acts and postures of the People's Republic of China, coupled with their rejection of the concept of peaceful co-existence, continue to be the major obstacles to an improvement of our relations with China.

We are grateful to friendly nations of the world, as well as to international institutions and agencies, who have given us valuable assistance in our development programmes as well as in meeting our food crisis.

Developing countries can also strengthen their economies through mutual co-operation. The Tripartite Meeting between the leaders of three non-aligned countries, President Tito of Yugoslavia, President Nasser of the United Arab Republic and our Prime Minister, has laid the foundations of such an approach.

Another Head of State whom we had the pleasure of welcoming amidst us recently was His Majesty the King of Afghanistan, with whom we have had very friendly and cordial talks.

* Now known as Myanmar.

Members of Parliament, I have briefly touched upon some of the issues that confront us today. You will have an opportunity to get a fuller picture of the Government's policies and programmes in these and other matters in due course. Your present session will be a short one, confined to the transaction of certain essential financial and budgetary business. You will be meeting again shortly to consider further business.

Bills will be introduced in the current session to replace:

- (1) The Mineral Products (Additional Duties of Excise and Customs) Amendment Ordinance, 1966;
- (2) The Essential Commodities (Second Amendment) Ordinance, 1966;
- (3) The Land Acquisition (Amendment and Validation) Ordinance, 1967; and
- (4) The Representation of the People (Amendment) Ordinance, 1967.

The Armed Forces (Special Powers) Continuance Bill will also be introduced.

A statement of the estimated receipts and expenditure of the Government of India for the financial year 1967-68 will be laid before you.

It is a matter of distress to us that President's rule had to be introduced in Rajasthan. It is our earnest hope that it will not be necessary to continue this arrangement for long and that it will be found possible early to restore responsible government.

A statement of the estimated receipts and expenditure of the Government of India for the financial year 1967-68 will also be laid before you.

I wish you success in your endeavours.



Dr. ZAKIR HUSAIN



ADDRESS TO PARLIAMENT—12 FEBRUARY 1968

Lok Sabha	—	Fourth Lok Sabha
Session	—	First Session of the Year
President of India	—	Dr. Zakir Husain
Vice-President of India	—	Shri V.V. Giri
Prime Minister of India	—	Smt. Indira Gandhi
Speaker, Lok Sabha	—	Dr. N. Sanjiva Reddy

MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT,

I am happy to welcome you to this first session of the New Year.

The past year has been challenging and difficult. The country passed through the second successive year of unprecedented drought and scarcity. Considering the disasters that accompanied famines in the past, we can take justifiable pride at the manner in which the entire nation rose to meet the grave threat posed to the very lives of millions of our countrymen. This was possible because of timely and sustained action by the Central and State Governments; the dedicated services rendered by voluntary organisations; the generous and timely support of friendly nations; the hard work and efficiency of our workers in every concerned field; and above all, the unbending spirit and fortitude of the people of the affected areas themselves.

While a year ago the prospects looked bleak and there were dark forebodings about the future, the clouds are now beginning to lift. The production of foodgrains is expected to be better this year than at any time in the past. Preliminary estimates place production at around 95 million tonnes which would be about 20 million tonnes more than in 1966-67 and 6 million tonnes more than the previous record production of 1964-65. With this increase in production, the food situation is expected to be easier. However, a significant portion of this crop will naturally go towards filling empty larders or building up depleted inventories. To bring stability to the food situation, it is essential to build up a sufficiently large buffer stock. It is also necessary to maintain a requisite level of public distribution of foodgrains at controlled rates. Towards these ends, Government are maximising efforts at internal procurement and endeavouring to build buffer stocks of the order of 3 million tonnes. All this requires mobilisation of

domestic production. In addition, some imports from abroad will still be necessary.

While favourable weather conditions have contributed to the increase in production, there is no doubt that a substantial breakthrough has been achieved in the field of agricultural production by the use of improved techniques. While in 1966-67 five million acres were sown with high-yielding varieties of seeds, 6 million acres were covered in the last *Kharif* season and a further 9 million acres are expected to be covered in the current *Rabi* season. Production of commercial crops like cotton, jute, sugarcane, tobacco, groundnuts is also expected to increase. The minor irrigation programme will cover an additional area of over 3 million acres. There has been an impressive increase in the use of fertilisers; thus the consumption of nitrogenous fertilisers in the current year will be about twice that in 1965-66. The area covered by plant protection measures this year is expected to be about three-quarters more than last year. There have been striking increases in the supplies of tractors, power tillers, pumps, diesel engines and improved implements to farmers. The arrangements for supply of agricultural credit have been strengthened. Progress continues to be made in the implementation of programmes of agricultural, education, training, research and extension. The development programme for agriculture aims at securing national self-sufficiency in foodgrains within the shortest possible time.

The increased agricultural production has resulted in a substantial increase in national income, which is expected to be about 10.8 per cent higher in the current year than in 1966-67. Improved agricultural performance has also reduced the upward pressure on prices. Over the year as a whole, the increase in wholesale prices was 5.7 per cent, as against 16 per cent, during 1966. While the prospects of achieving a reasonable measure of price stability are good, it will be necessary, as I have already said, to continue with the system of public distribution of foodgrains and to exercise discipline in respect of fiscal, monetary and income policies.

The severe drought of the last two years adversely affected industrial output because industries based on agriculture could not secure adequate supplies of raw material and there was also a fall in demand due to reduction in incomes. Some capital and producer goods industries faced slackened demand because of restricted investment outlays. The slowing down of industrial expansion has affected employment opportunities particularly for skilled manpower. Selective measures were adopted by Government to stimulate the output of goods both for export and for the domestic market; these included the selective liberalisation of credit, placing of advance orders by public sector undertakings, and avoidance of import of items which could be manufactured indigenously. Improved agricultural production and the consequent rise in national income are expected to stimulate demand for a variety of industrial products during the coming year.

The persistent upward movement of costs and prices, together with the sharp decline in agricultural production during the last two years, adversely affected the competitiveness of our exports. However, with increased production of foodgrains and of agricultural raw materials for industry, the outlook for exports in the coming year is encouraging. In the first seven months of the current financial year, exports were 5.7 per cent higher than in the corresponding period of 1966-67. The engineering industries have secured substantial export orders. As industrial production picks up, it is to be hoped that we shall be able to produce more for overseas markets.

Government continue to help producers and manufacturers to increase and diversify production and develop marketing skills and competence. The endeavour to improve export opportunities for our products and induce importing countries to provide favourable conditions for them has been pressed through multilateral negotiations, bilateral agreements and the day-to-day contacts of our missions abroad. The Agreements reached with the Socialist countries will help sustain the expansion which has been achieved in our trade with them. The successful completion of the Kennedy round of negotiations will bring to our exporters new opportunities for the export of some of our goods to Market economies. The Tripartite Economic Co-operation Agreement concluded with the U.A.R. and Yugoslavia will help to increase our mutual trade and provide a basis for expanding the area of commercial co-operation with the other developing countries. The expansion of exports remains a national objective of the highest priority and will be pursued with vigour.

The adverse balance of trade and the substantial burden of debt servicing, combined with unavoidable imports of foodgrains and raw materials for export production, have continued to make our foreign exchange position difficult over the year. Government have sought the co-operation of friendly countries and international institutions in finding a solution to the debt service problem. A measure of assistance to relieve the burden of debt was obtained during the year and further discussions continue. Nevertheless, there was a decline in the foreign exchange reserves and it became necessary to obtain further short-term assistance from the International Monetary Fund.

In any scheme for promoting a more efficient handling of our international trade, the development of our merchant shipping and port facilities occupies a place of crucial importance. In this respect Government have taken a number of important steps, including development of Tuticorin and Mangalore ports, construction of Haldia docks, expansion of the facilities at the existing major ports, reorganisation and modernisation of Hindustan Shipyard and the setting up of a second shipyard in the public sector at Cochin for the construction of bulk carriers of 66,000 dead weight tons with facilities for repairs to ships up to 85,000 dead weight tons. As for our

merchant shipping, the tonnage has now reached a total of approximately two million gross registered tons. Government has set up a Commission to examine comprehensively the problems relating to the finances and economics of major ports, including their modernisation.

No annual survey will be complete without reference to vitally important programme of Family Planning. This programme made rapid strides during the year. Its acceptability spread to many new sections of rural as well as urban population. Over 2.85 million men and women are estimated to be covered under the various Family Planning programmes. This represents the highest figure reached in any single year so far. However, in order to reach the objective of reducing the annual birth rate from approximately 40 per thousand to 25, an even greater and sustained effort will be required. With this end in view, it is proposed to bring over 6 million additional couples within the ambit of family planning methods and services during the next year. Government have also under consideration certain other measures vitally related to population control.

As one looks to the future, the foremost task which the Government have set themselves lies in imparting a new dynamism to the economy which is recovering from the severe set-backs suffered during the last two years. Government believe that it is only through the process of planning that the difficulties can be overcome and the country can go forward in its social and economic development.

The Planning Commission is engaged in the formulation of the Fourth Five Year Plan which will now commence from April, 1969. Meanwhile, planning for development has been on the basis of Annual Plans. The Annual Plan for 1968-69 will be shortly laid before you. Both the Government and the Planning Commission were naturally anxious that the Plan should be ready in time to be incorporated in the Budget for 1968-69.

The formulation of our Plans calls for an examination of a number of questions. Among these the most important relate to mobilisation of resources, increasing the efficiency and productivity of public sector enterprises and the proper utilisation of science and technology. There cannot be adequate mobilisation of internal resources without a much higher rate of domestic savings, both public as well as private. This, in turn, presupposes a regime of self-denial and self-restraint without which we cannot move forward. In order to stimulate effective mobilisation of resources, Government are considering various measures to simplify tax laws, rationalise taxation procedures and streamline the collection machinery.

Government are conscious of the need for urgently raising the efficiency of the public sector. They are reviewing the organisation and working of this sector in the context of the advice tendered by several expert bodies. Among the aspects under special examination are better management, a more rational and a carefully thought out personnel policy, improved labour

relations and effective economies though a more rigorous enforcement of priorities and evaluation.

Members will recall that during the last session of Parliament, the Deputy Prime Minister made a statement on Government's decision to bring general insurance under social control. In the current session, Government propose to introduce a bill to give effect to the decisions contained in that statement.

I referred to the importance which Government attach to the application of Science and Technology to our economic development. With this end in view, Government's policy is to bring together, in productive and creative partnership, our scientific research establishments, governmental machinery and industry.

During the year under review, the Thumba Equatorial Rocket Launching Station was formally dedicated. The first Rohini rocket developed at the centre was successfully launched from Thumba. The Experimental Satellite Communication Earth Station at Ahmedabad has been completed and a new station will be set up at Arvi. In the field of nuclear power, the Tarapore Atomic Power Project is expected to be commissioned this year. Two more nuclear power stations are under construction.

Government are conscious of the fact that our administrative structure must not only respond to changing needs but also command the confidence of the people. In order to achieve these purposes, the Administrative Reforms Commission was set up. It has produced a series of reports which have evoked wide interest. It is for the first time that a comprehensive enquiry of this kind has been undertaken in our country. The Commission had addressed itself to the problem of redressing grievances of citizens and had made certain recommendations. Government have now decided to set up a statutory machinery to enquire into complaints alleging corruption or injustice arising out of mal-administration. The machinery will be headed by a Lokpal who will have authority to enquire into the allegations arising out of administrative acts of Central Ministers and Secretaries. The Lokpal will also co-ordinate the working of two other functionaries of the status of Lokayuktas. The first will primarily go into allegations of corruption and the second into other allegations made against Central Government servants lower in rank than Secretaries. A Bill on the subject will be introduced in Parliament during the present session.

There are certain aspects of our national life which are a source of constant concern to Government. Unemployment, specially amongst educated and technically qualified youth, is naturally a matter of disquiet. However, there are no easy, short-term solutions. These problems can only be solved in the measure that our economic growth provides increasing employment

opportunities which will absorb the output of our educational and technical institutions as well as take care of population increases. The Planning Commission is critically re-examining the earlier forecast of our manpower requirements. In the meantime, Government earnestly hope that our young men and women, conscious of the dignity of labour, will not hesitate to accept such employment opportunities as might be available at present even if the work involved does not measure up to their technical qualifications.

The socio-economic advancement of the hitherto underprivileged sections of our society—the Scheduled Castes, the Scheduled Tribes and the Backward Classes remains a matter of the utmost interest and concern to Government. While a great deal has been done to ameliorate their position, Government are conscious that more remains to be done. In this respect, too, the final answer to our problem lies in the speedy growth of our economy.

Both in the short-term and in the longer perspective, all our hopes for economic recovery and further growth depend on orderly functioning of our democratic institutions, the hard work of our people, their sense of self-discipline, the productivity of their labour and the maintenance of industrial peace.

It is a matter of concern that there has been a recrudescence of divisive forces causing conflicts and violence either in the name of region, or language or community. This is a matter for deep national concern transcending party affiliations. It was in recognition of this that both Houses of Parliament had given their unqualified support to efforts being made to curb communalism. The appointment of a Commission of Inquiry headed by a former Judge of the Supreme Court to enquire into the major incidents that took place in different parts of the country in recent time, reflects Government's determination to do everything that lies within its power to curb the forces of disruption.

In a country as large as ours, there will always be problems which agitate people in one part or the other. However, we have a political system in which all these problems can be brought up for dispassionate consideration by the representatives of the people. Reasoned debate and persuasion are the only ways of democratic functioning. Violent agitation in the streets weakens the democratic system and undermines the foundations of national unity.

It is a matter of deep regret to Government that there should be demonstrations and acts of lawlessness over the language issues in certain parts of the country. The overriding objective of Government's language policy is to strengthen the unity of the country and to promote the integration of our people, while providing full opportunity to all sections of the community for self-expression and cultural development. It is Government's

earnest hope that all controversies about language will now be ended. Whatever practical problems arise in the implementation of our language policy and programmes should be approached in a spirit of understanding and mutual accommodation.

Government are convinced that co-operation and understanding between the Central and State Governments will continue to serve and advance the larger national interest. On their part, they reaffirm their desire to work in harmony with State Governments irrespective of party affiliations. And, in turn, they expect similar co-operation from State Governments.

Government have made earnest effort to evolve a national consensus on the question of reorganisation of Assam in consultation with leaders of various political parties in Parliament, and the representatives of different sections of opinion in Assam. It is hoped that with their co-operation a satisfactory solution will be found in the near future.

The late Shri Mehr Chand Mahajan, former Chief Justice of India, submitted his report in August last on the question of boundary adjustment between Mysore* and Maharashtra and Mysore* and Kerala. Government trust that these boundary problems will be satisfactorily resolved.

To meet the persistent threats on our borders, we are continuing to improve the state of preparedness of our Defence Forces; their re-equipment and modernisation are proceeding steadily. Within the resources available, our air defence arrangements have also been improved as part of the overall Defence Plan. Modernisation of the Navy and expansion of our ship holdings have made good progress. Government will continue the special efforts to promote self-reliance in the field of Defence Production.

The threats across our borders from two of our neighbours continue. While we seek friendly and peaceful relations with them, we are determined to make the necessary sacrifices in defence of the territorial integrity of the country.

The steadfast pursuit of peace, international understanding and co-operation continue to be the basic objectives of our foreign policy. These objectives coincide with our enlightened national interest. Government are convinced that in the present-day world, the principles of co-existence alone provide the framework for international peace.

In the world today, there are many sources of conflict and tension. The most dangerous of these lie in Vietnam and West Asia. Government are convinced that the tragic conflict in Vietnam can only be resolved by political and not by military means. Government have, therefore, consistently appealed for an unconditional stoppage of the bombing of North Vietnam as the first step towards a peaceful settlement. An increasing number of countries in the world subscribe to this view.

* Now known as Karnataka.

The crisis in West Asia remains unresolved. The longer a just solution is delayed, the more difficult would be the problem. As a member of the Security Council, we have consistently supported all the efforts made to find an early and equitable settlement so that no State is allowed to retain the fruits of aggression and that every State in the area is able to live in peace and security with its neighbours.

Nearer home, we are glad that our relations with Burma*, Ceylon®, Nepal and Afghanistan, are cordial and the areas of mutual understanding and co-operation with them are being steadily enlarged. This growing cordiality has been reflected by the visits of the distinguished leaders of these countries to India, and the visits of the Prime Minister and some of her colleagues to these countries.

It is a matter of regret that our relations with Pakistan and China remain unsatisfactory. We had hoped that the solemn Declaration of Tashkent would provide a basis for the development of peaceful and co-operative relations with Pakistan. Government have earnestly tried to bring about a normalisation of these relations as befits two neighbouring countries with so many ties in common. The restoration of mutual contacts, the full re-establishment of the severed communications and the reactivation of trade and commerce will facilitate the consideration of other questions. We hope and trust that wisdom and statesmanship will prevail, so that the fabric of friendship and understanding is gradually built up for the benefit of the hundreds of millions of citizens of both countries and in the interest of peace and harmony in the area.

As for our relations with China, we have always wished the Chinese people well. We naturally expect China to respect our right to pursue our own domestic and foreign policies. The principles of mutual respect, non-aggression and non-interference alone provide a durable basis for international relations. On our part, we seek restoration of our relations with China on these principles.

Our country had the honour of being in the vanguard of the movement for the liberation of peoples from colonial rule. We have also stood for the ending of the odious practice of racial discrimination and oppression. We shall continue to espouse the cause of the suppressed peoples of Southern Rhodesia, South-West Africa and of the Portuguese colonies for their independence and liberation. To those struggling against the barbarous policy of apartheid, our unrelenting support shall continue.

Our relations with the sovereign and independent States in Africa have become many-sided. We are actively collaborating with a number of these States in economic, technical and educational fields.

* Now known as Myanmar.

® Now known as Sri Lanka.

It is gratifying to note that the process of detente in Europe continues. Our own relations with the European nations, regardless of their political systems and ideologies, are growing satisfactorily. In different ways, they are partners in our efforts at economic progress for which we thank them. We shall continue to work for the strengthening of our trade and economic relations with them. The continuing cordiality and friendliness of our relations with the U.S.S.R. and Yugoslavia have been reflected in the visits of President Tito and Chairman Kosygin, whom we had the pleasure to receive in our midst recently. We have received valuable assistance from the U.S.S.R. for which we are grateful, and are confident that with our common dedication to principles of peaceful co-existence our relations will continue to flourish.

The U.S.A. continues to extend to us valuable and substantial economic and food aid which has helped us to tide over difficulties in the past and should assist us in the growth of our economy in the future. We are grateful for their understanding and help.

With the countries in the American continents, we have happily no special problems and our bilateral relations with them are friendly.

We are thankful to Australia, Britain, Canada, France, Japan, the Federal Republic of Germany and other friendly countries for their economic help.

Our relations with the countries of South and South-East Asia are developing satisfactorily and we look forward to further strengthening of our ties with them, more specially in the sphere of economic co-operation.

That the friendship of India is valued by many countries is evident from visits paid to us by distinguished Heads of State and Government and other leaders from various countries.

We are glad to be hosts to the second United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. It is to be hoped that this Conference will succeed in giving to the international community a concrete programme of action designed to bridge the increasing economic gap between developed and developing nations. Government are deeply convinced that the present wide disparities between the rich and poor nations constitute the foremost cause of instability and tension in the world today and pose a threat to peace and security.

This broad survey of our internal and external affairs will not be complete without a reference to the legislative and other business which will come up before you.

The estimates of receipt and expenditure of the Government of India for the next financial year 1968-69 will be presented to you for consideration shortly.

It is the intention of Government to bring before Parliament the following legislative measures during the current session:

- (1) The Companies (Amendment) Bill, 1968.
- (2) The Armed Forces (Special Powers) Continuance Bill, 1968.
- (3) The Central Silk Board (Amendment) Bill, 1968.
- (4) The Forward Contracts (Regulation) (Amendment) Bill, 1968.
- (5) Bill to rationalise the nomenclature of the Indian Customs Tariff.
- (6) The Public Premises (Eviction of Unauthorized Occupants) Amendment Bill, 1968.
- (7) The Gold Control (Amendment) Bill, 1968.
- (8) The Central Excise Bill, 1968.

A Bill will be introduced to replace the Delhi Municipal Corporation (Amendment) Ordinance, 1968 (No. 1 of 1968).

Members of Parliament, I have briefly touched upon some of the more important issues before us. After many centuries, the people of India are going through a process of dynamic change. It is a challenge to us all to answer the urges and needs of our people. Important national problems must be placed above party politics. Government will be ready to sit with Leaders of all Parties and take counsel with them on major issues of interest and importance to the nation.

May I now commend you to another year of constructive labour and wish you success in your endeavours?

ADDRESS TO PARLIAMENT—17 FEBRUARY 1969

Lok Sabha	—	Fourth Lok Sabha
Session	—	First Session of the Year
President of India	—	Dr. Zakir Husain
Vice-President of India	—	Shri V.V. Giri
Prime Minister of India	—	Smt. Indira Gandhi
Speaker, Lok Sabha	—	Dr. N. Sanjiva Reddy

MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT,

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to this joint session of the two Houses of Parliament. It is an appropriate occasion for Government to present a realistic appraisal of the year under review and to delineate the broad features of Government's policies and purposes in the coming year.

A year ago, we were just emerging from the worst period of economic set-back in the history of our Republic. The manner in which our people faced the difficulties with courage and fortitude is a matter for pride. Without their sacrifice and co-operation, their hard work, their basic good sense and patriotism, the plans and programmes of the Central and State Governments could not have borne fruit.

The milestones passed on the road to our economic recovery can be easily identified. These are: a decisive upward turn in agriculture, a recovery in a large segment of industry, the relative price stability and a striking improvement in the balance of payments.

The harvest of 1967-68 has been the turning point in our agricultural production. Foodgrains reached a record figure of 95.6 million tonnes which was 6 million tonnes higher than the previous peak of 1964-65. Commercial crops like jute, cotton, oilseeds, tea, coffee and sugarcane also did well. Despite the damage caused by drought and floods in several States, the overall production of foodgrains in 1968-69 is expected to be as good as in 1967-68. Our farmers are increasingly taking to scientific agriculture. They are also making massive investments in ground water exploitation for irrigation and in purchase of agricultural machinery. The high-yielding varieties programme will spread to 8.5 million hectares during 1968-69 and will be further extended next year. More intensive cropping patterns than

prevailing at present are being adopted. An additional area of 6.1 million hectares of gross cropping will be achieved in 1968-69.

Government are supporting the enthusiasm of the farmer by providing sufficient fertilizers even by large-scale imports. Indigenous production is also building up with commissioning of new plants in Gorakhpur, Namrup and Kota. Next year, fertilizer projects at Kanpur, Durgapur, Cochin and Baroda are expected to come on stream. With the delicensing of tractor manufacture in the country, the production of tractors is expected to be stepped up. Meanwhile, Government have undertaken to meet the needs of the farmer by imports. Large-scale credit is crucial to the programme. This is being provided by the co-operative movement and the commercial banks under the guidance of the Reserve Bank. The national objective to eliminate reliance on food aid over the next two or three years is well within reach. A buffer stock of 3 million tonnes will be reached in the course of the coming months. 6.4 million tonnes of foodgrains have been procured out of the 1967-68 crops. Government have provided large funds for the preservation and storage of grains. It has been possible to relax restrictions on the movement of foodgrains and to expand the zones for particular cereals.

In Government's strategy of development, the family planning programme continues to occupy pivotal importance. The programme has now been widely extended to the rural population covering even remote areas.

The striking improvement in agriculture during 1967-68 raised national income by 9.1 per cent over the previous year. Quick estimates show that the net national income for 1967-68 amounted to Rs. 16,665 crore (at 1960-61 prices) as compared to Rs. 15,272 crore in 1966-67, recording an increase of Rs. 1,393 crore during the year. Though during the current year agricultural production will be at about the same level as in the previous year, the recovery in industry is expected to improve the national income.

In industry the process of recovery has begun. In the past two years, the agriculture-based industries faced shortages of raw materials. With increased activity in agriculture and an increase in farm incomes, industries oriented towards agriculture have begun to recover. Fertilizers, pesticides, tractors, etc. are increasing output rapidly. Electricity generation and the output of electrical machinery is also increasing. In the consumer goods field, cotton textiles and Vanaspati production has been rising. However, the demand for the products of some industries in the machine-building sector continues to be inadequate in relation to the capacity available. The crude index of industrial production (1960 : 100) for the first nine months of 1968 stood at 159.3 which is 5.6 per cent higher than the level recorded during January-September 1967. On the basis of present trends, an increase of 5 to 6 per cent in the index seems likely during the year.

Growth in agriculture and industry is having a salutary effect on the unemployment problem in the country. We have still a long way to go to offset the effect of the two drought years and to improve on the position, especially about unemployment amongst technologists which is causing serious concern. A modest start has been made with the programme for employment of qualified engineers in a self-employment programme.

The improvement in agricultural production has raised the problem of maintenance of reasonable prices for agricultural produce to the farmer. Procurement prices have, by and large, been maintained at last year's remunerative levels through the effort of the Food Corporation of India. The improvement in industrial production has resulted in price stability. The index number of wholesale prices, which was 211 a year ago, now stands at 205.

The performance in the field of exports and in the drive for reduction in imports has been even more encouraging. Continuing import substitution and reduction of unduly large inventories have brought the import bill for the first nine months of 1968-69 to Rs. 1376.49 crore, that is Rs. 107.72 crore less than for the same period last year. Our export earnings, on the other hand, amounted to Rs. 1019.04 crore, that is about Rs. 116.65 crore more than for the corresponding period of the last year. There has been striking progress in the export of engineering goods. The textile industry too has been able to raise its exports sizeably. We are also now on the way to becoming the world's largest exporter of polished gems.

Our industrial products, particularly steel, steel manufactures, electrical equipments, leather goods and some chemicals, have successfully met international competition and secured substantial gains in the difficult markets of industrial nations and also in the markets of several Asian and African countries. We are beginning to utilise our natural and industrial resources to pay for what we need from abroad. However, international commercial policies continue to inhibit the expansion of export earnings of developing countries.

Government are aware that transport, shipping and tourism are important and vital elements in augmenting its resources on invisible account. The size of our merchant fleet is in the range of 2 million tonnes GRT with about 7 lakh tonnes on order. The fleet composition is being diversified taking into account the need for bulk carriage. Steady progress has been maintained in indigenous shipbuilding and it is hoped that in the course of the year, work on the second shipyard at Cochin will be commenced.

Various schemes have been started to attract foreign tourists and, in particular, hotel accommodation of the right type at important tourist centres is being developed further. Substantial improvements are being effected in our international airports and other airports in the country.

The demand for irrigation schemes and power schemes in the country is large. It is proposed to set up an All India Irrigation Commission to review the development of irrigation in the country and to report on the best programme for integrated development of surface and ground water resources for maximising agricultural production. Though in the last two decades the availability of power has gone up nearly six-fold, demand continues to outstrip the generating capacity in some areas of the country. For better utilisation of the capacity already created, Government are giving more attention to transmission and distribution schemes and the regional grids for integrated operation of the power systems in each region. Inter-regional tie lines are also under construction for utilising surplus power in one region in a neighbouring deficit region. This will ultimately result in an all India grid. Rural electrification which is of direct benefit to the agriculturist for increasing his production, has been given a special place in the power programme.

The Planning Commission is finalising the Fourth Five Year Plan which will begin its term next April. Our plans would only be indicative of the future without any attempt to shape the future to suit our needs and aspirations, unless they embodied our national will and determination to progressively bridge the gap between the needs of the people and the resources in sight. Government are determined to make every effort to mobilise our own resources of savings, enterprise and managerial ability. The new prosperity in the rural areas will have to be harnessed to promote further growth particularly among the smaller farmers and in the relatively backward regions. While encouraging a greater flow of genuine savings to sustain larger investment both in the public and the private sectors, the situation will have to be utilised to strengthen the financial position of both the Centre and States.

Government are conscious of the important role which our public sector has to play in the many-sided development of our economy. Consequently, the raising of the efficiency of this sector is engaging Government's close attention. The recommendations of the Administrative Reforms Commission made in their report on 'Public Sector Undertakings' have been considered. Various decisions have been taken to delegate more powers to the management of these enterprises with the object of improving their efficiency and profitability. Steps have also been taken to mobilise managerial resources for these enterprises, including adoption of suitable policies of personnel and labour matters.

There is considerable uncertainty with regard to external assistance. The burden of servicing the external debt is mounting and amounts to 514 million dollars this year. The re-scheduling of debt payments of 101 million dollars provided by the Consortium countries and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development is, therefore, welcome. While we

hope that adequate external assistance will be forthcoming, we intend to pursue a policy of a judicious use of credits from abroad and to reduce progressively the dependence on foreign aid by increasing self-reliance.

It is a matter of some satisfaction that India's first atomic power station at Tarapur, in the State of Maharashtra, is expected to deliver 380 MW of electric power from July 1969. India's first Uranium Mine and Mill at Jaduguda (Bihar) have been commissioned and the production of uranium concentrates has commenced. Work has commenced in Hyderabad on the setting up of facilities to process these concentrates into finished fuel elements required for our atomic power programme. Considerable progress has been made in the field of space research. 'Rohini' and meteorological rockets, which have been completely designed and fabricated in India, were successfully tested in flight. India has entered the field of Satellite Communications. The first Indian Commercial Satellite Communications Earth Station is under construction at Arvi near Poona. This station is expected to become operational by the end of October 1969.

Government are conscious that the problems of integrated economic development in the country require political stability. The elections to the Legislative Assemblies of Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal and Nagaland have been conducted by and large in a peaceful and orderly atmosphere. It is a matter of satisfaction that the Chief Election Commissioner has found it necessary to order repoll or fresh poll in only 28 polling stations out of over 1,10,000 polling stations in the five States in which an electorate of nearly 102 million was recently called upon to cast its vote. However, disquieting reports have been received from certain areas that sections of citizens were subjected to pressures amounting to intimidation which prevented them from exercising their franchise. This matter is receiving Government's attention. Every political party should endeavour to ensure political stability which is essential for rapid social and economic development. In the meantime we hope that with the co-operation of all the political parties, stable governments will be formed after the elections which have just concluded. As defections from organised political parties contributed to political instability, a Committee was appointed to examine this problem in pursuance of a resolution passed by the Lok Sabha. The Committee has completed its work. Its recommendations will now be considered by Parliament.

Last year, I referred in my speech to certain disturbing trends in our national affairs. Parochial, regional, caste and communal movements have caused tensions and violence in the country. The National Integration Council, consisting of representatives of the Central and State Governments, leaders of many opposition parties, and other leaders of public opinion, held a meeting in Srinagar in June 1968 to consider problems of national integration, and in particular that of communal tensions. The Council made a number

of specific recommendations on which action is being taken by the Central and State Governments. The Criminal and Election Laws (Amendment) Bill, 1968, introduced in pursuance of the recommendations of the Council, is before Parliament. When enacted, it will greatly strengthen the hands of the Government in curbing the evils of communalism. However, while legal and administrative measures are necessary, the fight against these fissiparous movements has to be carried to the broad masses of our people. The key to success lies in fostering the concept of Indian Nationalism and secularism in the minds and hearts of our people.

The country also faces the danger of violence from certain extremist political groups. The doctrines propounded by these groups are clearly subversive of our Constitution and the rule of law, and detrimental to orderly government and progress. There is no place in a democratic society for groups which seek to change the social and political structure by armed insurrection.

As the Hon'ble Members are aware, the Machinery for Joint Consultation and Compulsory Arbitration was set up on a voluntary basis in 1966 with the object of promoting harmonious relations between Government and their employees and the redressal of employee's grievances. Government have full faith that the Scheme of Joint Consultation and Compulsory Arbitration is the only answer to the problem of settlement of disputes with its employees consistent with the imperative need for the maintenance of discipline in the public services and uninterrupted operation of essential services. They accordingly propose to give the Scheme a statutory basis in order to place it on a firmer and sounder footing.

After years of patient deliberations, a formula was evolved last year for the reorganisation of Assam. A Constitution Amendment Bill for conferring necessary powers on Parliament to set up an autonomous State within the State of Assam is already before the House. After Parliament has approved this amendment and it is ratified by the State Legislature, as required under Article 368, Government propose to bring forward detailed legislation to give effect to the scheme.

Travelling beyond the limits of our internal affairs, I should like to refer briefly to external affairs. Government feel convinced of the essential soundness of the broad structure and principles of their foreign policy. In the world today, it is difficult to see any alternative to peaceful co-existence among all States and peaceful co-operation for the promotion of peace, economic well-being and stability in the World. Every State must ceaselessly strive for areas of agreement so that processes of detente can continue unimpeded even in the midst of difficulties and setbacks that may arise from time to time.

There is an all-round strengthening and improvement of India's relations with various nations of the world. It is our firm belief that the simulated distrust and suspicion of India assiduously spread by Pakistan, and the distorted image of our country which China projects through its ideological prism, will both succumb to the realities of the situation. Government have expressed more than once with frankness and sincerity their desire to have friendliest of relations with both our neighbours consistent with our sovereignty, territorial integrity and on the basis of absolute non-interference in each other's internal affairs.

Government's stand on Vietnam, which was always based on a realistic appraisal of the interplay of forces, has stood vindicated. Whatever the difficulties ahead, there must be firm resolve to overcome them through negotiations now in progress in Paris. The courageous people of Vietnam who have suffered so much should be able to fashion their own destiny without outside interference. The situation in West Asia demands a most urgent solution of the continuing crisis in that part of the world. There is not much time to lose in implementing the Security Council Resolution of November 22, 1967. Government hope that the consultations now in progress between the USSR, the USA, Britain and France will lead to an early restoration of peace in the area.

The major aim of our policies remains the strengthening of relations and the promotion of international co-operation. This has been the purpose of the visits to foreign countries undertaken by me and the Prime Minister. I visited Nepal, the Soviet Union, Hungary and Yugoslavia last year. Apart from visits to Australia, New Zealand, Malaysia and Singapore, the Prime Minister visited Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombo, Guyana, Trinidad and Tobago, Uruguay and Venezuela. The welcome accorded to me and the Prime Minister in all these countries testified to the regard in which India is held by these nations. The Prime Minister addressed the General Assembly of the United Nations and it is a matter of deep satisfaction that enunciation in her address of the basic principles of India's foreign policy evoked a heartwarming, widespread response. The Prime Minister also attended the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference in London. It provided a welcome opportunity for exchange of views with the large number of Heads of States and Prime Ministers assembled there.

We have been privileged to receive many Heads of State and Governments in our midst. Most recently, Their Imperial Majesties the Shahanshah Aryamehr and Shahbanu of Iran, and the Prime Ministers of Ceylon*, Bulgaria and New Zealand were in India.

While Government and the entire country ardently desire peace and are dedicated to promoting peace, we have to be very vigilant in the matter of defence preparedness. Considerable progress has been made in

* Now known as Sri Lanka.

re-equipping and modernising our Armed Forces. Our fighting forces are in a good state of training and their morale is high. Some measures have been taken to improve the service conditions of our soldiers, sailors and airmen. Improvements have been effected in their pay scales and in their pensionary terms and the rates of certain allowances. The need for economy in defence expenditure has always been kept in view.

The first frigate built in the country, INS Nilgiri, was launched recently. This is an important landmark in the history of the Indian Navy.

A survey of our internal and external affairs must inevitably include a reference to the legislative and other business which will come up before you.

The estimates of receipts and expenditure of the Government of India for the next financial year 1969-70 will be presented to you for consideration shortly.

Government propose to bring before Parliament the following legislative measures during the current session:

- (a) Bills to replace the existing Ordinances:
 - (i) The Limitation (Amendment) Ordinance, 1968.
 - (ii) The Public Wakfs (Extension of Limitation) Amendment Ordinance, 1968.
 - (iii) The Customs (Amendment) Ordinance, 1969.
 - (iv) The Payment of Bonus (Amendment) Ordinance, 1969.
- (b) New Bills:
 - (i) Bill to provide Statutory Basis for the Machinery of Joint Consultation and Compulsory Arbitration for Central Government Employees.
 - (ii) The Indian Council of Agricultural Research Bill, 1969.
 - (iii) The Essential Commodities (Amendment) Bill, 1969.
 - (iv) The Tea (Amendment) Bill, 1969.
 - (v) The Prevention of Water Pollution Bill, 1969.
 - (vi) The Delhi Motor Vehicles Taxation (Amendment) Bill, 1969.
 - (vii) Bill to extend certain Central Labour Acts to the State of Jammu & Kashmir.

I should now like to conclude this Address by recalling that this year we celebrate Gandhiji's birth centenary. Many ideas, emotions and images rise to one's mind and the whole panorama of the history of our country unfolds itself. We are inheritors of a great heritage. Our country is rich in

resources. Our people are skilled craftsmen. Our scientists and technologists are some of the best which any country could boast of. While we can argue with one another within the limits of reason and rationality about the best means and methods to be adopted for reconstructing our society, we can all unite in a purposive effort to build the India of Gandhiji's dreams and to endeavour to wipe every tear from every eye. Only thus shall we be able to serve the common people and fulfil the pledges of the founding fathers of this great Republic. I wish your labours all success.



SHRI V. V. GIRI



ADDRESS TO PARLIAMENT—20 FEBRUARY 1970

Lok Sabha	—	Fourth Lok Sabha
Session	—	First Session of the Year
President of India	—	Shri V.V. Giri
Vice-President of India	—	Shri Gopal Swarup Pathak
Prime Minister of India	—	Smt. Indira Gandhi
Speaker, Lok Sabha	—	Dr. G.S. Dhillon

MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT,

I welcome you to your labours in a new session of Parliament. I wish you another year of dedicated work in the service of our country.

This is the first Budget Session of a new decade. Behind us lies the decade of the sixties. This period has been one of anxiety, of trials and tribulations and also of achievement. India had to face two wars and two years of unprecedented drought. All citizens stout-heartedly faced this period of trial. The wars brought home to us the inescapable necessity for self-reliance and the drought focussed our energies on augmentation of agricultural production. Indeed, a new strategy for agricultural development was implemented during this period and its success has attracted world-wide attention.

The challenge posed by the industrial recession was also met in a variety of ways. Many industrial units began diversifying their production. The search for markets for our goods was intensified.

Taking stock of our record during the period beginning with our independence and ending with the decade of the sixties, Hon'ble Members will recognise the range and scope of our country's achievement in industry and agriculture, in science and technology, and in education and the arts.

The path of progress tends to be uneven and beset with reverses, frustrations and hardships. However, our country today is no longer stagnant. It is in ferment. The aspirations of our people and their hopes have been aroused. They are vocal and impatient—conscious of their needs and rights. Against the background of a highly stratified society, which had invented the perverse concept of untouchability, we now see the pride and self-assertion of groups and classes who once were regarded as beyond the pale.

There has been an unleashing of a vast amount of human energy and enthusiasm. Ideas, attitudes and even habits are rapidly changing. And this transformation is taking place by consent and within the framework of a political democracy. Government are determined to give to these vast forces, which have been unleashed by the developments of the last two decades, a new sense of direction and purpose as well as a realisable goal.

Government are acutely aware of the inequalities in the country which become glaring when contrasted with the prosperity of some sections of the community. Consequently, change in the social structure and the removal of poverty are two aspects of the same question. One cannot be achieved without the other.

Government are resolved to go forward at a faster pace towards the achievement of a social order which is just and humane, by taking particular care of the weaker sections of the community and by ensuring that the meagre wealth of the nation is augmented by hard and dedicated work. It is my Government's unswerving purpose to build, brick by brick, a society which is democratic and socialist. The task is long and hard and there are no models to copy. The problems of India require uniquely Indian solutions, taking into account our way of life, our history and our tradition.

The present economic situation in the country augurs well for the acceleration of the pace of development. Despite the deficiency of the monsoon in some parts of the country such as Western Rajasthan, Saurashtra and Kutch, and the somewhat belated onset of winter rains, it should be possible to reap an even better harvest than during the past two years. While the movement of prices has been subject to seasonal fluctuations and some increase has been noticed in respect of certain commodities, the price situation is on the whole well under control. The food position is satisfactory and we have been able to augment our buffer stocks. However, constant vigilance is necessary to maintain price stability. The balance of payments has remained satisfactory and we should be able to end the year with an increase in reserves even after substantial repayments to the International Monetary Fund. We have also received the first instalment of the Special Drawing Rights which marks an important advance in the evolution of a rational international monetary system. Industry in general has registered satisfactory growth, and the outlook, especially in the engineering field, is now distinctly more favourable.

The Central and State Governments have further intensified their efforts to raise agricultural production under the new strategy. The area under high-yielding varieties has risen from 1.9 million hectares in 1966-67 to about 9 million hectares in 1968-69. The coverage will be extended further in 1969-70. For the first time the supply position of fertilizers in the country is comfortable. We are formulating measures to promote their increased use. The gathering momentum of the technical transformation of our agrarian economy is evident in the keen demand for tractors which

Government are striving to meet through maximum indigenous production and large scale imports. A big programme for the setting up of agro-service centres by small entrepreneurs, particularly engineers and technicians, is proposed to be implemented vigorously with assistance from the banking sector.

Rural electrification programmes, in conjunction with the exploitation of ground water resources have an important part to play in stepping up agricultural production and in dispersing its benefits widely. State Electricity Boards have been enabled to borrow from the banking system on a bigger scale in the wake of nationalisation. A significant part of these resources will be utilised by them for the extension of electricity to rural areas. Hon'ble Members are also aware that a Rural Electrification Corporation has been formed to provide funds to the Electricity Boards so that they can energise a larger number of pump sets for lift irrigation.

The breakthrough in agriculture which is at present limited to irrigated areas growing high-yielding varieties has to become universal. In the coming years, Government will concentrate their attention on the problems of the dry areas. While research on the development of suitable technology for dry areas will receive high priority, my Government propose to begin with a few pilot projects in different parts of the country to implement a package of new practices and to enlarge the programme progressively.

My Government have decided to appoint a National Commission to survey the problems and policies relating to agriculture. Such a survey was last made forty years ago. Since then a great many developments have taken place, both in India and abroad, which render a fresh survey essential. My Government have also decided to set up a Committee of Enquiry to make a comprehensive study of the problems of the sugar industry.

Government are deeply conscious of the developing imbalances in the countryside and the resulting tensions which have regrettably led to violence in some parts of the country. These are no doubt problems of public order but they cannot be divorced from their socio-economic setting. An unfair tenurial system impedes the attainment of a high rate of growth in agricultural production. Hence, all State Governments have been asked to accord high priority to land reforms, with special emphasis on security of tenure, fair rents, strict enforcement of ceilings, distribution of land to the landless and assured supply of agricultural inputs to small farmers. The problems which are associated with land reforms are of national importance. My Government earnestly hope that the State will see the realities of the situation and take urgent and imaginative remedial measures. The vigorous implementation of land reforms will also promote the social and economic advancement of scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and other backward classes, whose welfare is of special concern to my Government.

After the set-back in 1966 and 1967, there has been a significant increase in the tempo of industrial activity. Present indications are that industrial production will have increased by a little over 7 per cent in 1969. A particularly heartening feature of the current industrial situation is the recovery noticed in a large number of industries manufacturing capital goods and equipment.

Government have formulated a new licensing policy in the light of the recommendations of the Industrial Licensing Policy Enquiry Committee. This policy seeks to promote industrial growth while embodying adequate safeguards against monopolistic trends and the concentration of economic power. The encouragement of new entrepreneurs, small and medium, is one of its important features. Government are also keen to encourage the growth of small-scale industries. The list of industries reserved for the small-scale sector has therefore been enlarged.

My Government are of the view that there is considerable scope for large-scale industrial units in the public as well as in the private sectors, to farm out the production of components to ancillary units. Government's licensing and financial policies will seek to encourage coordinated development of large and small-scale industries. The need to redress regional imbalances has also received the special attention of the Government in the last few months. An integrated policy has been evolved to identify industrially backward areas and give them special incentives for industrial development.

The policies of financial institutions are being progressively reoriented towards the promotion of industries in backward areas. While these policies are designed to accelerate the flow of finance for industrial development in backward areas, they will succeed only in so far as the requisite infrastructure is built up imaginatively and speedily. The primary responsibility in this regard is that of State Governments and it will be the endeavour of my Government to work in close harmony with them in promoting balanced regional development.

The revival of industrial production in the current year is reflected in the increased demand for steel and steel products. While arrangements had to be made for imports of steel to meet, to an extent, the pressing shortages, it is our aim to maximise production in existing plants and establish additional capacity as early as possible.

Government have now decided to take in hand immediately the work on the second stage of the Bokaro Plant. Indeed it is our objective to initiate action for the establishment of other steel plants also at suitable sites so as to ensure the fruition of additional capacity according to a phased programme. The Fourth Plan, which is now being recast, will reflect the current thinking of Government on the possibilities of further expansion

of steel capacity in the country. An important consequence of these decisions will be the fuller utilisation of capacity in our heavy engineering units.

Oil exploration is another important element in our strategy for economic self-reliance. Progress has been maintained in the current year in the exploration and production of oil. The aggregate production of crude oil during 1969 was 6.7 million tonnes as against 5.8 million tonnes in the previous year. A specially significant development has been the extension of exploration to the offshore areas of the Gulf of Cambay. We expect to spud the first well in shallow waters shortly and are poised to undertake the preparatory work to begin exploration in the deep waters of the Gulf of Cambay. Production has already commenced in the Oil and Natural Gas Commission's offshore joint venture with Iran.

Apart from steel and oil, the production of fertilisers has been given the highest priority in our Plan. During the current year, two new fertiliser plants have gone into production, raising the total installed capacity to 1.34 million tonnes of nitrogen. Three more projects—in Durgapur, Cochin and Madras—with a total capacity of nearly 500,000 tonnes are expected to be commissioned during 1970. Work on coal-based plants will also commence shortly. We shall continue to pursue self-sufficiency in this important field with unabated vigour.

A steady and significant increase in our exports is essential to maintain the momentum of development. Last year witnessed very gratifying progress towards external viability. Despite the recent pick up in industrial recovery, imports have continued to fall, thus affording some evidence of the success of import substitution. Exports, however, have not done so well in the first seven months of the current year, for a variety of reasons, external and internal. My Government have, therefore, undertaken a crash programme to increase exports as much as possible.

In securing a better equilibrium in our balance of payments, earnings on invisible account are of very great importance. During the year, certain progress has been registered. It is gratifying to note that a larger number of tourists visited India during 1969 compared to 1968, resulting in an increase in our foreign exchange earnings on this account from Rs. 27 crore to roughly Rs. 32 crore. Likewise, with the steady increase in our shipping tonnage, our overseas trade is being carried in a larger measure by Indian ships whose share is at present between 18 and 20 per cent.

A perceptible increase in the standards of living of our people is also linked with the vigorous implementation of family planning programmes. The rising rate of population erodes the gains of development. Our family planning programme has gained momentum in the last four years. But very much more needs to be done if the national aim to reduce the current birth rate of 39 per thousand to 25 per thousand in a decade is to be achieved on time.

Increased production and better distribution of wealth and income generating opportunities for employment should be the parameters of our economic policy. These priorities will be reflected in the Fourth Plan document which will shortly be finalised and placed before you. My Government are aware that unemployment is the most serious problem facing the economy and an early and effective solution to it must be found. The increase of 2 per cent in employment in the organised sector after comparative stagnation in the two preceding years is an encouraging factor.

The selective increase in the level of outlays now envisaged in the public sector in the Central and State Plans has, among other things, inspired Government's desire to enlarge opportunities for employment. At the same time, special steps have to be taken to impart an employment bias to development. Programmes with large employment potential will be identified and given a special impetus. Some steps have already been taken towards this end. In the current year, the States have been enabled to earmark larger outlays for programmes such as major and minor irrigation, and rural electrification which provide employment to a large number of engineers and technicians. Land reclamation, the renovation of minor irrigation works, construction of roads linking villages with marketing centres and similar programmes can make a substantial impact on rural development and employment.

A large scale rural works programme, pooling together the resources available under the Plan, will be drawn up and implemented vigorously within a period of 12 to 18 months. This is a task which calls for much detailed planning and local initiative at State level. Construction activity can also contribute to employment among engineers, technicians, skilled and unskilled workers. My Government therefore propose to direct larger resources towards programmes such as the bulk acquisition and development of land for the allotment of house sites, housing for low income groups and slum clearance, particularly in metropolitan areas where the housing problem is most acute.

Our technical education programmes have to be reoriented so as to subserve the needs of employment. The education now imparted in our polytechnics has to be linked with practical experience in industry. This involves a fundamental change in education in polytechnics so that theory can be related to practice and teaching to industrial work. We have simultaneously to provide greater opportunities to other students also to gain work experience. The programme of national service for students studying in the first two years at degree level is now proposed to be expanded to cover all universities on a selective basis. It is expected that nearly one lakh students will participate in the scheme. The students will thus get an opportunity to engage in social service and in the process acquire a sense of involvement in various national development programmes.

Greater employment will thus result from investment, which in turn calls for the mobilisation of larger savings. This will be one of the important objectives of nationalised banks. With their present bold programme for branch expansion, they are expected to mobilise deposits on a much larger scale than hitherto. At the same time, assistance for viable and productive schemes will flow from the banks in a greater measure to the weaker sections of society. The spirit underlying the policy of nationalisation is beginning to inform the activities of the banks which have begun to assist productive and gainful activities in agriculture, servicing industries and the retail trade which had so far been grievously neglected. The salutary processes, which have already been initiated, will be further activated when legislation regarding the nationalisation of banks is suitably re-enacted in the light of the recent judgement of the Supreme Court.

I should like, at this stage to refer to Government's labour policy. It has always aimed at ameliorating the living and working conditions of labour, improving their wages and emoluments and assuring them a degree of job security. In pursuance of this policy, Government have recently decided to accept the principal recommendations of the Wage Boards on Ports & Docks and have encouraged the setting up of a bipartite negotiating machinery for revision of the wage structure in the iron and steel industry. The National Commission on Labour, whose report the Government have recently received, has made several recommendations for strengthening the Trade Union movement and promoting effective collective bargaining. My Government specially appeal to all sections of organised labour to support the efforts of Government in stepping up production and productivity. Without discipline and sustained hard work, the country cannot achieve its socio-economic goals.

But all these efforts at socio-economic advancement can succeed only in an environment of peace and harmony, and a firm adherence to democratic principles. The continuing trend towards violence in the country is, therefore, a cause of deep concern. The problem transcends political divisions and the Government seek the co-operation of all political parties, and indeed of all responsible citizens, in dealing with it.

Of all the manifestations of violence the most disturbing, because it is destructive of all values of civilised life, is the one between different religious communities. After the meeting of the National Integration Council in 1968, there were signs of improvement in communal relations. But then came the shocking happenings in Ahmedabad, causing national humiliation and leaving a blot on our honour. Those happenings are a challenge to all who have faith in secularism and the dignity of the individual, and respect for human life. We view with particular concern the continuing resort to violence by certain extremist political groups. At the root of their activities is a political ideology which exploits social discontent to pursue its disruptive

aims. While we are anxious to remove genuine causes of social discontent, violent activities have to be dealt with firmly.

At a critical period in our history, the Princes showed patriotism and imaginative understanding of the aspirations of the people and made a major contribution to the smooth and peaceful unification of India under a democratic regime. I have every hope that in the same way they will recognise the social imperatives of the present times and, in the wider interest of the country, once again exhibit a spirit of co-operation and goodwill. The concept of Rulership, with privy purses and special privileges unrelated to any current functions and social purposes, is incompatible with an egalitarian social order. Government have, therefore, decided to abolish the privy purses and privileges of the Rulers of the former Indian States, and legislation will be introduced to give effect to this decision. It is, however, our intention to make certain transitional arrangements so that the former Rulers may have time to adjust themselves to changed circumstances.

My Government earnestly hope that the decisions regarding Chandigarh and part of the Fazilka tehsil will enable the people of the two neighbouring States to devote their energies to the constructive tasks which lie ahead. When emotions are aroused, a decision capable of satisfying everyone is not possible. But it is Government's belief that the decisions reached have been just and fair. Government will soon appoint a Commission to go into other claims by Punjab, Haryana and Himachal Pradesh for the re-adjustment of their present boundaries and will also consider such modifications as are necessary in the present arrangements relating to the management of the Bhakra Project and the construction of the Beas Project.

Our next decennial Census of population will be held early in 1971, marking the completion of a hundred years of census-taking in the country. The Indian Census is the largest administrative operation of its kind in the world and the success of an operation of such intricate nature and magnitude is possible only through the co-operative effort of the Central and State Governments, local authorities, and, indeed, of every citizen.

In the sphere of external affairs, we have sought to promote and further strengthen our friendship with other countries. We continue to adhere to the pursuit of peace, international understanding and mutually beneficial co-operation.

The concept of peaceful co-existence has been steadily gaining acceptance. We feel that the area of peaceful co-existence should steadily be widened and given a new dimension of friendly co-operation. We believe that, with the lessening of the rigidities of the military blocs and easing of tensions between the power blocs, there is now greater acceptance of the concept of non-alignment and widening of the opportunities to advance the cause of the freedom, prosperity and stability of nations.

It is a matter of gratification that our relations with our neighbouring countries—Ceylon*, Burma®, Nepal, Afghanistan and Iran—have been developing fruitfully. New vistas of mutual co-operation and understanding continue to be discovered with these and other countries.

It has been Government's policy to pay increasing attention to the development of our bilateral and multilateral economic relations with all countries. We are paying particular attention to promoting such relations with the developing countries in general and the countries of the Asian region in particular. Now that agricultural and industrial development of India has reached a significant stage, it is possible for our country to make a contribution to international co-operation. We have, therefore, supported the setting up of a broad-based regional arrangement through the Council of Ministers for Asian Economic Co-operation under the ECAFE.

Government earnestly desire the understanding, co-operation and friendship of the people and Government of Pakistan. We have made various suggestions and constructive proposals to the Government of Pakistan to break the present impasse. Unfortunately, there has been no positive response from Pakistan to the initiatives we have taken. My Government will persevere in their efforts to promote relations with Pakistan in a co-operative spirit and on the basis of amity and good neighbourliness.

With China also our aim has been to conduct our relations on the principles of mutual respect of each other's sovereignty and territorial integrity and non-interference in each other's internal affairs. We expect China to respect our right to pursue our own domestic affairs and foreign policy.

My Government are deeply concerned that the conflicts in West Asia and in Vietnam have remained unresolved. Both these conflicts have an unsettling effect on the peace and stability of the world. The tensions in West Asia are reaching a dangerously explosive level. It is necessary for the U.N. to ensure implementation of the Security Council Resolution of November 22, 1967. In Vietnam, the hostilities still continue. My Government have consistently advocated the withdrawal of all foreign forces so that the people of Vietnam are able to fashion their own destiny without any outside interference.

We have had the privilege of receiving many distinguished Heads of States and Governments in our midst. During the past year, I visited our friendly neighbour Ceylon* and the Prime Minister visited Burma®, Afghanistan, Japan and Indonesia. These visits contributed to the growing understanding and friendship with these countries.

We are dedicated to the cause of peace but have to be vigilant to maintain our defence preparedness at a high level. Steady progress has been made in achieving self-reliance in equipping our defence forces.

* Now known as Sri Lanka.

® Now known as Myanmar.

A self-supporting industrial base for defence is being built up in the country. We are now self-reliant in respect of many important categories of arms and ammunition. We have also made appreciable progress towards indigenous production in the vital fields of electronics, aeronautics and construction of warships.

The estimates of receipts and expenditure of the Government of India for the next financial year (1970-71) will be presented to you for consideration shortly.

Government will bring before Parliament a Bill for replacing the recent Ordinance re-nationalising the 14 banks. A Bill is already pending in the Rajya Sabha which will replace the Essential Commodities (Amendment) Continuance Ordinance, 1969. Government also propose to bring forward a Bill in replacement of the Haryana and Punjab Agricultural University Ordinance, 1970. Government also intend to bring before Parliament the following legislative measures during the current session:

1. A Bill to amend the Press Council Act.
2. The Prevention of Insults to National Honour Bill, 1970.
3. The Foreign Assistance (Regulation) Bill, 1970.
4. The Crop Insurance Bill, 1970.
5. A Bill to set up a Newspaper Finance Corporation.
6. A Bill to amend the Untouchability (Offences) Act, 1955.
7. The National Co-operative Development Corporation (Amendment) Bill, 1970.
8. A Bill to set up an autonomous statutory corporation for the management of the four international airports in India.

Members of Parliament, you meet at a moment of great expectations among our people. May you truly reflect their urges and aspirations, and may your deliberations and wisdom bring them nearer fulfilment.

ADDRESS TO PARLIAMENT—23 MARCH 1971

Lok Sabha	—	Fifth Lok Sabha
Session	—	First Session after the 5th General Election
President of India	—	Shri V.V. Giri
Vice-President of India	—	Shri Gopal Swarup Pathak
Prime Minister of India	—	Smt. Indira Gandhi
Speaker, Lok Sabha	—	Dr. G.S. Dhillon

MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT,

It gives me pleasure to address this Joint Session of the Fifth Parliament of our Republic and summon you to new endeavours.

The General Election has once again demonstrated that durable political power in a democracy has only one source—the people. It has proved the people's confidence in themselves and their faith in the process of democracy.

Our people have made their choice. They have asserted their sovereignty through the ballot box. And theirs is a massive mandate for change/peaceful change that must swiftly and visibly alter the picture of poverty and alienation in our land.

We have begun this work. But now we have to address ourselves afresh to evolving perspectives, policies and practices even more closely and concretely related to the needs of our people and our times.

My Government have been returned to office on the clear pledge that the central objective of our policy must be the abolition of poverty. To achieve this, my Government are firmly committed to implementing the economic and social transformation outlined in the manifesto which has received such overwhelming support of the electorate.

The Government will soon frame specific policies and programmes arising out of the mandate of the electorate. A mid term appraisal of the Fourth Plan will be made. This appraisal will enable us to review and reorient the plan in order to increase the pace and effective use of investment in the economy. As part of this exercise, Government will also identify the specific

directions in which developmental programmes could be further reinforced in a determined effort to deal with the problem of unemployment. The Crash Scheme for Rural Employment which is to be implemented from the commencement of the next financial year will form the nucleus of a comprehensive programme for the expansion of employment. This programme will be linked to schemes for raising the productivity of agriculture. The construction and renovation of minor irrigation sources and the provision of basic amenities such as drinking water supply and link roads will form part of this programme. The problem of the educated unemployed will receive special attention.

My Government are convinced that land reforms are vital for the promotion of an egalitarian social order and for maximising agricultural production. In recent months, various issues relating to land reforms have received special attention of my Government. A Central Land Reforms Committee under the chairmanship of the Union Minister of Food and Agriculture has been set up. As a result of the lead provided by the Government of India, States in which intermediary tenures have not been completely abolished have taken steps to do so. Further legislation has been introduced in some States to give security of tenure, to reduce rents and ceilings and to restrict exemptions.

While recognising that land reforms come within the legislative competence of the States, my Government will continue to press the State Governments for further action in promoting a more equitable agrarian structure. Simultaneously the Government will pursue the objective of imposing a ceiling on urban property.

Extension of credit facilities for productive purposes to areas and classes hitherto neglected is one of the important objectives of my Government. A comprehensive credit guarantee scheme has been launched recently. A Credit Guarantee Corporation has been set up under the auspices of the Reserve Bank of India. As from 1st April, 1971, small loans given by commercial and cooperative bank offices will be eligible for guarantee by the Corporation to the extent of about 75 per cent of the loans advanced. The increasing attention paid by the banks to the genuine needs of productive enterprises, including those of agriculturists whose main resort earlier was to money-lenders, is one of the striking new developments which have served to concretise the benefits of nationalisation for the small man.

Government also attach high priority to the extension of electricity to rural areas and, in particular, to the utilisation of electricity for lift irrigation. The implementation of rural electrification programmes has been appreciably accelerated; 2.66 lakh pump sets were energised in the first year of the Plan and this tempo has been stepped up in the current year. The Rural Electrification Corporation has begun well with the sanction of schemes of the value of about Rs. 70 crore. This programme will be pursued with increasing vigour.

My Government are keenly aware of the intolerable living conditions of the urban poor. The cleanliness and improvement of slums and rehabilitation of slum dwellers will figure prominently in the agenda of economic and social reforms which my Government have in view and larger resources will be channelised for this purpose. The Housing and Urban Development Finance channelised has been set up recently and will become an important agency for the augmentation of housing facilities in metropolitan centres and urban areas.

Simultaneously, efforts to improve rural housing conditions will be given fuller consideration. The aim is to allot building sites to landless workers on a larger scale, to legislate for the conferment of homestead rights and to assist in the construction of decent, liveable houses for the rural population. This will necessarily have to be a joint programme of the State and Central Governments.

My Government also propose to:—

- (a) appoint task forces to remove obstacles that come in the way of the speedy implementation of investment programmes in the public and private sectors of our industry and to step up the rate of industrial production;
- (b) extend the new technology in agriculture to dry farming, to new crops and to new areas which have not been covered so far. Research and extension programmes for a faster growth in the output of fibres and oilseeds which are articles of mass consumption will be intensified;
- (c) consult leaders of trade unions and managements in order to evolve sound industrial relations and to secure increased productivity consistent with a fair deal for labour. Improvement in industrial relations is as vital as capital and technology for increasing output;
- (d) accelerate changes in the structure and functioning of administrative apparatus, expedite decision making, ensure effective delegation of powers and responsibilities and streamline financial procedures; and
- (e) devote special attention to building up a well-equipped managerial cadre for the public and private sectors.

The economy recorded growth almost, at the planned rate in 1969-70, and it is likely to repeat this performance in the current year. A good harvest for the fourth year in succession is expected, raising the foodgrain output to 105 million tonnes—5.5 million tonnes more than that of last year. The wheat revolution is by now an accomplished fact. Our agricultural scientists have released a number of higher yielding varieties of rice. The response of farmers to the new technology is limited only by our capacity to reach them effectively.

However, the improvement in the food situation will at best be a reprieve. The results of the new Census will be a grave reminder that the Family Planning Programme has to be pushed forward with much greater vigour. This programme can only be fulfilled if it becomes a movement. The small family must speedily become the accepted social norm. Indeed family planning should be regarded as a vital element in the gigantic task of social transformation that lies ahead.

While the general outlook for the economy is hopeful, my Government are aware that the level of prices in recent months has caused some concern. The wholesale price index is now approximately 3.4 per cent higher than the level about a year ago. But it is important to note that amidst this pressure on prices the foodgrain prices have declined by about 6.5 per cent. The Government have therefore sought to keep the rise in prices in check by arranging larger imports of commodities in short supply while taking steps to increase their internal production.

My Government intend to draw up and execute a National plan for the application of Science and Technology to development. This plan will be intimately related to and indeed largely derived from our socio-economic plan. An important feature of such a plan will be the preparation of detailed programmes in a few high priority areas of national endeavour in which science and technology play an important part.

The Government have set up an Electronics Commission to ensure balanced development of the electronics industry. The Commission will concern itself with research, development and industrial operations in the field of electronics.

My Government are anxious that rapid economic development should not lead to the pollution of air, water and soil. There should be rational management of our natural resources taking care not to upset the ecological balance in nature.

The persistence of communal tension in some parts of the country and the occasional flaring up of violence constitute a threat to our secularism and democracy and to the basic values of civilised life which we cherish. The Government are determined to overcome this danger. This problem needs to be treated as national task to ensure national survival.

In the recent past, violence has grown in West Bengal. The murder of Shri Hemanta Kumar Basu, one of our oldest and most dedicated colleagues in the freedom movement, and of other political workers has shocked us all. Nevertheless the conduct and results of the recent elections in West Bengal clearly indicate a reaffirmation by the people of their faith in democracy.

My Government reiterate their unqualified determination to root out lawlessness and to eliminate the 'politics' of murder and assault. Simultaneously my Government intend to accelerate the programme for the improvement of Greater Calcutta* with the help of public and private investment. The Calcutta* Metropolitan Development Authority has begun its work. The Industrial Reconstruction Corporation is about to be launched. Other development works are also being undertaken in West Bengal.

The West Bengal Land Reforms (Amendment) Act was passed in July 1970 whereby the Bargadar's share of the crop was increased and his right to cultivate land made secure and heritable. A Presidential Act has been enacted recently to reduce the ceiling and fix it in terms of the family as a unit.

You are aware that orders for the derecognition of the Rulers of former Indian States were declared inoperative by a majority judgement of the Supreme Court. However Government's resolve to abolish by appropriate constitutional measures the Privy purses and privileges of Rulers remains unaltered.

Hope and despair continue to co-exist in the larger world around us. There has been a relaxation of tensions between Western and Eastern Europe. We welcome the signing of the agreement between the Federal Republic of Germany and the Governments of the U.S.S.R. and Poland. But the situation in South-East Asia and West Asia has worsened.

The situation in Indo-China has deteriorated further. Ever widening areas are engulfed in war embracing Cambodia and Laos. This is inconsistent with the interests of peace. We have urged restraint and pressed our view that the only solution lies in a peaceful and negotiated settlement within the broad framework of the Geneva Accord. It is our belief that the best solution will be an international Agreement or Convention, signed by all the Great Powers and others interested in the region.

There is uneasy truce in West Asia. My Government hope that positive response would be made to the series of initiatives recently taken by the U.A.R. showing its earnest desire to implement the Resolution of the Security Council of November 22, 1967.

We are concerned at the setting up of military bases by outside powers in the Indian Ocean and the proposed sale of arms to South Africa. As mentioned in the Lusaka Declaration, we should like the Indian Ocean area to be a zone of peace, free from military confrontation and the rivalries of Great Powers.

The attitude of the Government of Pakistan during the recent hijacking of an Indian Airlines plane and its eventual destruction was deeply resented by the Government and the people of India. Friendship and understanding which we seek cannot be achieved by such provocations.

* Now known as Kolkata.

My Government will steadfastly pursue its policy, of non-alignment. It will raise its voice whenever peace is threatened, wherever the independence of sovereign nations is eroded. It stands firmly against colonialism whether in its old shape or in any new guise.

Your present session will be a short one confined to the transaction of essential financial and budgetary business. You will be meeting again shortly to consider further business. A statement of the estimated receipts and expenditure of the Government of India for the financial year 1971-72 will be laid before you. Bills will also be introduced for replacing the State of Himachal Pradesh (Amendment) Ordinance, 1971, and the Labour Provident Fund Laws (Amendment) Ordinance, 1971. A Bill for continuing the Imports and Exports (Control) Act, 1947 will also be introduced in the current session of Parliament.

Honourable Members, the people of India have given their verdict in unmistakable terms. With that verdict the period of political uncertainty and of the politics of manoeuvre ends. After the din of the election battle, we must bend ourselves to the service of our people. We can take pride that political democracy and parliamentary institutions have grown and have taken deep roots in the hearts and minds of our people. We must serve the cause of democracy by respecting the will of the people.

The massive majority given to my Government is only the first step on the long and difficult road ahead. To achieve victory in the war against poverty and social injustice requires the sustained and dedicated efforts of millions of our people. I am confident that Members of Parliament and the people of India as a whole, will respond, in abundant measure, to the challenge of our times.

ADDRESS TO PARLIAMENT—13 MARCH 1972

Lok Sabha	—	Fifth Lok Sabha
Session	—	First Session of the Year
President of India	—	Shri V.V. Giri
Vice-President of India	—	Shri Gopal Swarup Pathak
Prime Minister of India	—	Smt. Indira Gandhi
Speaker, Lok Sabha	—	Dr. G.S. Dhillon

HON'BLE MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT,

The nation has come through a great test. It has shown unity and courage, compassion and clarity of vision in the face of the external threat. The world now has a clearer idea of the quality of our people. The life and liberty of 75 million people were at stake in Bangladesh. While the world wavered, India gave refuge to ten million fugitives from tyranny, and when attacked, met aggression stoutly, defended her own freedom and went to the aid of Bangladesh in defence of human freedom.

Our armed forces fought with valour, ability and a sense of purpose. The co-ordination among the three services and other para-military forces was exemplary, as was the spirit of comradeship between officers and jawans. Many jawans and officers made the supreme sacrifice. Many more will bear for life the marks of their patriotism. As Supreme Commander of the Defence Forces I salute them and offer the nation's sympathy to their families. I acclaim the spirit of the people of our border areas who showed calmness and fortitude in the face of danger and the disruption of their normal lives. We are aware of our responsibility for the welfare and rehabilitation of those who have been displaced from their homes due to aggression. Civilians elsewhere also remained united and rose to the occasion.

The guidance of Parliament, the judgement and leadership displayed by the Government in its political, diplomatic and military policies and decisions, the effective functioning of the administrative machinery at all levels and the moral and determination of the people as a whole have contributed to our success. This has given the country a justifiable sense of confidence and pride.

When I addressed you last year, I called upon you to give undivided attention to economic and social transformation.

We could not have foreseen that a war would be forced upon us. But every great challenge met, every risk taken for a high cause, every task well done, generates new capacity and strength. Our unity, strength and resolve have grown during the year.

We should use these now to enlarge our programmes of social justice and equality, to forge ahead in our quest for self-reliance, and to pursue even more actively our basic policy of response to friendship, resistance to pressure and dedication to national interest and world peace.

In the last twelve months, self-reliance made gains in spite of widespread floods in the north and east and drought in the Deccan and the influx of Bangladesh refugees which caused all manners of stress and strain and brought in its wake staggering administrative and organisational problems. The defence effort to meet Pakistan's unprovoked aggression imposed further burdens on the economy. The peace on our borders is still uneasy and vigilance cannot be relaxed. With the liberation of Bangladesh we have to extend help to the new nation in its economic reconstruction. These factors have led to a re-aligning of our priorities in the short run as well as in the longer perspective.

Our economy showed resilience in coping with the unexpected strains of the year. The tempo of growth and development was maintained. Production of foodgrains rose by more than 8 per cent, reaching a record level of 108 million tonnes in the agricultural year 1970-71. In the current year production is expected to be even higher. As a result the Government has stopped concessional imports of foodgrains. Exports are looking up. Special measures for the creation of additional employment in rural areas and for the urban unemployed have made some progress. It is proposed to intensify these measures. The interim report of the Committee on Employment has just been received and is being studied. The Planning Commission has been reconstituted and the plan as a whole re-appraised.

The implementation of land reform measures has gained momentum. Assam, Bihar, Kerala and West Bengal have made headway in providing security of tenure and ensuring greater measure of equity in rentals. Assam, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal have enacted legislation lowering the previous ceilings on land holdings. A national policy providing for lower ceilings on agricultural holdings has been enunciated, based on the recommendations of the Central Land Reforms Committee. The State Governments have been advised to amend their laws suitably in the light of these recommendations.

Programmes for providing water, electricity and credit to farmers have made headway. Credit from public and co-operative institutions is flowing into development of irrigation, particularly ground-water resources. The Rural Electrification Corporation has sanctioned Rs. 106 crore, of which Rs. 43 crore have been advanced to backward areas on concessional terms.

Slow progress in the industrial sector, however, has been causing concern. A number of remedial steps have been taken to promote better utilisation of capacity and to improve the pace of licensing of new units. Special attention has been given to the claims of new and medium entrepreneurs. The lending policies of financial institutions have been specially oriented in favour of backward areas. The output of the small-scale sector has been increased significantly through larger allocation of raw materials and liberal imports.

Government have provided for greater outlays in the public sector, since such outlays largely govern, the pace of industrial activity in our economy. Task Forces have been set up in each Ministry to assess progress, identify shortfalls, and suggest changes to accelerate Plan Schemes. The Industries (Development and Regulations) Act has been amended to give additional powers to Government to take over closed industrial units. A Plan Investment Board will soon be set up to provide a forum for the scrutiny of major public sector investment proposals through joint discussions.

My Government have been particularly anxious to revive industrial activity in West Bengal. Progress has been made in implementing a sixteen-point programme drawn up for this purpose.

In the wake of the recent emergency, I gave a call for a moratorium on strikes and lockouts to ensure that industrial unrest does not slow down industrial progress. The Prime Minister has also initiated a dialogue with the leaders of the trade union movement. I have no doubt that workers will fully contribute to the maintenance of industrial peace. They may rest assured that Government will ensure that the gains of increased productivity are equitably shared.

The tendency on the part of aid giving countries to use their credits as a lever to influence our policies adds urgency to our attainment of self-reliance. It is imperative that we should fill agricultural gaps, achieve full utilisation of installed capacity, avoid strikes and lockouts, and achieve increased productivity all round. Increased production of steel and fertilisers in the industrial sector and of commercial crops such as cotton and oilseeds in the agricultural sector and enhancement of our own technological competence hold the key to *Arthik Swaraj*. We should give the highest priority to efficiency in production and cost competitiveness. Export promotion and import substitution should be pursued with grim determination.

Preliminary work is in progress on the new steel plants at Salem, Visakhapatnam and Vijaynagar. Government have taken a decision to set up a holding company for steel and associated industries like coking coal, iron, manganese, etc. to achieve economics of vertical integration and ensure co-ordinated growth at minimum cost. Efforts to attain self-sufficiency in

fertilisers are continuing. Two new fertiliser plants have gone into production, two more are nearing completion. Construction has begun on three plants, two of them coal-based. Work on a third coal-based plant is expected to start shortly. Six new projects have been approved—three of them in the public sector.

The Intensive Cotton District Programme has made progress in thirteen districts. In addition, a special programme to spread a new high yielding variety of cotton—hybrid 4 has also been taken up. A beginning has been made to introduce non-traditional oilseeds such as soyabean and sunflower. Under a centrally-sponsored scheme, soyabean cultivation will be extended over 4 lakh hectares by 1973-74. Trial and selection of suitable sunflower varieties has also been taken up.

The newly constituted National Committee on Science and Technology has initiated a number of studies on the contribution which indigenous research and development effort can make to self-reliance in different areas of our economy.

Simultaneously, with reduced reliance on external assistance, *Arthik Swaraj* requires greater mobilisation of domestic resources and stricter financial discipline all round. Steps are being taken in consultation with State Governments to bring about reduction in their overdrafts by the close of the current financial year. Measures need to be devised to tap for national development part of the additional incomes which are accruing to the affluent sections of the farming community. Government have appointed an Expert Committee to examine the problem.

It is a matter for some satisfaction that despite the enormous increase in the Government's commitments on account of refugee relief and hostilities with Pakistan, the price situation did not get out of control. However, Government are not complacent, and will maintain a close watch over prices and distribution of essential commodities. The public distribution system will be strengthened and credit policy kept under constant review.

The Mid-Term Appraisal of the Plan has shown that social welfare schemes tend to be given low priority in the course of implementation. This is being rectified.

A scheme has been approved to provide Central assistance for house sites for landless rural workers. This will supplement the measures taken by State Governments to protect tenants facing eviction by landlords. Government have also approved a scheme for the improvement of urban slums. The urban reconstruction and renewal programme for the Calcutta* Metropolitan area continued with full vigour. In the current year over Rs. 40 crore are expected to be spent on water supply, transportation, housing and other developmental activities in this area.

* Now known as Kolkata.

Eight States have so far favoured Central legislation on ceilings on urban property. They have been requested to get resolutions passed in their legislatures under article 252 of the Constitution. In the meantime, as recommended by the Housing Ministers' Conference, a study group is examining certain aspects of implementation.

In spite of the preoccupation with defence and the problem of refugees, Government proceeded with major reforms in the social structure. One of the notable events of the year was the abolition of princely privileges and purses. Parliament gave its approval to amendments to the Constitution to enable other steps towards the ushering in of a society of equals.

The Government gave effect to the reorganisation of the north-eastern region. The new States of Manipur, Meghalaya and Tripura and the Union Territories of Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh have come into existence. The nation's good wishes go to the people of these areas. The North-Eastern Council will be established soon. I hope that the States and the Union Territories of the North-East will make rapid progress through close co-ordination of their development efforts.

Elections have just taken place in sixteen States and two Union Territories. The peaceful manner in which they were held has again demonstrated the maturity of our people and their enduring faith in parliamentary democracy. The new Governments which will take office in different States in accordance with the choice made by our people will receive the whole-hearted support of my Government in our common task of eliminating poverty and achieving social justice.

The emergence of Bangladesh under the leadership of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman is a landmark in the history of our subcontinent, indeed in man's search for freedom. We share the happiness of the people of Bangladesh in their triumph. We are gratified that our armed forces have been able to return from Bangladesh so speedily. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and his colleagues have had a series of discussions with our Governmental leaders on matters of mutual interest. Our Prime Minister is visiting Dacca for further discussions, and to convey the greetings of the people of India to the heroic people of Bangladesh. My Government are giving Bangladesh the fullest possible co-operation in the enormous task of rehabilitating its uprooted people and the reconstruction of its economy. We look forward to uninterrupted growth of co-operation in all fields between our two countries. The similarity in our ideals and outlook holds a good augury for the growth of such relations. A strong, peaceful and friendly Bangladesh will add to the strength and stability of the subcontinent as well as of Asia. We are confident that the new nation will be enabled to make an effective contribution to the community of nations.

We extend a hand of friendship also to the people and Government of Pakistan. We have taken the initiative in proposing direct talks between our two countries without any pre-conditions. We hope that Pakistan will accept the changed situation on the subcontinent and respond to our initiative in a spirit of goodwill. India has no territorial designs on Pakistan or any other country. Our unilateral and voluntary declaration of ceasefire on the Western sector, once the Pakistan forces surrendered in Bangladesh, confirmed this, if indeed confirmation were necessary.

Our foreign policy encountered, and successfully overcame, complex challenges in the past year. The correctness of our analysis of the forces at work on the subcontinent, and the restraint we showed in dealing with them, have been widely recognised. There has been a strengthening of our relations with most of our neighbours.

The signing of the Indo-Soviet Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Co-operation in August last year set the seal on a friendship that has been tested by time. It is a treaty of peace against war. It is not aimed against any country.

We welcome the entry, though belated, of the People's Republic of China into the United Nations, a step which we had been consistently advocating. We hope that this will promote peace and stability in Asia and the world.

There was great disappointment in our country at the lack of sympathy displayed by the Government of the United States of America towards the struggle of the people of Bangladesh for their democratic rights and fundamental freedom. Public opinion in the United States of America has expressed this sympathy in abundant measure and has been critical of the policies of the erstwhile military regime of Pakistan. This gives us hope that our relations with the United States of America, based on mutual respect and understanding, will not be allowed to deteriorate.

One of the important international developments of the year was the move of the United States of America and China to rearrange their relations. We hope that this will lead to a true relaxation of tensions and not to a sharpening of divisions.

The configuration of world forces is changing rapidly. Relations between superpowers and between them and other powers, are also undergoing a change. However, there are certain basic points which have to be borne in mind by all States, big and small. There should not be any attempt to carve out spheres of influence by the application of the doctrine of balance of power in this region or to dictate to countries big or small, regarding their relationship with other countries. India does not seek leadership or

domination. Nor will it tolerate domination by any country. We want this sub-continent and indeed the entire South Asian region and the Indian Ocean area to be free from power rivalries or domination and to develop into an area of peace and co-operation rather than one of confrontation. India would also like to encourage and foster greater regional co-operation, particularly in the fields of technology, trade and transit, science and culture, first and foremost between the countries of the sub-continent and then with other countries of South Asia, South East Asia and West Asia.

My Government welcome the Four-Power Berlin Accord and hope that the process of detente in Europe will continue, leading to stable agreements among the countries concerned.

The emergence of Bahrain, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates as free nations is a welcome development.

My Government deeply regret that the conflicts in West Asia and Vietnam are continuing. My Government hope that attempts to arrive at a peaceful settlement in both these areas will bear early fruit. The intensified bombing in Vietnam is not consistent with the desire for peaceful negotiations.

With the steady implementation of the Indo-Ceylon Agreement on Citizenship and increased economic co-operation, our relations with Ceylon* have been strengthened. The successful conclusion of a new Trade and Transit Treaty with Nepal has removed a source of misunderstanding between the two countries and paved the way towards an era of co-operation to our mutual benefit.

The sudden demise of His Majesty King Mahendra of Nepal has been a matter of deep sorrow to us. We extend our good wishes and co-operation to the new King, and the Government and the people of Nepal. We should like to assure them of our continuing friendship and co-operation for strengthening peace, progress and stability in this region.

We have close relations with Bhutan and it was a matter of deep satisfaction that Bhutan was admitted as a member of the United Nations in September 1971. Our co-operation with Bhutan has been in keeping with our earlier assurances and is bound to grow in the interests of both countries and peoples.

A survey of our internal and external affairs must inevitably include a reference to the legislative and other business which will come up before you.

The estimates of receipts and expenditure of the Government of India for the next financial year 1972-73 will be presented to you for consideration shortly.

* Now known as Sri Lanka.

Government will bring before Parliament Bills for replacing the Contingency Fund of India (Amendment) Ordinance, 1972, the Administrators-General (Amendment) Ordinance, 1972, the Public Wakfs (Extension of Limitation) (Delhi Amendment) Ordinance, 1972 and the Indian Copper Corporation (Taking over of Management) Ordinance, 1972. Government also intend to bring before Parliament the following legislative measures:

- (1) The Antiquities and Art Treasures Bill, 1972.
- (2) A Bill to establish Hill Areas University in North Eastern Region.
- (3) The Untouchability (Offences) Amendment Bill, 1972.
- (4) Bill to provide for deterrent punishments for certain types of economic offences involving contravention of laws regarding Customs, Central Excise, Gold Control, Income Tax and Wealth Tax.
- (5) A comprehensive Bill to provide for amendments of Foreign Exchange Regulation Act.
- (6) Bill to nationalise General Insurance Companies.
- (7) Bill for the nationalisation of the Coking Coal Mines whose management was taken over by the Government.
- (8) The Air Pollution Control Bill.
- (9) The Disturbed Areas (Special Courts) Bills.

Honourable Members, in conclusion, may I remind you that the war against poverty is no less heroic than military action? This larger struggle demands hard work and unwavering adherence to the goal. Nothing great has ever been achieved without consistent endeavour and sacrifice. I call upon all sections and all parties in our great country to display the same spirit of unity in construction that they showed in combat. Let the nation heed the summons to greatness—a greatness not of conventional power but of the spirit.

ADDRESS TO PARLIAMENT—19 FEBRUARY 1973

Lok Sabha	—	Fifth Lok Sabha
Session	—	First Session of the Year
President of India	—	Shri V.V. Giri
Vice-President of India	—	Shri Gopal Swarup Pathak
Prime Minister of India	—	Smt. Indira Gandhi
Speaker, Lok Sabha	—	Dr. G.S. Dhillon

HONOURABLE MEMBERS,

You have assembled to perform the exacting tasks which lie ahead of you. Not only have you to transact the formal legislative business but also to take stock of the problems that the nation faces and give guidance to the Government and the people.

Barely had the country overcome the extraordinary challenges of 1971, when we were confronted with fresh problems. The after-effects of the influx of refugees and the war were aggravated by drought in several parts of the country. Our hearts go out to all those who have been affected by drought and in certain other areas by cyclone and floods. Works on a large scale have been undertaken in all affected areas to provide employment and relief. Our buffer stock of foodgrains, along with the strengthening of the public distribution system, enabled the Government to meet the situation. In 1972, about 10.6 million tonnes of grains were distributed through the public system.

Inevitably, the drought led to a fall in food production, particularly in the areas of rain-fed cultivation, and this, in turn, influenced prices, which have registered a sharp increase since May last year. This has been a matter of grave concern to my Government. In addition to strengthening the public distribution system, as mentioned above, an emergency programme was launched to increase *rabi* and summer foodgrains production to offset the loss of *khari* output. We expect a good *rabi* crop this year. None the less, we must husband all available food resources and avoid waste.

Prices of food articles can be brought under check and the interests of the common people safeguarded by taking over the surplus of wheat and rice, by eliminating wholesale traders and by organising distribution of foodgrains, especially to scarcity areas and the vulnerable sections of the

population. The wholesale trade in wheat will be taken over from the coming wheat marketing season. This will be followed by the take-over of wholesale trade in rice. The success of this programme calls for the whole-hearted co-operation of surplus as well as deficit States.

The emphasis on credit policy continues to be one of restraint, consistent with the need to maximise production, meet priorities and attend to hitherto neglected sectors. The Government's programme of market borrowings during the year was designed to absorb the surplus liquidity of the commercial banking system.

The relatively sluggish rate of growth of industrial production in 1970 and 1971 gave place to an upward trend in 1972. Industrial production increased by over 7 per cent during the year. It would have been still higher but for the shortage of power in most parts of the country. Government is taking short-term and long-term measures to improve the generation, transmission and distribution of power.

Government has recently clarified its Industrial Licensing Policy of curbing monopolies and the concentration of economic power, consistent with the objectives and the priorities of production during the Fifth Five Year Plan. Several measures which should stimulate investment on a wide front have been announced. The larger number of applications and approvals for licenses, capital goods, finance from industrial financing institutions, registration of companies and capital issues—all indicate a gathering tempo of industrial activity. Government is also laying emphasis on the active implementation of industrial licenses already granted and is devising practical measures to increase the pace of implementation.

Government has devoted attention to the problems of textile and engineering units which have been lying closed or are facing serious difficulties due to mismanagement and failure to re-invest surpluses and to modernise the plants. The management of a number of these units has been taken over this year in order to revive production and ensure continuous employment. With the restoration of law and order in West Bengal, industrial recovery is gaining momentum under a 16-point programme.

In our steady march towards socialism, an increasingly wide segment of economic activity has been brought under public ownership and management. This covers a major part of transport and communications, power, coal, steel, heavy engineering, banking, insurance and important segments of external and internal trade. As a result of the vigorous steps taken by Government, a definite improvement was discernible in most public sector units last year. Ultimately, production and the quality of service to the people in all these fields depend on the dedication and sense of involvement of managers and workers. In the changed context, both managers and workers have to give up the traditional concept of their roles. Management

has to develop new attitudes and look upon workmen as participants in the service of the people. Workers should not allow trade union rivalry to prevent them from fulfilling their historic role of being in the vanguard of socialist transformation by making our public enterprises successful and models of service to the people. On its part, Government recognises the central role of the worker in the economic process will do everything in its power to ensure that his legitimate rights are protected. I appeal to workers, particularly in vital industries and sectors, to place the country first and keep in mind the conditions of the vast multitude of the low paid and the unemployed.

Government will continue its efforts to bring about a consensus among trade unions on the critical problems of uninterrupted production, increase in productivity, wages and participation in management.

Government has been considering methods of improving the performance of public sector undertakings. Some of these need to be restructured as holding companies so as to combine entrepreneurial vigour with effective public accountability. The Steel Authority of India Ltd. has been set up to reorganise the steel industry on these new lines. Further improvements in management practices and general administrative procedures are under examination.

The Approach to the Fifth Five Year Plan has been approved by the National Development Council. The Approach indicates the effort necessary to attain the twin objectives of self-reliance and the removal of poverty within a reasonable period. A number of programmes proposed to be taken up in the Fifth Plan—the National Programme of Minimum Needs, the Employment programme, the accent on the development of backward classes and backward regions and the reorientation of the pattern of production with emphasis on goods of mass consumption—are designed directly to attack the problem of poverty. The Approach is based on Government's considered view that growth and social justice are interlinked. Social justice needs growth to be meaningful and growth needs social justice to be sustained and durable. The quality and content of growth are more important than growth by itself.

The new directions given to the Fifth Plan and the magnitude of its targets call for major efforts on the part of all sections of our people. We have to sustain and transfer the unity, morale and confidence, which we demonstrated in meeting external danger, to the fields of economic and social transformation of the country. I have no doubt that the people will respond to this challenge. It will be the privilege of this fifth Parliament of our Republic to give shape to the Fifth Five Year Plan and make it the turning point in our advance towards economic independence.

A number of programmes intended for the benefit of rural masses have been in operation for the last two to three years—the Small and Marginal Farmers' Programme, the programme for Rural Employment, Drought Prone Areas Programme, provision of house sites to landless labour in rural areas and the Nutrition Programme. A special programme to provide employment opportunities for 5 lakh educated persons in the coming year has been formulated. These schemes for the provision of house sites to landless labour, creation of rural employment as also provision of water supply and electricity to rural areas will be further accelerated. The implementation of land reforms will be expedited.

Simultaneously, a programme of advance action for the Fifth Plan has been prepared. It is proposed to increase the production of pulses, oilseeds, sugarcane and cotton, and to accelerate irrigation projects, improve the working of power stations and hasten the commissioning of those which are nearing completion. The production of steel and fertilisers is also being increased.

Realising the significance of education, both for social transformation and economic growth, Government has decided to take steps, in concert with State Governments, for programmes of educational reconstruction and development in the Fifth Five Year Plan.

A Science and Technology plan, which will form an integral part of the economic plan, is being prepared. This will help us to harness science and technology in a more purposive way for self-reliance and economic growth. At the same time, we must take measures to preserve the quality of the natural environment.

A new Department of Space and a Space Commission have been constituted to utilise fully the benefits that can accrue to the country as a result of the peaceful uses of outer space.

Government has been deeply concerned at the recent developments in Andhra Pradesh. The problem in that State has a long history. We view with grave anxiety the resort to violence in an attempt to settle this problem. Such violence is opposed to the basic values we cherish; it has resulted in the loss of valuable lives and extensive damage to public property. I express my sympathy, and sorrow for those who have suffered. There is no problem for which a reasonable solution cannot be found through calm and rational discussion. Government's sole consideration is to safeguard the interests of all sections of our people. I appeal to the people of Andhra Pradesh to co-operate fully with the Government in finding a peaceful solution.

I now turn to relations with neighbours, near and far. We have desired the establishment of mutually beneficial and friendly relations with Pakistan. We signed the Simla Agreement as the first step towards the establishment of durable peace. The Agreement lays emphasis on bilateralism for the

solution of differences by peaceful means and excludes outside agencies and third party involvement. I am glad that India and Pakistan have been able, through bilateral negotiations, to determine a line of control in Jammu and Kashmir which is to be respected by both sides. Similarly, both sides have withdrawn their troops to the international border; in the process, India has vacated about 5900 sq. miles of Pakistan's territory. This by itself is concrete evidence of India's friendly intentions towards Pakistan.

The prisoners of war of the Western front have been exchanged. It is hoped that Pakistan will create the necessary conditions which would enable the three parties to the conflict in the Eastern theatre to hold discussions for the repatriation of the prisoners of war who surrendered to the joint command of India and Bangladesh Forces. The Simla Agreement holds promise not only of improving and normalising relations between India and Pakistan but also of establishing durable peace in the sub-continent as a whole. This will enable the countries of the sub-continent to devote their energies and limited resources to the urgent task of furthering the economic and social well-being of their peoples.

Our friendship with Bangladesh has taken concrete shape in the historic Treaty of Friendship, Co-operation and Peace and in Agreements on various matters of mutual interest. Bangladesh has made remarkable recovery from the ravages of the liberation struggle. Within a year, Bangladesh has adopted a Constitution and is about to hold her first General Elections. Seldom has a nation which has been through so harrowing an ordeal progressed so rapidly on the road to political stability and economic recovery. We hope that Bangladesh, which has been recognised by 95 countries, will take her rightful place in the United Nations. We share Bangladesh's concern for her nationals who are detained in Pakistan and hope that they will soon be released.

Our friendly relations and close co-operation with Nepal continued to grow during the year. In April-May 1972, we had the pleasure of receiving the Prime Minister of Nepal, the Right Honourable Shri Kirti Nidhi Bista, as our guest. Our Prime Minister paid a visit to Nepal earlier this month and a useful exchange of views took place during the visit. These visits have helped to further strengthen the already close, friendly and mutually beneficial relations between the two countries.

In the death of His Majesty Jigme Dorji Wangchuk, Bhutan lost a great statesman and India a dear friend. The news of his demise in Nairobi was received in India with a deep sense of shock and sorrow. We extend our co-operation to the new King, His Majesty Jigme Singye Wangchuk and are confident that during his rule existing ties of close friendship between Bhutan and India will be further strengthened.

We are happy that the long-delayed peace agreement in Vietnam has been concluded and that the terrible war that raged for a whole generation, causing great suffering and hardship to the people, has ended. We hope that the cease fire will lead to a durable peace which will enable the people of Vietnam to address themselves to the tasks of reconstruction. We hope also that peace and order will come to the neighbouring States of Laos and Cambodia.

We have strengthened our ties of friendship, mutual understanding and co-operation with all countries. It is gratifying that with many of them our trade has also registered an increase. We value our close ties with the Soviet Union and will continue to strengthen them.

It is our earnest desire to improve understanding and co-operation with the United States of America.

The emergence of a new Western Europe, following the entry of the United Kingdom, Denmark and Ireland into the enlarged European Economic Community is a major development. It is our hope that this bigger European Community will look outward rather than inward and pursue a helpful approach to the problems of the developing countries.

We welcome the positive trends in the international situation which have created an atmosphere of *detente*. My Government would like to normalise relations with China. We view the moves towards reconciliation between the United States of America and China, Japan and China, and between North and South Korea as positive steps in favour of the relaxation of tensions. In Europe, the acceptance by the Federal Republic of Germany of existing frontiers has led to relaxation of tensions between the Federal Republic of Germany and German Democratic Republic, in particular, and other European States in general.

We shared with the Zambian people their shock and anger when Rhodesia closed its border with Zambia and stopped the transit over Rhodesian soil of all Zambia's imports and exports. We have offered to help the Zambian Government with such assistance as we can give. We regret that because of the situation created by the Rhodesian action, the Zambian President, Dr. Kenneth D. Kaunda, could not pay his State visit to India last month.

The expulsion of Asians from Uganda has been a matter of serious concern to the Government as it has led to the uprooting of several thousands of people of Indian origin who had made Uganda their home and had contributed to its development. During my visits to Ethiopia, Tanzania and Zambia, I found how these actions had embarrassed enlightened opinion in various countries which are striving for rapid economic development and racial equality and tolerance. We continue to make common cause with the people of Africa who are fighting against colonialism, injustice and oppression. I am happy that our technical and economic co-operation with African countries is rapidly increasing.

We regret that there has been no progress towards a solution of the problem created by Israel's occupation of Arab territories. Our stand on this critical issue is based on principles which we have again supported in the last resolution in the United Nations calling on Israel to vacate these territories.

Honourable Members, the correctness of our internal and external policies and the basic vitality of our economy, our institutions and our people have been proved time and again whenever the country has had to face grave situations. I am sure that our present difficulties are temporary and that we shall overcome them and emerge more united and disciplined. We shall have to work with clarity of vision and unity of purpose to meet these challenges.

During your present Session, you will be dealing with the Demands for Grants for the next financial year as well as with legislative business. Government will bring before Parliament a Bill to replace the Coal Mines (Taking over of Management) Ordinance, 1973. Government also intends to bring before Parliament a comprehensive Taxation Laws (Amendment) Bill. In addition, legislation to regulate foreign contributions and to establish a Newspaper Finance Corporation for rendering financial assistance to small and medium newspapers as well as Bills to amend the Election Law, the Cinematograph Act and the Delhi Development Act will be among the measures that will be brought before Parliament.

Honourable Members, I summon you to your new endeavours and wish you well.

ADDRESS TO PARLIAMENT—18 FEBRUARY 1974

Lok Sabha	—	Fifth Lok Sabha
Session	—	First Session of the Year
President of India	—	Shri V.V. Giri
Vice-President of India	—	Shri Gopal Swarup Pathak
Prime Minister of India	—	Smt. Indira Gandhi
Speaker, Lok Sabha	—	Dr. G.S. Dhillon

HONOURABLE MEMBERS,

You reassemble at a time of difficulty and trial. The people face many hardships as a result of high prices, scarcity of essential commodities and interruptions in production and supply caused by strikes, *bundhs* and unrest, which in some parts of the country have taken a violent turn. The international oil crisis has cast an uneasy shadow on the economy. These unforeseen events have undoubtedly slowed down the pace of our social and economic development. In this situation, the people's mood is one of understandable anxiety. I have deep sympathy with the people, particularly the poor sections, who have had to suffer.

Seldom has a country faced such gigantic problems in quick succession, year after year, as we have these last three years. It has been a continuous testing of the nation's mettle. The nation has survived these difficulties and has not allowed them to come in the way of its basic endeavours towards development. This is no mean achievement and should not be ignored, even though positive aspects are apt to be overlooked in difficult times.

There have been a number of welcome developments. One of these is the manner in which the people of Andhra Pradesh have solved the problem of intra-regional tensions which only a year ago appeared insurmountable. I congratulate all sections of the people of that State on the wisdom and spirit of accommodation which they displayed. The six-point formula which has been evolved should lead to fuller integration and to the accelerated development of the backward areas of the State.

Two other hopeful trends are in the economic sphere: the rise in export earnings and the improvement in the performance of public undertakings. Until about two years ago, the low rate of growth of our exports was a

cause for considerable anxiety. However, since 1972-73, there has been a marked improvement. In that year, our exports increased by 22 per cent. In the first eight months of 1973-74, despite a variety of constraints, exports have increased by 20.8 per cent. We are confident that with a greater national effort, exports can be pushed up substantially.

Only about two years ago, the continuing losses of our public enterprises were a cause for concern. It is, therefore, a matter of satisfaction that consequent to a number of measures taken by Government, our Central public undertakings, taken together, have increased their production and earned a net profit for the first time in 1972-73. This year the position is expected to be much better. The utilisation of capacity will generally increase, the profits of some units are expected to be higher and in others the losses will be considerably reduced.

The rise in prices and the scarcity of food articles, particularly in deficit States, is of prime concern to the people and the Government. The expectation that the good *kharif* harvest of 1973 would help to stabilise prices has not materialised. Partly, this is due to the internal inflationary situation. The provision of work and relief on a hitherto unprecedented scale to the people of drought affected areas, without jettisoning investment on Plan programmes and the requirements of defence, has necessitated increased deficit financing. The situation also reflects the effect of the international economic crisis on our country. The steps towards *detente* between nations in different parts of the globe had raised hopes of a favourable climate for the speedy progress of developing nations. However the international economic situation has created new and complex problems. The international monetary crisis, followed by the steep rise in the prices of many commodities, has affected poorer countries like India more than others. The prices of almost all commodities that we have to import have gone up by two to four times in the past few months, while the prices of our own exports have risen, if at all, only marginally.

The serious situation created by these developments has been aggravated by hoarding and speculation by unscrupulous traders and by interruptions in production and movement caused by lapses on the part of management and by some misguided sections of organised classes. Stocks are also being hoarded by producers and affluent consumers. All these sections of our people must realise that they cannot survive unless the nation as a whole survives. Resort to violence and *bandhs* only worsens the situation. The poor suffer the most. Government will deal firmly with hoarding and with attempts to interrupt production, movement and distribution.

Supplies to deficit areas and vulnerable sections of society can be maintained through the public distribution system only if there is adequate procurement of grains. Appreciating the need to compensate the farmer for the rise in the cost of production, Government increased procurement

prices substantially for the current *kharif* cereals. While the procurement of rice is satisfactory in many States, it is unfortunate that the procurement of coarse grains did not gather momentum. The *kharif* procurement season has still several months to go. The situation has been studied in detail, State by State, and Government has indicated the steps to be taken by State Governments. This year's experience in procurement and distribution will be fully considered in taking corrective action for the coming *rabi* season. I wish to impress upon the State Governments, with all the earnestness at my command, the importance of achieving procurement targets. It has to be realised that the Central Government can distribute only as much quantity as the State Governments procure and make available to it. Therefore, all State Governments, whether they be of surplus or deficit States (which also have surplus areas), should give overriding importance to this matter and to the checking of hoarding and smuggling.

Judged by world standards, we consume very little oil. Yet the increased prices of crude oil alone will cast on us an additional burden of rupees eight hundred crores a year in foreign exchange. This poses an unprecedented challenge to our economy.

We can understand the anxiety of oil producing countries to conserve their depleting reserves of crude. We also appreciate their desire to strengthen and diversify their economies through investments financed by larger revenues from their exports of oil. We extend our support fully to them in their efforts to secure a dominant role in the international trade in oil which has hitherto been controlled by a handful of private oil companies. We have cordial relations with oil-exporting countries. The adverse impact of the rise in oil prices on the economies of developing countries like India is recognised by the friendly countries in Western Asia. We have to devise ways and means of ensuring that this genuine concern is adequately reflected in concrete measures. We are in close touch with oil producing countries and hope that we can find just solutions through appropriate mutual arrangements.

We have satisfactory reserves of coal and a sizeable potential of hydro-electric power. We possess the technology for nuclear power generation. We are hopeful that our efforts at oil exploration will yield results. Given a little time and the necessary resources, we should be able to develop these to meet our needs. But the intervening years will be difficult and will call for the most disciplined effort on our part and understanding from our friends.

Government is organising a massive effort to develop our indigenous sources of energy and to maximise our earnings from exports. Efficient and increased production of our own sources of energy and of export-oriented industries, utmost economy in the use of oil products and selective restraints

on domestic consumption of exportable goods are essential for the success of this effort. I appeal to all section of the people to co-operate fully with measures that will be taken by Government.

The search for oil, onshore and offshore, will be pursued with vigour. The exploration which has begun in one offshore area will be intensified. We have already a joint venture for production of crude oil in Iran. The Oil and Natural Gas Commission has started exploration in a prospective area in Iraq and similar ventures elsewhere are under consideration.

Schemes for the generation of power will be given high priority. Special attention is being paid to improving the working of existing units and the earlier commissioning of projects which are in an advanced state of construction. This will add a sizeable quantum of power. In addition, a large number of projects are to be taken up and completed during the Fifth Five Year Plan period. The necessary approvals for these projects have been given and in the case of thermal plants, the coal fields from which coal will be supplied have been identified and linked up for particular projects. A co-ordinated development of coal fields transportation and power plants will be ensured. This massive programme calls for the reorganisation of the electricity industry.

The key to the success of our efforts in insulating our projected targets of economic growth from the rise in prices of oil lies in larger production and transport of coal. Department of Mines and the Railways have to gear themselves to the task of raising and moving the coal to various centres of consumption.

The State Governments on their part should ensure that necessary basic facilities like power and feeder roads are made available. A great responsibility rests on the managements and the one and a half million workers of the mines and the Railways. With their co-operation, the production of coal will be increased in 1974-75 to 90 million tonnes, if not more, and a steady flow will be maintained to keep the wheels of industry running smoothly.

In the present situation, the maintenance of production, particularly in essential sectors, is an obligation we owe to our people. In recent months, the workers have been experiencing considerable economic difficulties. In spite of this, our workers, who have a proud heritage of patriotism, know very well that the situation can be improved only if the social tasks of production are viewed in the larger national perspective. Therefore, workers have to make a supreme effort to increase production and to ensure quick and uninterrupted movement. This is the only way in which they can contribute to relieve the shortages faced by the common people.

The Draft Fifth Five Year Plan provides the framework and the programme to tackle the twin problems of food and fuel. The strategy for agriculture is based on a combination of the application of new technology and widening

the base of production. The emphasis is on programmes for command areas and marginal areas on the one hand and for the small farmers on the other, so that the very process of increased production ensures wider distribution region-wise as well as between different sections of the people. The Plan gives special importance to the development of power, coal, oil and transport and of industries like fertilizers which are vital for agriculture. In a number of sectors, a large part of the output levels envisaged in the Plan is based on the assumption of full and more efficient utilisation of existing capacities. This is as much a part of the Plan as new investment.

For the first time integrated sub-plans are being prepared within the overall framework of State Plans for the development of backward areas, including hill and tribal areas, so that all sections of the people achieve certain minimum levels of social consumption in elementary education, rural health, drinking water, provision of home sites, slum clearance, rural roads and rural electrification. The endeavour will be to integrate the services under health, family planning, nutrition, education and social welfare at the field level.

It is a measure of the maturity of our democracy that notwithstanding the present economic difficulties, a fifth of our population is exercising franchise this month in elections to State Assemblies. I appeal to all political parties to ensure peaceful conduct of the elections. We are proud of our record in this regard, as free and peaceful elections constitute an important feature of a stable democracy. Successful democracy consists not only of the freedom to choose but also of a realisation that in spite of differences, the parties in power and in opposition abide by certain basic rules of conduct, the more important of which is the avoidance of all forms of violence and extra-constitutional methods.

Early this month, Gujarat has come under President's rule. It is the responsibility of all citizens to help in the establishment of a climate of self-restraint and co-operative effort so that the peoples' hardships can be alleviated.

In the year under review, our foreign policy was pursued with vigour and registered some notable successes. Relations with our neighbours, particularly Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal and Sri Lanka, as also Burma* and Afghanistan, saw noticeable improvement in building up a polity of peace, friendship and mutually beneficial co-operation.

The human problem of the persons stranded in Pakistan, Bangladesh and India after the conflict of 1971 is on the way to satisfactory resolution following the historic initiative taken by India and Bangladesh. The three-way simultaneous repatriation began in September last and is expected to be completed before the middle of this year. My Government is prepared to enter into negotiations with Pakistan to implement the rest of the Simla

* Now known as Myanmar.

Agreement. We sincerely hope that the Government of Pakistan also desires this.

We have maintained a constant dialogue with Bangladesh on all issues of mutual interest. The Governments of both the countries have made concerted efforts to further strengthen friendly relations and co-operation in commercial and economic fields.

I am happy to say that the exchange of visits by our Prime Minister and the Prime Minister of Sri Lanka has resulted in the activation of economic relations and co-operation between the two countries. The question of the status of all persons of Indian origin in Sri Lanka has been finally resolved and considerable progress has been made in finding a solution to other questions.

The visit of our Prime Minister to Nepal and of the King and Queen of Nepal to India symbolised the close relations between us, which are based on mutual trust and commonality of interests. We admire greatly the resolve of the Government of Nepal to advance the economic and social interest of its people, a task in which we have been privileged to participate according to the wishes of the Government of Nepal.

Our friendly relations with Afghanistan are being developed and strengthened further by mutual co-operation in many fields. Several projects in which we will be able to participate under our technical and economic co-operation programme have been identified in Afghanistan.

During my visit to Malaysia in March 1973, I had expressed our support to the Declaration of November 1971 by Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand and Singapore that South-East Asia should be a zone of peace and neutrality. Along with other countries of the region, we have always urged that the Indian Ocean should be a zone of peace and should be free from military bases of big powers. This has been emphasised by the General Assembly of the United Nations and the non-aligned countries who met at Algiers last year. It is, therefore, a matter of deep concern and disappointment to us that the United Kingdom and the United States of America have entered into an agreement for the establishment of a military base in the island of Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean. We consider that the establishment of the military base is against the interests of peace and we sincerely hope that the wishes of the people of this region and of the United Nations will prevail in this matter.

We attach the greatest importance to our friendly relations with countries of West Asia. We are pursuing these in the emerging context of greater economic exchanges between developing countries. We have concluded agreements with the Republic of Iraq covering many fields of such co-operation. The growing friendship between India and Iraq is reflected in the positive response of Iraq in finding a solution to the problems arising from the rise in oil prices.

Our view that no stable peace can be established in West Asia without the vacation of Israeli aggression from all occupied Arab territories and the restoration of the rights of the Arab people of Palestine is well-known. There have recently been some positive developments and we hope that the West Asia Peace Conference will lead to lasting peace and stability in this region.

As a result of the high-level visits recently exchanged between Iran and us, there has been a better understanding of each other's policies and many new avenues of mutually beneficial co-operation have been identified. Government will pursue these vigorously.

Yet another milestone was reached in our relations with the Soviet Union with the exchange of views and the Agreements that were signed when we had the pleasure of playing host to General Secretary Brezhnev in November 1973. The Agreements put the economic relationship between the two countries on a long-term footing. We are gratified that Indo-Soviet friendship has progressively attained newer levels of maturity and co-operation.

In June 1973 our Prime Minister visited Yugoslavia. I paid a visit to Romania and Czechoslovakia in October 1973. Later in the year, we welcomed General Secretary Dr. Gustav Husak of Czechoslovakia and an agreement on economic co-operation was signed with Czechoslovakia. President Tito's visit last month gave yet another opportunity for a detailed exchange of views on recent developments affecting non-aligned countries.

There has been a conscious effort on the part of my Government and that of the United States of America to strengthen relations on the basis of equality and mutuality of interests. An important result of this is the agreement on the question of U.S. rupee funds in India.

The conclusion of the Commercial Cooperation Agreement with the European Economic Community is a significant step and with this our relations with the enlarged Community have started well. We are confident that trade and economic co-operation between the Community and India will grow fast in the coming years.

The views exchanged during the visits of the Prime Ministers of two sister countries of the Commonwealth—Australia and New Zealand—indicated the enlightened stand of these leaders on world issues, their commitment to peace and their increasing interest in the development of India and other countries of Asia. The visit of our Prime Minister to Canada in June 1973 helped to further strengthen the close ties between the two countries.

Our relations with African countries are close and co-operative. The Vice-President visited Tanzania recently and participated in the tenth anniversary of the Revolution in Zanzibar. In line with our well-known

support for the struggle of the African peoples against colonialism and racism, we hail the emergence of the new State of Guinea-Bissau.

Close co-operation with other non-aligned countries has been one of the important aspects of our foreign policy. The Prime Minister attended the Fourth Summit of non-aligned countries in Algiers in September, 1973. The Conference demonstrated a large measure of agreement in the political field and also the resolve of member countries to co-operate with one another more concretely.

Hon'ble Members, the basis and nature of relationships between the countries of the world are changing rapidly; so also many concepts which held sway during the last two decades. Amidst all this, it is a matter for satisfaction that the basic tenets of our foreign policy since Independence have been consistently vindicated.

During this session you will consider the demands for grants for the next financial year and the pending and new legislative business. Government will bring before Parliament a Bill to amend the Prevention of Food Adulteration Act to enable more vigorous enforcement. Among other measures are the Bills for establishing Central Universities at Pondicherry* and Hyderabad, a Bill to further amend the Ninth Schedule to the Constitution and a Bill to amend the Agricultural Refinance Corporation Act to enable it to extend assistance directly to Area Development Corporations.

Hon'ble Members, I summon you to the exacting tasks of 1974. The formidable challenges that the nation faces can be turned into an opportunity by determined people. I have no doubt that as the representatives of the people, you will give the right lead in a spirit of dedication and constructive co-operation and that the country will overcome the present difficulties and emerge stronger and more united to advance along the chosen path.

* Now known as Puducherry.



DR. FAKHRUDDIN ALI AHMED



ADDRESS TO PARLIAMENT—17 FEBRUARY 1975

Lok Sabha	—	Fifth Lok Sabha
Session	—	First Session of the Year
President of India	—	Dr. Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed
Vice-President of India	—	Shri B. D. Jatti
Prime Minister of India	—	Smt. Indira Gandhi
Speaker, Lok Sabha	—	Dr. G. S. Dhillon

HONOURABLE MEMBERS,

I welcome you all and summon you to another year of hard work in the service of the nation.

We begin the year on a confident note, having responded with determination to the unforeseen and stupendous challenges of the last four years. In the face of continuing rise in prices, the foremost concern of Government in 1974 was to impart a measure of stability to the economy. Government adopted a comprehensive strategy to control inflation and this was put into operation from July, 1974.

Besides increased mobilisation of resources and economies in non-Plan expenditure, money supply was restricted through an appropriate monetary policy. A vigorous drive was launched against economic offences like smuggling, hoarding and tax evasion and against spurious units indulging in malpractices in scarce materials. Consumer expenditure was restrained by limiting dividend incomes and impounding increases in wages and salaries and a part of additional dearness allowance. Public distribution was strengthened and arrangements were made for adequate import of foodgrains and essential raw materials and commodities. The annual plan for 1974-75 was reviewed and outlays on the core sectors were raised to boost production. Vigorous action was also taken to improve utilisation of capacity in power plants, rail transport, coal production, steel plants and other public sector industries.

This concerted action began to yield results towards the end of September, 1974. Despite an unsatisfactory *khari* crop caused by poor rainfall in many States, prices began to fall and there has been a weakening of the inflationary forces. The availability of essential goods has generally improved. The general outlook for the *rabi* crop is good.

Production in public enterprises has shown a significant rise in the first nine months of this financial year. Fourteen per cent more electricity is being produced by thermal plants and improvement of thirty-four per cent in the production of power by DVC plants merits special mention. Since shortage of power still persists in a number of States, high priority is being given to the completion of power projects. About two million KW of power capacity is being added in 1974-75 and another three million in the coming year. Ten million tonnes more coal will be produced this year. Steel production is going up and public sector engineering industries are doing remarkably well. More railway wagons are being moved daily.

I congratulate workers, farmers and other sections of the people for the determination, courage and identity with national purpose shown by them in supporting the Government's programme of economic stabilisation.

Government is aware that there is no room for complacency as there are still sizeable imbalances between supply and demand in several important sectors of the economy. The international economic situation is also full of uncertainties.

The monetary and fiscal measures and the action against economic offences will be continued with vigour. Simultaneously, Government will intensify measures to remove limitations in the infrastructure and to increase production in vital sectors. In the international sphere, we shall continue to work for the evolution of a just and viable economic order in co-operation with developing countries as well as developed countries which have shown understanding of our problems.

We have been hit hard by the sudden and large increase in the prices of oil, food and fertilizers. Articles of common consumption have been affected and great hardship has been caused to the people. There is a very heavy draft on foreign exchange. Even a significant increase in our export earnings—in the first eight months of 1974-75, the increase was 36 per cent—is not adequate to fill the gap. Special efforts and arrangements are necessary to deal with the problems of oil-importing developing countries. Some of the oil-exporting countries have helped us in this regard. There has also been some action at the international level. But these measures fall short of the needs of the situation. The severe damage caused to the economies of developing countries has to be recognised and redressed through purposeful co-operative effort on a global scale. We shall continue to take appropriate initiatives, in this direction both through bilateral negotiations and in international forums.

In addition to the emphasis on increased production and use of coal, we are going ahead with oil exploration on an urgent basis. The recent discoveries in the offshore Bombay High structure are promising. Government has decided that this oil field should be developed to the production stage

with the greatest expedition. It is being planned that the first stage of production should begin in 1976 and that in another four years, the production from this area should go up to 10 million tonnes. The future outlook for production of oil from offshore and onshore areas is reassuring.

There is understandably some anxiety about the Fifth Five Year Plan. A Plan has a framework and a coherent system of objectives as well as a detailed programme indicating targets and the availability of resources necessary for achieving them. The basic framework of the draft Fifth Plan and its objectives remain unaltered. At the same time, the extraordinary developments in the economic sphere, both external and internal, call for adjustments in the sequence and composition of detailed programmes. Meanwhile, the annual plan for 1975-76 is being prepared giving emphasis to economic stability and increased investment in crucial sectors—agricultural production, irrigation, fertilisers, power, steel, coal and oil exploration. It is also proposed to intensify development programmes benefiting the less developed regions and the weaker sections of the community including scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. Programmes under the Small Farmers Development Agency and those for Marginal Farmer and Agricultural Labour, drought prone areas and the Command Areas are being accelerated.

A review of the national effort in 1974 will not be complete without reference to the major advance that we made in the nuclear field—the underground experiment of 18th May, 1974. I congratulate our nuclear scientists and engineers on this signal achievement. We have reaffirmed our determination to use nuclear energy only for peaceful purposes and our reasons for undertaking the experiment have been appreciated by most countries. Government will continue to give a place of importance to science and technology as instruments of economic advancement.

I am happy that the extensive talks held between the representatives of the Government of India and the leaders of the State of Jammu and Kashmir have yielded positive results. Government will shortly make a statement in this regard. We wish the people of Jammu and Kashmir speedy progress as an integral part of the nation.

Hon'ble Members, when the nation is straining every nerve to meet formidable challenges, it is regrettable that some groups have been doing every thing possible to weaken the will of the people and to sap the cohesion and unity of purpose, so vital at such times. They claim that their object is total revolution and elimination of corruption but the actual result is violence and disruption of political and economic life. Government is fully conscious of the need for reform in several spheres of national life and welcomes suggestions. Indeed, our objective is to bring about a transformation of society and to change the quality of life. It is the essence of the democratic system that changes are brought about through the

widest possible discussion and agreement. Mere disruption of the existing system or institutions, with no better and workable alternative, will only endanger the stability and progress of our country.

Government is anxious that the Lokpal and Lokayukthas Bill, which has been before you for some time now, should be considered and finalised during this year. This will provide the legal framework to deal with corruption among political executives and in administration. Government will shortly discuss with the leaders of political parties proposals for changes in the electoral law. Whatever reforms are introduced should be such as will command the widest possible public support and consolidate the system of parliamentary democracy enshrined in our Constitution.

As regards education also, Government has worked out programmes for reform of the examination system, vocationalisation of secondary education, regulation of enrolment for higher education and introduction of a system of non-formal education. Previous experience shows that schemes of educational reform fail to gather momentum unless they are widely accepted by State Governments, teachers, parents and students. Meanwhile, considerable disturbance is caused in the scholastic career of millions of young people. State Governments have taken steps to implement some of the programmes of reform. We are anxious that more far-reaching changes in the educational system are introduced through the widest possible discussion.

I appeal to all sections of the people to ponder seriously over these fundamental issues, offer positive and constructive suggestions and criticisms and co-operate with the Government in working out national solutions. This is the democratic way. Any other way will lead only to chaos and disillusionment.

I may now refer to developments in Sikkim. Elections were held there for the first time in April, 1974. On the unanimous resolution of the elected Assembly, a new constitutional framework was promulgated by the Chogyal on the 4th July, 1974. Responding to the expressed wishes of the people of Sikkim, you approved a Constitution Amendment Bill in September, 1974 incorporating specific provisions for strengthening Indo-Sikkim relationship, including the representation of Sikkim in our Parliament. We congratulate the People of Sikkim on the progressive realisation of their democratic aspirations.

In our relations with the outside world, we have naturally continued to attach special importance to the consolidation of friendly relations with our neighbours.

In December, 1974, we had the privilege of welcoming the King of Bhutan. The visit served to consolidate further the traditional warm friendship between India and Bhutan.

An event of significance in our close relations with Bangladesh was the conclusion of an Agreement, during the visit of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in May last, settling the land boundary questions which had remained unresolved for nearly a generation. I feel confident that the two countries will resolve any issue which may arise in the same spirit of understanding and co-operation.

There has been increasing co-operation with Afghanistan in the political and economic fields. We look forward to the visit of President Daoud next month.

During the recent visit of the Prime Minister of Nepal, there was a detailed exchange of views on various aspects of Indo-Nepal relations. It was recognised that it was in the interests of both India and Nepal to do their utmost to strengthen bilateral relations keeping in view, at all times, the principles of reciprocity and mutual benefit.

I am particularly gratified that the cordial relations between Sri Lanka and India were further strengthened by the amicable settlement of the long outstanding questions of Kachhativu and the maritime boundary in the waters of the Palk Bay as well as the status of persons of Indian origin in Sri Lanka.

The exchange of visits between the Prime Ministers of Maldives and India strengthened the friendly relations between the two countries.

The visit of the Prime Minister of Mauritius, Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam, helped to further strengthen our close ties with that country.

The goodwill visit of President Ne Win of Burma* in April, 1974 consolidated our mutual co-operation and understanding on bilateral and international questions.

Several steps were taken towards normalising relations with Pakistan. Progress has been slow but not discouraging. Agreements have been worked out for the resumption of postal services, telecommunication links, travel facilities and trade between the two countries. We hope that the healthy trend towards settling differences bilaterally and through peaceful means will gather momentum and that Pakistan will realise the futility of rearming itself by procuring arms from various sources, as this will hinder reconciliation and the establishment of durable peace on the subcontinent.

A continental shelf boundary Agreement was concluded with Indonesia. We were honoured to receive the King and Queen of Malaysia in December, 1974. Their visit served to underscore the friendship and understanding between our two countries.

* Now known as Myanmar.

There is a marked increase in the tempo of our political and economic relations with the countries of East Asia. With Japan, our relations remain friendly and our trade ties are growing.

As you are aware, Government is taking steps to establish formal contacts and more direct relations with the Provisional Revolutionary Government of South Vietnam.

Our traditional ties with the Arab World have continued to be marked by solidarity and close co-operation. We have had exchange of visits at the highest level with a number of Arab countries such as Iraq, Sudan, the Arab Republic of Egypt and the United Arab Emirates, during which we have had discussions on our common policies and have entered into a number of agreements in the economic and technical fields. The situation in West Asia is a cause for grave anxiety. Lasting peace in West Asia will not be achieved until justice is assured to Palestinians and Arab territories seized by aggression are vacated. We welcome the presence of the Palestine Liberation Organisation in the United Nations.

Our Prime Minister's visit to Iran and the visit of the Shahanshah of Iran to India contributed to the strengthening of relations between the two countries. We have agreed on a number of long term projects which should bring our countries closer in economic and other fields.

An event of great significance to the cause of liberty and freedom in the world was the change in the Government in Portugal. An Agreement has been entered into for resumption of diplomatic relations between India and Portugal. We welcome the opening of a new chapter of friendship and co-operation with that country.

In the progress of the African peoples towards independence, a new era has dawned. Some of the Portuguese colonial territories are on the threshold of independence, in others the process has begun. Apparently, these events are having an impact on the illegal regime in Rhodesia; we have no doubt that in Zimbabwe too a settlement will be reached for the establishment of majority rule and the end of discrimination. South Africa cannot remain unaffected and we sincerely hope that the logic of these events and the inevitability of the outcome will be clear to this last bastion of colonialism and racialism and that there will be an end to the suppression of human liberty and other forms of persecution which have earned them the censure of the civilised world.

The visits of Dr. Kenneth Kaunda, President of Zambia and Mr. Kawawa, Vice-President of Tanzania further strengthened economic and technical co-operation between India and these countries.

We wish to strengthen our ties with the developing countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America through economic and technical co-operation. We have developed expertise in a number of fields and have a large reserve

of trained and experienced manpower and thus have the capacity to respond to the requests of friendly developing countries for co-operation in economic development. Similarly, many of these countries can help us in several ways. A positive aspect of the oil situation is the enormous possibilities it has opened up for mutual co-operation between developing countries.

We greatly appreciate the support given by the USSR to our policy of non-alignment and friendship among all nations and to the initiatives taken by us to expedite the process of normalisation on the subcontinent. Indo-Soviet co-operation is growing in all fields.

During 1974, we had the privilege of receiving the Prime Ministers of Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, the GDR and Hungary. The exchange of views with these leaders has deepened our mutual understanding.

India and Yugoslavia have continued their close co-operation in the Non-aligned Movement and at the United Nations and other international forums.

During the visit of Dr. Henry Kissinger to India in October, 1974, there was expression of mutual desire for better understanding and a mature relationship between India and the United States of America. An Indo-US joint Commission, which will provide an institutional framework for co-operation, was formed. We hope that the United States will continue to support the trend towards normalisation on the subcontinent and will not take any step, which may adversely affect it.

The European Economic Community is taking a progressively more liberal attitude towards the problems of development. Over a third of India's trade is with the countries of the Community and we look forward to increasing co-operation with them.

Relations with Australia and New Zealand have remained close and cordial based on a growing understanding of Asian questions. Both these countries have shared the concern of the littoral States regarding the need to maintain the Indian Ocean as a Zone of peace, a matter to which we attach very great importance.

We are convinced that the crisis in the international economic order and the enormous problems facing developing countries can be resolved only if there is peace and absence of tension throughout the world.

Hon'ble Members, during this Session you have to consider the Statement of Receipts and Expenditure and the Demands for Grants for the coming financial year, which is crucial from the point of view of further stabilising the economy and giving it a firm direction. Of the new legislative measures that will be presented to you, the most important one deals with the imposition of ceiling on urban land. You have as many as 34 Bills pending

before you in various stages. Some of these are of far-reaching importance. You have a full and strenuous programme ahead of you. I appeal to one and all not to fritter away national energies on acrimonious controversies and agitations but to give a constructive and confident lead to the people of India, who have a proven capacity to overcome challenges.

I wish you success in your endeavours.

ADDRESS TO PARLIAMENT—5 JANUARY 1976

Lok Sabha	—	Fifth Lok Sabha
Session	—	First Session of the Year
President of India	—	Dr. Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed
Vice-President of India	—	Shri B. D. Jatti
Prime Minister of India	—	Smt. Indira Gandhi
Speaker, Lok Sabha	—	Shri Bali Ram Bhagat

HONOURABLE MEMBERS,

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you all and particularly to have in our midst the representatives of Sikkim, which became the 22nd State of the Indian Union in May, 1975. It will be the endeavour of Government to ensure speedy development of this neglected hill State.

Last year, while noting the positive trends in the economy arising out of the firm measures taken by Government, I drew attention to the efforts of some groups to disrupt the existing system and institutions and the danger this posed to the stability and progress of our country. I appealed to them to follow the path of discussion to bring about changes and welcomed suggestions for reform. It is most unfortunate that this appeal was not heeded. Groups and elements of widely differing persuasions joined together to paralyse the country's economic and political life. They clutched at every opportunity to create confusion in the minds of the people and to foment chaos and disorder. Their activities seriously threatened internal security. They were directed towards undermining Government's vigorous efforts to curb economic offences, increase production and ensure the smooth and speedy movement of goods in order to stem the rising tide of inflation, stabilise the economy and bring relief to the people. The nation's interests demanded firm and decisive action.

The declaration of emergency on June 25, 1975, the 20-Point Economic Programme launched on July 1, 1975 and the steps taken to tone up efficiency in all spheres of national life have had a dramatic effect on the health of the nation. Diffidence and apathy have given place to confidence that we can face our problems successfully if we are disciplined and united, and do not allow our energies to be frittered away. Our people have given overwhelming support to the steps taken by the Government and have

welcomed the change in the atmosphere in the country. Strengthened by this, decisive action has been taken by Government on a wide front. Inflation has been checked. The overall price level has come down by 10 per cent when compared to the peak level reached in September, 1974, the fall in the price level of food articles being nearly 20 per cent. Stringent action has been taken against economic offences. Shortage of coal, power, intermediate goods like steel and cement and the dislocation and inefficient working of the transport system had severely strained the economy during 1973 and early 1974. This year production has increased and performance improved significantly in all these sectors. With the co-operation of workers, industrial peace has been maintained, save in a few isolated cases. Several distortions and imbalances that had developed in the economy have been corrected. As a result of this, the privileges enjoyed by some groups have been reduced. But it should be remembered that no single group can further its interests in isolation. The interests of each group are dependent on the soundness of the economy as a whole.

New vigour has been imparted to the implementation of programmes for the uplift of the poor. Rapid progress is being made in allotment of house sites to the landless, implementation of land reforms, increasing agricultural wages and giving relief from debts.

The problem of poverty cannot be solved in a short time. We can make a dent in it only through sustained hard work and discipline in all walks of life. The new spirit that has been generated over the last few months should therefore be maintained unimpaired.

The 20-Point Economic Programme will continue to be implemented with zeal. Government invites the full co-operation of the people as it is a peoples' programme and cannot be implemented by official agencies alone.

We have a record *kharif* crop this year. The maximum quantity of grain will be procured so that farmers will not have to sell below the procurement price and in order to have sufficient stocks to meet any unforeseen eventuality.

We aim to extend irrigation to five million more hectares before 1979. Disputes between States have delayed a number of projects. Government will try to get acceptance of the concept of water as a national asset to be utilised to the best advantage of all the people. A National Water Resources Council with adequate powers to prepare master plans for river basins will be constituted. Meanwhile, efforts have been intensified to settle as many disputes as possible by bringing the concerned States together. As a result, agreements have been reached regarding some projects in the Narmada basin, the Rajghat project on the Betwa river and the Kadana project on the Mahi river. The recent agreement amongst five States on the

utilisation of a major portion of the waters of the Godavari River is a landmark in the settlement of inter-State water dispute by negotiations. The Godavari basin covers a tenth of the area of the country and the agreement will enable the construction of projects to irrigate five million hectares of land.

The outlay on the annual plan this year is 25 per cent higher than last year's. This will be further increased next year with emphasis on priority sectors so that the impulses of growth are quickened. Simultaneously, steps will be taken to ensure the modernisation of industries like textiles and sugar, which are engaged in the production of mass consumption goods and have been suffering from obsolescence and sickness.

Industrial licensing policies and procedures have been under review. Controls which are no longer relevant will be removed to increase production in priority areas and widen the entrepreneurial base, consistent with the objective of curbing the concentration of economic power.

International economic events of the last three years have imposed severe strain on our balance of payments. A big increase in exports is essential to achieve a self-reliant economy. Several measures have recently been initiated to promote exports. Special steps will be taken, with the assistance of State Governments, to increase exports of handlooms and handicrafts. A review of policies and procedures is being made so as to remove constraints and obstructions.

Measures to improve administrative efficiency will continue and will be expanded. Our administrative procedures and attitudes have remained largely unchanged, specially in the field of financial administration which affects the working of all wings of Government. Government has decided upon a comprehensive scheme of reform of financial administration, which will be put through this year. The maintenance of accounts of the Union will be departmentalised and separated from Audit Rules and procedures for payment of salaries and pensions, maintenance of provident fund accounts, remittance and withdrawal of moneys, and for sanction of expenditure will be simplified and modernised. Methods of evaluation of performance will have to be changed in order to make the administration at every level result-oriented and accountable.

A major achievement in the field of health is the eradication of small pox. Strict vigil is being kept against the recurrence of this scourge. The campaign against other communicable diseases is being intensified.

We are aiming to reduce the birth rate to 30 per thousand in the next three years. To achieve this, the family planning programme will have to become a mass movement. New schemes of incentives and disincentives are being evolved to increase the acceptance of a small family.

Along with other countries, we observed 1975 as International Women's Year. The problems faced by women in a number of areas have been studied in detail. The Ordinance guaranteeing to women equal remuneration for equal work will come before you this session. A National Plan for Women is being prepared, the implementation of which will help to remove some disabilities from which they suffer.

I congratulate our space scientists and engineers on the construction of our first Satellite, Aryabhata. The successful working of the Satellite Instructional Television Experiment is a landmark in the practical application of science and technology for the benefit of the rural population. This Experiment will help us decide on the use of television as a means of mass communication in rural areas.

The importance of developing new sources of energy has been recognised and work is being intensified in a number of areas. Biogas plants and the utilisation of solar energy are being given high priority.

I shall now deal with our relations with other countries.

We remain firm in our conviction that normal and friendly relations between all the countries of the subcontinent are essential for the progress of their peoples.

Recent events in Bangladesh have caused us anguish and concern. We were shocked and grieved by the brutal assassination of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the members of his family and his associates. Nevertheless, we have treated developments in Bangladesh entirely as an internal affair of that country. We are therefore distressed by the false propaganda that is being carried on in some quarters. In recent talks between representatives of the two countries, we have reaffirmed our desire for a peaceful border and a stable, strong and independent Bangladesh in which the interest and welfare of all sections of its people are safeguarded. Bangladesh emphasised its desire to continue the policy and ensuring equal rights to all its people, irrespective of caste, creed and religion.

I regret that the progress of implementation of the Simla Agreement has been slow because of disappointing response from Pakistan, which has continued a campaign of misrepresentation of India.

Our traditional bonds of friendship with Bhutan are growing. The programme of economic co-operation has taken a giant stride with the starting of work on the Chukha hydro-electric project.

Relations with our friendly neighbour, Nepal, were further strengthened by the visit to India of their Majesties the King and Queen in 1975. As a result of the discussions held during the visit, there is better appreciation of the mutual advantages of a joint approach to the utilisation of waters of the rivers flowing into India from Nepal.

With Sri Lanka we have strengthened the tradition of informal and mutually beneficial exchanges and collaboration on matters of common interest. We have improved our economic, cultural and scientific links with Burma*.

We have sought to strengthen our relations with our neighbours in South-East Asia as well as with Japan and other countries of East Asia. We rejoiced at the ending of the prolonged hostilities in Indo-China and have welcomed the negotiations leading to the reunification of the two Zones of Vietnam. We believe that a reunited Vietnam and stable and economically strong Cambodia and Laos will constitute forces for peace and stability in South-East Asia. I visited Indonesia in March, 1975, where I found a growing awareness of the possibilities and mutual advantages of increased economic, industrial and technological co-operation between Indonesia and India.

We have close and friendly ties with Afghanistan, based on historical and cultural affinity and on similarity of approach to current problems. We are gratified that programmes of technical and economic co-operation are making good progress.

Our understanding and mutually beneficial exchanges with Iran have grown and become more varied. An important landmark in this process has been the signing of agreements for the development of the Kudremukh Iron Ore Project.

Economic, commercial and cultural contacts with the Arab countries continued to make progress. My visit to the Arab Republic of Egypt and the Sudan gave me deeper insight into the problems of West Asia. Government reaffirms its belief that lasting peace in West Asia will not be achieved until Arab territories seized by force are speedily vacated and the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people restored.

We greet Mozambique, Angola, Cape Verde, Sao Tome and Principe on their achievement of independence from centuries of Portuguese colonialism. We also welcome the emergence to independence of Comoros, Surinam and Papua New Guinea.

We cannot but condemn armed intervention by South Africa in the internal affairs of Angola. India has steadfastly supported the organisation of African unity and will join with Africa in all measures to end apartheid, to liberate Namibia and to end racist minority rule in Zimbabwe and South Africa.

India's relations with the Soviet Union and countries in Eastern Europe are characterised by a spirit of warm friendship, understanding and mutually beneficial co-operation in a widening variety of fields. These countries have consistently supported India on all issues of vital concern. In the last few months, a number of high level visits have been exchanged and I visited Hungary and Yugoslavia.

* Now known as Myanmar.

In Europe, the successful conclusion of the conference on Security and Co-operation marks an important step in the consolidation of peace. This spirit of *detente* should extend to other parts of the world where conflict and tension persist. Our economic co-operation as well as relations in the fields of trade and science and technology with the E.E.C. and other countries of Western Europe has continued to expand.

We desire a mature and constructive relationship with the United States of America. A serious effort should be made to understand each other with a view to strengthening peace, stability and co-operation.

The next conference of Heads of State and Government of non-aligned countries will be held in Sri Lanka in August this year. We are glad that the validity of non-alignment has come to be recognised more widely. At the same time attempts are being made to weaken and dilute the non-aligned movement. We shall continue to strive to preserve the fundamental principles of non-alignment and the solidarity and effectiveness of non-aligned countries.

The most striking feature of the world economy is dominance by a small number of rich countries. The developing poor countries bear the brunt of the burden. As each year passes, the problems of these countries become more acute. This trend must be reversed urgently and steps taken to establish a new world economic order. The consensus reached at the seventh special session of the United Nations General Assembly marks the beginning of a dialogue. In the Paris Conference on International Economic Co-operation, we contributed constructively in an effort to evolve equitable solutions to the problems of energy, the pricing of raw materials and industrial products and of the economic development of poor countries. We hope that concrete agreements for action will be reached in relevant international forums as early as possible.

Hon'ble Members, in view of the uncertainties of the international situation, especially on our subcontinent and the neighbourhood, the continuing challenge of forces of disruption at home and the need to accelerate our social and economic programmes, the nation should remain vigilant and disciplined. There must be constant effort to improve performance and bring about changes and reforms in every sphere of national life.

Before concluding, I should like to refer to the unprecedented tragedy in Chasnala Colliery, which has plunged the whole nation in deep sorrow. The work on clearing the mine of the flooded water is in progress. Several friendly countries and a number of organisations within the country have come forward to assist us in this operation. Government will spare no efforts to mitigate the sufferings of the affected families and to improve conditions of safety for workers.

Your present session will be a short one, but the agenda is heavy. In addition to pending business from the last session and the conversion of Ordinances into Acts of Parliament, you have to consider the Bill on urban land, which will be introduced during the session. There is not a minute to waste. I am sure you will provide the clear, bold and firm lead which the people expect. I summon you to your labours and wish you all success.

Jai Hind.



SHRI B. D. JATTI



ADDRESS TO PARLIAMENT—28 MARCH 1977

Lok Sabha	—	Sixth Lok Sabha
Session	—	First Session after the 6th General Election
President of India	—	Shri B. D. Jatti (Acting)*
Vice-President of India	—	Shri B. D. Jatti
Prime Minister of India	—	Shri Morarji Desai
Speaker, Lok Sabha	—	Dr. N. Sanjiva Reddy

HONOURABLE MEMBERS,

I extend my felicitations to the members of the new Lok Sabha and welcome you all to the joint session of the Sixth Parliament.

On this occasion when we miss his benign and familiar presence my thoughts go to our late President Shri Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed in whom we have lost an elder statesman, a wise counsellor, an experienced leader, and a perfect gentleman. We mourn his loss today and convey our sincere and heart-felt condolences to Begum Abida Ahmed.

The General Election just concluded has effectively and decisively demonstrated the power of the people, the vitality of the democratic process in India and the deep root that it has taken. The people have given a clear verdict in favour of individual freedom, democracy and the rule of law and against executive arbitrariness, the emergence of a personality cult and extra-constitutional centres of power. The election marks an important milestone in the evolution of our democratic polity into a healthy two-party system.

My Government pledges itself to fulfil in every way the mandate given to it by the people. In doing so, it will not take the people for granted or assume that they know nothing and that the government alone knows all answers and solutions. The traumatic experience of the last two years during which many atrocities were committed on the people and they had to undergo untold sufferings and some have even died, has brought home the relevance of this.

*Shri B.D. Jatti, Vice President—acting as President of India.

Hon'ble Members, the new Government has taken charge only three days ago. It has not had the time to work out the details of the various measures it intends to adopt. This will be done in due course during the year and placed before you. Nevertheless, there are some urgent tasks to be attended to and the Government will take them in hand immediately.

The most urgent task is to remove the remaining curbs on the fundamental freedoms and civil rights of the people, to restore the rule of law and the right of free expression to the Press. The external emergency proclaimed in 1971 has been revoked by me yesterday. The Government will also take the following measures:

- (i) Having regard to the gross abuse to which the Maintenance of Internal Security Act has been put during the last two years, a thorough review of the Act will be undertaken with a view to repealing it and examining whether the existing laws need further strengthening to deal with economic offences and security of the country without denying the right of approach to courts.
- (ii) Legislation will be introduced to ensure that no political or social organisation is banned except on adequate grounds and after an independent judicial enquiry.
- (iii) The Prevention of Publication of Objectionable Matters Act will be repealed. Immunity which the Press enjoyed in reporting the proceedings of legislatures will be restored.
- (iv) The amendment to the Representation of Peoples Act which redefined corrupt practices and afforded protection to electoral offences by certain individuals by placing them beyond the scrutiny of the courts, will be repealed.

During the course of the year, a comprehensive measure will be placed before you to amend the Constitution to restore balance between the people and Parliament, Parliament and the Judiciary, the Judiciary and the Executive, the States and the Centre, the citizen and the Government, that the founding fathers of our Constitution had worked out. This will include provisions to amend Article 352 to prevent the abuse of the power to declare emergency and of the relevant Articles to ensure that President's Rule is imposed strictly in accordance with the objectives mentioned in the Constitution and not for extraneous purposes.

One of the very serious developments in the recent past was the erosion of the freedom and impartiality of the media of publicity and information. My Government will take steps to restore to the media their due place in a democracy. Steps will also be taken to ensure that All India Radio, Doordarshan, Films Division and other Government media function in a fair and objective manner.

Nothing has roused public anger and resentment so much as the manner in which the family planning programme was implemented last year in several parts of the country. This has caused a major set-back to the programme which is vital for the welfare of the nation. Family planning will be pursued vigorously as a wholly voluntary programme and as an integral part of a comprehensive policy covering education, health, maternity and child-care, family welfare, women's rights and nutrition.

In the economic sphere, the Government is pledged to the removal of destitution within a definite time-frame of 10 years. Relative neglect of the rural sector has created a dangerous imbalance in the economy leading to migration of people from rural areas to urban centres. The farmer has been denied reasonable and fair price for his products. Allocations for agriculture and related developments have been grossly inadequate and the need to improve conditions in the villages has received scarce attention. More than a lakh of villages do not even have the most elementary facilities for drinking water. My Government will follow an employment-oriented strategy in which primacy will be given to the development of agriculture, agro-industries, small and cottage industries especially in rural areas. High priority will also be given to the provisions of minimum needs in rural areas and to integrated rural development. To the extent possible at this point of time, the Fifth Five Year Plan will be reviewed. The planning process will be revitalised and work on the Sixth Five Year Plan will be taken up without delay. My Government will announce at the time of the presentation of the final budget later this year the details of the economic programme that is proposed to be followed.

I now come to external relations. My Government will honour all the commitments made by the previous Government. It stands for friendship with all our neighbours and other nations of the world on the basis of equality and reciprocity and will follow a path of genuine non-alignment. I am glad to say that my Government will be hosting a meeting of the Non-aligned Co-ordinating Bureau early next month. My Government will also give very special attention to the strengthening of ties and economic and technical co-operation with all developing nations.

Hon'ble Members, your present session will be a short one in which you will have to attend to urgent financial business— the Supplementary Demands of the Union and the States under President's Rule, and the Vote on Account regarding the General Budget, the Railway Budget and the budgets of States under President's Rule. A heavy and busy schedule lies ahead of you in the coming months. There is today a mood of expectancy in the country and I trust that you will co-operate fully in attending to the business that will be placed before you by Government, with thoroughness and expedition. I commend you to your tasks and wish you all success.

Jai Hind.



Dr. N. SANJIVA REDDY



ADDRESS TO PARLIAMENT—20 FEBRUARY 1978

Lok Sabha	—	Sixth Lok Sabha
Session	—	First Session of the year
President of India	—	Dr. N. Sanjiva Reddy
Vice-President of India	—	Shri B. D. Jatti
Prime Minister of India	—	Shri Morarji Desai
Speaker, Lok Sabha	—	Shri K. S. Hegde

HONOURABLE MEMBERS,

I welcome you to this first session of Parliament in the current year which is also the first that I am addressing since I assumed the Office of President of India. While there are many things that claim our attention on this day, my thoughts go out to the people who lost their lives and property and to their kith and kin who survived, the devastating cyclones which struck Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Pondicherry* and Lakshadweep. My Government has treated this as a national calamity and has rendered all possible assistance and has fully cooperated with the concerned State Governments in organising relief measures. People from every part of our country have spontaneously and generously made contributions and I should like to place on record my sincere appreciation of their help.

In the eleven months that have elapsed since the general election, Parliament and Government have gone ahead with speed in restoring to the people the freedoms and protections guaranteed by the Constitution in their original plenitude. The Courts have regained their powers. The Press is free. The citizen is no longer in fear of arbitrary restrictions on his freedom. Step by step, the promise of re-establishing a just balance between and among the legislature, the executive, the judiciary and the citizen is being fulfilled. In fact the process is nearly complete except for the constitutional amendments that have to be made.

One of the first tasks to which the Government addressed itself in terms of its mandate was the removal of the authoritarian provisions that had been introduced into the Constitution. The Constitution (Forty-fourth Amendment) Bill, which has been passed by both the Houses of Parliament, is now before the State Legislatures for ratification and does away with the

* Now known as Puducherry.

various restrictions on the jurisdiction of courts. After detailed discussions with leaders of the Opposition Parties, a comprehensive Bill to abolish the distortions introduced by the Constitution (Forty-second Amendment) Act, has been drafted and will be introduced during the course of this session. I hope it will receive the full and early cooperation of all sections of the two Houses so that the Constitution can be restored to its true form by removing the dark spots. In particular, there is need to build bulwarks against any possible future bid to use the Constitution itself to negate and subvert the basic principles of democracy.

Several changes that had been introduced in the electoral laws vitiating the equality before law, altering the concept of corrupt practices and abridging the power to appeal to the courts have been repealed. Another Bill is before you to repeal the amendments made in the Representation of Peoples Act in 1974 and in 1975 so as to restore the democratic elements which obtained prior to these amendments. While undemocratic intrusions are thus being removed, there is need for basic reforms in electoral laws and procedures in order to make the electoral process more equitable and less susceptible to pernicious influences. Government is studying this question in detail and will place its proposals before the political parties very soon.

The people earnestly yearn for cleaner politics and cleaner administration at all levels. Unless there is faith in the probity of the holders of high office, the future of constitutional Government will not be secure. The Commissions constituted to enquire into the excesses of the Emergency and the allegations against certain individuals who had misused their positions are engaged in their onerous tasks. The Lokpal Bill designed to provide for practical and reliable safeguards against corruption and misuse of power by the elected representatives of the people is before you. Government will also be introducing a Bill to provide that all Members of Parliament should declare their assets, liabilities and business interests.

An alert public opinion is the best guarantor of rule of law and of honest and efficient democratic Government. By repealing the Prevention of Publication of Objectionable Matter Act and reviving the Parliament Proceedings (Protection of Publication) Act, Parliament has enabled the Press to function once more as a watchdog of liberty of the individual and well-being of the community. Government has taken the initiative to end any kind of control over news agencies. Assessment of the performance of the Press should be left to professional organisations, like the Press Council, which I hope will soon be revived. In order further to facilitate the growth of sturdy and independent newspapers and news services in the country, Government proposes to appoint a Press Commission to make suitable recommendations.

The facilities given to all political parties to broadcast over the radio and the television during the elections to State Assemblies in June, 1977

opened a new chapter in the annals of our media. Government has made it very clear not to use the official media for partisan purposes and is awaiting the report of the Working Group which is studying the question of giving greater autonomy to Akashvani and Doordarshan.

A thorough review of the Maintenance of Internal Security Act has been made by Government and a Bill has already been introduced for the repeal of MISA and for amending the Code of Criminal Procedure. Government has seen to it that while retaining the minimum necessary legal sanctions in the interest of security and defence of India, maintenance of public order and all services and supplies essential to the life of the community, necessary safeguards, including review by boards of judges nominated by the Chief Justices of High Courts, are provided to prevent any kind of arbitrariness in the exercise of such powers.

In some areas of national life, the suppressed feelings of the people have found expression in various forms of protests and agitations. At the same time, the removal of restrictions has been utilised by some sections to indulge in acts of violence, intimidation and sabotage. There have also been acts and threats of terrorism against our personnel and property abroad. While any aggrieved section is welcome to seek redress of its legitimate grievances through constitutional channels open to it, the Government cannot obviously permit lawlessness and violence. Stringent deterrent action will be taken against those indulging in them. The police in the country has to be transformed into an effective instrument of public service not only to maintain law and order but also to protect the rights of citizens, especially the weaker sections. Government has issued detailed directions to the Administration in this regard. Since the Indian Police Act was enacted in 1861 and the last Police Commission was set up as far back as in 1902, the Government has appointed a National Police Commission to examine and recommend on all the major issues pertaining to police administration in the country.

The Government attaches highest importance to the enforcement of the rights and safeguards for Minorities/Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and Backward Classes. The Government feels that standing institutional arrangements are necessary to enable these sections to participate effectively and freely as equal members in the national mainstream. The following Commissions are, therefore, being set up:

- (1) The Minorities Commission is being set up for the enforcement of constitutional safeguards and the protection of laws passed by the Union and the State Governments; and
- (2) The Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Commission is being set up to investigate all matters pertaining to the safeguards for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes under the Constitution and laws.

A Backward Classes Commission is being set up to go into the problems of the backward classes and make recommendations to improve their conditions.

Due to proper management of the economy in the past year, it is today well placed for making a rapid advance in the coming year. The rate of growth of the economy has risen to 5 per cent this year as against less than 2 per cent in the year prior to the assumption of office by this Government. Agricultural production has made up the ground lost last year and foodgrain production is expected to be above 118 million tonnes. The production of commercial crops also is much larger during the current year. The balance of payments continues to be strong in spite of a deceleration of export earnings and our foreign exchange reserves have continued to rise significantly. Procurement has been large in spite of the removal of the zonal system and food stocks are currently about 17 million tonnes even though the off-take from the public distribution system is larger.

Inflationary pressures have been brought under check. While the price rise in the previous year was about 12 per cent, the current level of prices is no higher than the level at the end of March, 1977. The growth of money supply which had been as high as 20 per cent has been brought down substantially in the current year. However, since the inflationary potential in the economy is considerable Government does not view the price situation with complacency. All available instruments will be deployed to maintain reasonable price stability during the next year.

This Government inherited an economy in which poverty and unemployment were acute, particularly in the rural areas, and in which the development of the past 30 years had not benefited large numbers. To rectify this neglect of the rural areas as well as to solve the chronic problems of poverty and unemployment Government decided to re-orient the strategy of development. Therefore, the Fifth Five Year Plan is being terminated this year and a new Five Year Plan is being started from April 1978, which will incorporate fully the new thinking of the Government regarding the strategy of development. The primary objectives would be the removal of unemployment and substantial underemployment in the shortest possible time, increasing the availability of basic goods and services to the people in the lowest income groups in the same period, a significant reduction in disparities of income and wealth and a steady progress towards technical self-reliance. The next Five Year Plan will therefore, give particular emphasis to agriculture and allied activities, cottage and small scale industries, irrigation and power, adult education, universalisation of elementary education, rural water supply and rural roads. The production of basic goods necessary for the economy, such as oil, coal, metals, fertilizers, cement will also be emphasised.

Government has announced a new Industrial Policy which lays emphasis on the development of cottage and small industries widely dispersed throughout the country. This should help in achieving our goal of rapidly increasing employment. This policy which also covers the role of public sector and large industries, indigenous and foreign technology, foreign investment, workers' participation and related matters, will go a long way in removing any uncertainty in this regard and lead to a revival of investment.

In the sphere of foreign trade, India's exports have made further advance during the year. The Government has adopted a deliberate policy of minimising the social cost of our exports and has regulated the exports of essential items such as sugar, rice, oil, oilseeds, fresh vegetables and cement. The adverse impact of this on export earnings has been more than made good by encouraging the growth of exports in the dynamic sectors.

Long years of shortages of domestically produced commodities and imports have led to a host of controls and regulations through the economy. Government is keen that those that have outlived their utility should be removed so that the enterprise and initiative of the people have full play in determining economic activity. The current state of the economy is such that such a policy can be effectively pursued. Already the policy and procedures regarding exports and imports and industrial licensing have been examined with this objective in mind. A committee has been constituted to study comprehensively the entire systems of controls and make recommendations to reduce and streamline them.

Industrial unrest will lead to loss in production and this will not be in anybody's interest. I appeal to employers, employees and others concerned to ensure harmonious industrial relations so that growth is not affected. In this context, I would like to refer to the study group set up by Government to examine this difficult subject. I hope the recommendations of the study group will help in the evolution of a rational wage and income policy.

My Government attaches great importance to the need of overhauling the educational system with a view to meeting the challenge of development as well as providing opportunities of public service to the students. The problem of illiteracy on such a large scale as prevails also requires to be given priority attention. We have thus to think of educational policies in terms of not only academic but also adult education. In fact, if the country is to make accelerated progress towards the goal we have set before it, the spread of literacy on mass scale is indispensable. Various avenues of consultation with educational authorities have been explored by the Ministry of Education and as a result, guidelines in respect of different fields of education, namely university education, secondary education and primary and adult education have been prepared and enhanced provision is being made in the Central and State plans.

Government attaches the full importance to the promotion of science and technology in order to improve the quality and content of the lives of our people and be conducive to increasing employment. Research effort is being stepped up and made more relevant to our immediate problems in natural resources survey, in agriculture and industry and in energy sources. Government has taken up the implementation of a National Satellite Project. Through this project significant improvement in communications, meteorological and disaster-warning services will become available to the country.

I must refer now to a matter of great importance to our future well-being. The family planning programme has suffered a set-back this year as a reaction to the excesses committed during the Emergency. We cannot afford to allow this trend in this vital matter. The fact that we are keen that family planning should be wholly voluntary requires that there should be a much greater effort towards education and motivation. I appeal to the State Governments and to all people to recognise the importance of the programme and to assist in the measures to achieve the national targets.

Another subject of vital importance to family welfare and to the discharge of constitutional responsibility is prohibition. As decided in the Conference of Chief Ministers and Ministers held last year, prohibition will be introduced throughout the country in a phased manner during the next four years. The details of the phased programme are being worked out in consultation with the States.

Hon'ble Members, I now come to our relations with other countries. My Government has spared no effort in striving to make our subcontinent an area of peace and cooperation, through a series of initiatives in our bilateral relations with neighbouring countries. Agreement was reached with Bangladesh on the sharing of the Ganga Waters. We have approached our relations with other neighbours like Bhutan, Nepal, Afghanistan, Burma*, Sri Lanka and Pakistan in the same spirit, based on equality, mutual respect and appreciation of each other's sensitivities and aspirations. In particular, our bilateral relations with Iran have registered an improvement which only an enlightened approach to mutual understanding could have achieved.

Although differences relating to the border remain unresolved, we are gradually improving bilateral relations with China on the basis of the 'Panchsheel'. My Government has recognised the importance of developing close relations with the countries in South-East Asia. We have made significant strides in beginning to build bridges of cooperation with the Democratic Republic of Vietnam and other States of Indo-China and with the Commonwealth countries in this region. For the first time, the Commonwealth Heads of Governments of the region met together recently

* Now known as Myanmar.

and discussed methods of increasing mutual cooperation. With Japan, there is a deeper understanding and realisation that Indo-Japanese relations can be a contributing factor in achieving peace and promoting development in Asia.

The Government has based its relations with the Great Powers on the firm belief in a commitment to genuine non-alignment, beneficial bilateralism and furtherance of constructive international cooperation. We are confident that the many sided cooperation and understanding which we have built with the Soviet Union and other Socialist countries will be strengthened and enriched. We have achieved cordiality and friendship in our relations with the United States of America and Western democracies with whom we share a common belief in the democratic system of Government. It is our hope that notwithstanding the differences which we may have had in the past, we can now foster these relations to a new level and quality of mutual confidence which will transcend differences on specific matters and enlarge the area of understanding and faith in each other.

Tensions still beset specific areas of the world, particularly in Southern Africa and West Asia. We have continued to support the African countries and their liberation movements in the struggle against colonialism and racialism and have pledged our political and material support to the liberation movements in Namibia, Zimbabwe, and South Africa. We cannot over-emphasise the need for unity amongst the African leaders in dealing with the common enemy of racialism and colonialism. In West Asia, we continue to hold the view that a just and lasting settlement based on the withdrawal of Israeli forces from all occupied territories, and in accordance with the resolutions of the United Nations which secure the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people and security for all States of the region, is essential durable peace in that region.

My Government has strengthened India's constructive participation in international forums—in the United Nations, in the non-aligned world, in the Commonwealth and in the conference on International Economic Cooperation.

We are convinced that the enormous problems facing both the developing and the developed countries can be solved only if there is peace and stability in all parts of the world. In order to bring this about, it is essential that the major nuclear powers arrive at an early agreement on test ban, on reduction and ultimate elimination of all nuclear weapons, and on peaceful exploitation of atomic energy on the basis of respect for sovereignty, equality and non-discrimination. Nuclear disarmament is a matter of foremost concern to all the countries of the world and we hope that at the Disarmament Conference proposed to be held later this year the major nuclear powers will be able to announce an agreed and time-bound programme of disarmament. For our part, we have reiterated our solemn resolve to use nuclear energy only for peaceful purposes and have also

made it clear that we will unilaterally desist from making nuclear tests. We are, however, opposed to any form of discrimination in this vital sector.

Hon'ble Members, during this Session you have to consider the Statement of Receipts and Expenditure and the Demands for Grants for the coming financial year which will determine the new direction in which the country will progress in the coming years. You will have to finalise the legislative measures already pending with you and also deal with the new ones that will be presented, to some of which I have earlier made mention. Many of these measures are of far-reaching importance in strengthening our democratic polity and economy. You thus have a very heavy agenda before you. I would not therefore detain you any longer. I summon you to your endeavours and wish you all success.

Jai Hind.

ADDRESS TO PARLIAMENT—19 FEBRUARY 1979

Lok Sabha	—	Sixth Lok Sabha
Session	—	First Session of the Year
President of India	—	Dr. N. Sanjiva Reddy
Vice-President of India	—	Shri B. D. Jatti
Prime Minister of India	—	Shri Morarji Desai
Speaker, Lok Sabha	—	Shri K. S. Hegde

HON'BLE MEMBERS,

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to this session of Parliament, the first in 1979. You have a heavy schedule of business ahead of you, and at the outset, let me wish you godspeed in the completion of your budgetary and legislative business.

Last year we had unprecedented floods which were the worst within living memory. Many lives were lost; crops were damaged over large areas and there was heavy loss to both private and public property. We cannot but admire the courage and fortitude with which our people faced this calamity. The State Administrations met the extremely difficult situation arising out of these floods with commendable speed and efficiency. The Central Government allocated assistance liberally both in cash and kind. The Defence Services and police personnel also played a notable role in affording relief and I wish to place on record our tribute to all of them. I would also, at this stage, like to record my gratitude to the various agencies and individuals, both in India and abroad, who came forward with donations in cash and kind and also rendered service in various forms. In the light of the experience of such large scale floods, the Government is giving special attention to an integrated approach for their control.

Last year, I referred to the repeal of the amendments made in the Representation of the People Act in 1974 and 1975, so as to restore the democratic elements obtaining prior to these amendments. Government has under consideration basic reforms in electoral laws and procedures in order to make the electoral process more equitable, and less susceptible to pernicious influences. The detailed proposals evolved will be discussed with the political parties.

It needs to be noted that our system has withstood the strains and stresses of the times, largely as a result of restoration of civil liberties, the free play of democratic processes and the containing of inflationary pressures. In the years before 1977 there was a period of high inflation followed by a period of repression of all demands. Many of the demands of today only seek to make up for the denials of the earlier period. Yet it is somewhat unfortunate that some of these demands should have their origin more in politics than in economics.

Government continued its efforts at freeing the democratic processes from the shackles of the Emergency, and restoring the rule of law. The Constitution (Forty-fifth Amendment) Bill, which has been passed by both the Houses of Parliament, is now before the State Legislatures for ratification. Action is being taken on the reports of the Commissions which inquired into the excesses of the Emergency and the alleged misuse of their high positions by certain individuals. The Government proposes to bring forward legislation to constitute Special Courts for trial of offences committed by persons holding high political and public office during the Emergency. The Working Group appointed to study the question of giving greater autonomy to *Akashvani* and *Doordarshan* submitted its report. The Government proposes to introduce legislation on the subject as early as possible.

Over the last few years, the centre of gravity of political processes has been shifting from urban to rural areas. The rising tide of, expectations has made the rural community extremely sensitive to economic factors. This shift is also accompanied by an increase in social tensions. The success of our democracy will depend upon our ability to manage this shift, both in political and economic terms, in an orderly manner.

Last year, I had referred to the directional changes being undertaken by the Government by reorienting the strategy of development and launching a frontal attack on the problems of poverty and mass unemployment, particularly in rural areas. The Plan reflects this primary concern of the Government. The basic approach of the Government has been endorsed by the National Development Council.

Considering the role the States are required to play in the development of the country, it is appropriate that they should be enabled to do so financially. The Seventh Finance Commission provided for substantial devolution of financial resources to the States. The Government of India accepted the recommendations of the Commission. The National Development Council directed that a review be made of Centre-State financial relations, having regard to the provisions of the Constitution, and appointed a Committee to go into this. In 1978-79, for the first time since the inception of the planning process, the total of the States' Plan outlays exceeded those of the Centre.

The year 1977-78 witnessed a growth of national income of about 7.4 per cent (at 1970-71 prices) as against 1.4 per cent in the previous year. The high priority accorded to agriculture and rural development has started yielding encouraging results. In the current year in spite of the extensive flood damage in Bihar, U.P. and West Bengal, the *kharif* foodgrains production is likely to be around that of the last year. The output of groundnut, oilseeds, cotton and jute is likely to surpass last year's level. Prospects for the current *rabi* crops are also bright.

Additional irrigation potential of 26 lakh hectares was created in 1977-78, the highest ever achieved by any country in a single year. For the current year the target is 28 lakh hectares. The consumption of fertilisers in 1977-78 recorded a 26 per cent increase over the previous year, and this year too the upward trend has been maintained. The irrigation and fertiliser consumption data underline the success of the policy of increased attention to the agricultural sphere, and with obvious results.

The record level of foodgrains production, which was 125.6 million tonnes last year, has resulted in a comfortable food supply situation. Cereal supplies have been plentiful and their prices stable. The disparity in foodgrains' prices between surplus and deficit areas has narrowed in the absence of restrictions on movement.

Sugar production achieved a new peak of 64.7 lakh tonnes in 1977-78, an increase of nearly 34 per cent over the previous year's record. Consumption of sugar increased by 20 per cent to nearly 45 lakh tonnes. Control on sugar distribution and prices was removed with effect from 16 August, 1978, and thereafter sugar prices declined, benefiting the consumer. A package of measures to protect the growers' long-term interests has been worked out.

The increased foodgrains and industrial production is reflected in price-levels remaining stable and essential commodities and consumer goods being easily available throughout the country. The wholesale price index moved within a narrow range of less than 2 per cent during the greater part of the current year. In fact, the index for April-October, 1978 was, on an average, 1.1 per cent lower than that for the same months of 1977, which itself was a period of relative price stability. Price stability has been achieved through monetary and fiscal discipline, appropriate pricing policies, increased production, availability of essential consumer items' supply like edible oils through imports, and regulation of export of essential commodities. However, there are still certain sensitive commodities like pulses, oilseeds, and cement whose prices and availability are a matter of concern. Programmes for increased production of these commodities have been taken up.

The steps taken by the Government to relax the regime of controls are bearing fruit. The removal of restrictions on movement of foodgrains and

relaxations in the industrial licensing and import policies and procedures have led to benefits both to producers and consumers. A committee is going into the question of further possible relaxations in the regime of controls.

For ameliorating the economic conditions of the rural poor, a significant step taken in 1978-79 was the introduction of the programme of Integrated Rural Development. The new programme attempts to mount a frontal attack on rural poverty through intensification of developmental activity in rural areas. Out of a total of 5,004 blocks, 2,300 have been selected for intensive development, and are to be given special assistance of Rs. 5 lakhs per block for formulating schemes of benefit to the weaker sections, over and above the outlay under the normal development programmes of the block. Such additional assistance will generate gainful employment for the rural unemployed and underemployed, raise their incomes, and nutritional and living standards. Durable community assets will be created, thereby strengthening the rural infrastructure. The Food for Work programme has become a major instrument of rural development and employment. Last year, 2.04 lakh tonnes of wheat was distributed under this programme through the States, while this year 10 lakh tonnes is targeted. Forty crore man-days of work are expected to be created by this year's Food for Work schemes.

A Committee under the chairmanship of Shri Asoka Mehta inquired into the working of Panchayati Raj institutions and suggested measures for a more effective and decentralised system of rural planning and development. Its report is to be discussed with the States in the near future.

Government attaches great importance to speedy implementation of land reform measures. The protection afforded by the Ninth Schedule of the Constitution will be extended to all new land reform laws. Up to November, 1978, 6.48 lakh hectares of land had been distributed to the landless. More than fifty per cent of the beneficiaries belonged to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. The State Governments have been urged to close the gap between declaring of surplus areas and their distribution. Attention of the State Governments has also been drawn to the need for proper maintenance of land records including their updating. Surveys and settlement operations are being taken up on a large scale, and special drives have been undertaken by the States for disposal of pending cases.

Agricultural credit to the weaker sections of the community such as small and marginal farmers, agricultural labourers, rural artisans, tenants, share-croppers, scheduled castes and scheduled tribes has been emphasised. The volume of agricultural credit is expected to be of the order of Rs. 2,215 crores by the end of 1978-79, against Rs. 1,676 crores the preceding year. Over one-third of the total institutional credit is drawn by weaker sections of the community.

In accordance with the National Cooperative Policy Resolution, steps have been taken to see that cooperatives provide the requirements of credit, fertilisers and other agricultural inputs. Cooperatives are also marketing and processing agricultural commodities and providing price support for them. The supply of essential articles of mass consumption at reasonable prices is being done through a large number of cooperative outlets, especially in the rural areas.

In order to create employment opportunities through development of decentralised rural, small and cottage industries, the Government is setting up district industries centres in every district of the country. About 250 such centres have been sanctioned so far, and the rest are proposed to be set up in the coming year. The assistance programmes of the Khadi and Village Industries Commission have been strengthened. The number of items reserved for exclusive development in the small sector has been increased from 504 to 807, and legislation to provide protection to small and cottage industries is proposed to be undertaken.

Government recognises the necessity of making available to the rural community its basic minimum needs in the shape of drinking water supply, rural roads, healthcare, elementary and adult education (especially for women), house-sites for the homeless, and programmes have been approved for all of these. For example, the aim is to provide safe drinking water to over 1,13,000 "problem" villages by March, 1981. Of these, 18,000 villages were covered last year, and 27,000 more are likely to be covered this year. Also, housing for the weaker sections in both rural and urban areas is being provided, and a large amount is being specifically earmarked for rural housing. The scope of the Rural House Sites Scheme, under which 7.46 million landless families have already been given house-sites, is being expanded to provide financial assistance for the construction of low cost houses by these families. I hope that the State Governments will implement the minimum needs programme in right earnest.

A viable production-cum-distribution scheme has been drawn up in accordance with the recommendation of the National Development Council and approved by the Union and State Governments. The scheme consists of a package of measures covering production, procurement, storage, transportation and distribution. The bulk of the beneficiaries of the proposed system will be the weaker sections of society. The scheme will be taken up for implementation throughout the country with effect from 1st July, 1979.

Six new railway lines to serve the transport needs of the north-eastern part of the country have been sanctioned. With these, every State and Union Territory of the region will be connected by the railway system.

Government announced a programme of action to achieve an industrial growth rate between 7 and 8 per cent in 1978-79. This goal is likely to be

achieved, despite widespread floods which seriously affected vital sectors like coal, steel and the railways. Effective monitoring helped overcome bottlenecks, and during April-November 1978, the rate of growth was about 8 per cent. Targets for next year, now under finalisation, will be higher than what is achieved this year. Electricity generation which is up by nearly 13 per cent this year so far over last year, is no longer a constraint, while total steel production is up by nearly 6 per cent over last year. Production of fertilisers, commercial vehicles and aluminium is well over last year's levels. A strategy has already been finalised by the Government to meet the overall requirements of the country in certain hard-core sectors, such as, fertilisers, oil and gas, steel, cement, paper, aluminium and other non-ferrous metals so that the country does not have to face continued shortages in these basic areas of our economic development as in the past. The state of health of the Indian shipping industry is also of concern to Government. In view of its importance, Government has decided to extend assistance to deserving shipping companies to overcome their acute cash flow difficulties. For dealing with industrial sickness generally, Government has laid down a set of guidelines which will govern the taking over of sick units with discrimination, in place of the *ad hoc* approach formerly adopted. A high powered Screening Committee examines all such proposals and recommends appropriate action.

In view of the importance of the textile sector in generating new employment opportunities, an integrated textile policy was announced in August 1978, which lays emphasis on development of handlooms for purposes of meeting the clothing requirements of the masses as well as for generation of further employment opportunities. Arrangements for distribution of controlled cloth have been strengthened, and the NTC has been given the major responsibility for production of cheap cloth. Output of cotton yarn in the first eight months of the financial year increased by over 9 per cent, which is a record. The output of cloth in the mill sector increased by only 2 per cent, which indicates that, as envisaged in the new policy, a major part of the yarn output has gone to increased production in the decentralised sector.

The Industrial Relations Bill now before Parliament constitutes a comprehensive approach to the establishment of sound labour-management relations. The Bill deserves earnest and early consideration by Hon'ble Members.

Government has initiated action to fulfil its undertaking to spread literacy. A massive National Adult Education Programme has been launched to cover 100 million adult illiterates in the next five years. A programme to universalise elementary education within the next decade is also being put into operation. Concurrently, programmes have been initiated to recast the content of education at all stages with a view to making education

functional and related to the lives of the people and the environment. For women, functional literacy programmes are to be undertaken to impart educational and vocational skills to adult women.

The International Year of the Child is being observed in 1979 in accordance with the resolution of the United Nations General Assembly. Government proposes to expand integrated health, nutrition, immunisation and educational services for pre-school children along with functional literacy for adult women and training of child welfare workers. A National Children's Fund is being setup to help voluntary organisations take up programmes for child welfare.

Based on the recommendations of the Kothari Committee and the UPSC, Government has approved a modified system of examination aimed at broadening the base for selection. Under the system there will be a screening test, and candidates will be allowed to write in any of the languages of the Eighth Schedule.

A high rate of population growth reduces the country's economic gains. The Government is determined to pursue the family planning programme vigorously. The urgency of the problem calls for the fullest possible cooperation of the State Governments and the people. The country as a whole must accept the concept of a small family.

Government is committed to the Science Policy Resolution, 1958. The outlay proposed for scientific research in the 1978-83. Plan is Rs. 2,491 crores, which is almost double of that in the Fifth Plan. The Government intends shortly to issue a statement on technology policy.

In our relations with the rest of the world, the Government has steadfastly pursued the policy of non-alignment and positive cooperation with all countries. It is a matter of deep gratification that our foreign policy is better understood now and respected by all countries as contributing to the process of regional and global peace and security.

India's relations with major powers are based on our deep commitment to non-alignment, mutuality of interest, reciprocity and constructive cooperation. The visit of the Prime Minister to Washington in June, 1978 has given further impetus to improved relations between India and U.S.A. While our views may not coincide with those held by them on all issues, we share with the U.S.A. many fundamental values. With the U.S.S.R., we have initiated a programme of long term cooperation and are confident that the multiple links that bind our two countries will be further consolidated during the forthcoming visit of Premier Kosygin to this country. The visit of the Prime Minister to the Headquarters of the European Economic Community at Brussels was similarly productive of greater understanding. Steps have been initiated towards the normalisation of our relationship with the People's Republic of China on the basis of 'Panchsheel.' Hon'ble Members are aware of the recent visit of the Foreign Minister to China.

We are gravely concerned at the latest developments on the Sino-Vietnamese Border which carry the potential to endanger international peace and stability. Fighting should end immediately and, as a first step, Chinese forces should withdraw from Vietnam.

In the international forums and U.N. Conferences we continue to work actively for the cause of disarmament, especially nuclear disarmament. At the special session of the United Nations devoted to disarmament and subsequently in the U.N. General Assembly sessions we have consistently campaigned against the attempt to freeze the international power structure on the basis of nuclear weapon status and we have outlined steps that must be taken to ensure progress towards the goal of complete disarmament under effective international control. We firmly believe that commitment to disarmament is an essential step for setting mankind on the path of peace, progress and sanity.

The Government is seriously concerned about the protectionist measures being adopted by developed countries. These have materially affected the country's exports. The growing trend towards protectionism in the developed countries underscores the need for greater collective self-reliance on the part of developing countries. Towards this end, the Government has taken several initiatives in bilateral and multilateral forums.

The search for an enduring and just peace in West Asia continues to defy solution. India's consistent policy to support the just cause of the Arabs remains unchanged and we continue to hope for a comprehensive solution to the problems of the withdrawal of Israel from all occupied territories and the restoration to the Palestinian people of their inalienable rights to self-determination and to a State of their own. Our economic and technological cooperation with the Arab world has grown both in depth and dimension.

In South-East and East Asia, and the Pacific, we have continued to pursue the existing friendly ties and strengthen economic and technological cooperation between our country and those in this region. Steps have been initiated for a dialogue with the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN). The importance we attach to Indo-Japanese relations as a factor contributing to general peace and stability is symbolised by the institution of annual consultations at the level of Foreign Ministers.

Our bilateral relations with countries in Africa have been further strengthened through increased economic cooperation. The situation in Southern Africa continues to cause us concern. Hopes raised for a just and peaceful settlement of the problems of Namibia and Zimbabwe were belied by the ambiguous postures and manoeuvres of the racist regimes. However, it is our sincere hope that freedom will come to Namibia and Zimbabwe in the near future. We have continued to extend moral and material assistance to the liberation movements in Southern Africa.

While we shall pursue our policy of peace and cooperation around the world, and especially so with our immediate neighbours, we recognise the need to maintain effective defence preparedness at all times. I am happy to say that the state of morale and training of our Defence Forces continues to be excellent. Steps are in hand to modernise their equipment. In this task, our defence industries continue to play a significant part. Progressive self-reliance and indigenisation are the main goals in their further development.

Hon'ble Members, in what I have outlined, there is considerable evidence to justify hope and confidence about sustained progress of this country towards building up a just social and economic order provided there is unity of effort to achieve this goal. While there may be different approaches, we should strive for identity of purposiveness in our efforts and avoid actions, postures and pronouncements which would be self-defeating from the point of view of achieving our national goals. In this spirit of unified national endeavour I commend to you the business of this session and wish you all success.

Jai Hind.

ADDRESS TO PARLIAMENT—23 JANUARY 1980

Lok Sabha	—	Seventh Lok Sabha
Session	—	First Session after the 7th General Election
President of India	—	Dr. N. Sanjiva Reddy
Vice-President of India	—	Shri M. Hidayatullah
Prime Minister of India	—	Smt. Indira Gandhi
Speaker, Lok Sabha	—	Dr. Bal Ram Jakhar

HONOURABLE MEMBERS,

It gives me pleasure to welcome you to this first joint session of the Seventh Parliament. I extend my felicitations to the members of the new Lok Sabha.

The Sixth Lok Sabha was elected in March 1977. But it could not last its full term and had to be dissolved less than half-way through. After its dissolution, the governance of the country had to be carried on for some months without a Lok Sabha. Happily the uncertainty of these last few months has been resolved. The people of India have gone through the democratic process, unambiguously rejected philosophies based on regional, linguistic, sectoral or communal differences and have chosen to be governed by those who derive their mandate from all parts of the country and all sections of the population. The result of the elections has made it possible for the country to look forward to a period of stable government at the Centre.

It is a matter of regret that today we do not have amongst us here representatives from a number of constituencies of some of the North-Eastern States. The problems of this region, and more especially of Assam at the moment, require to be dealt with urgently and in a spirit of understanding and mutual accommodation on all sides. The Government will spare no pains to secure speedy solutions to these problems and to put an end to violence. Government appeals to all sections of the people to help in creating conditions conducive to this.

Anti-national forces have become active on our borders posing a fresh threat to our security. Communal and other divisive forces have also reared their ugly heads in different parts of the country causing serious prejudice

to our ideals of national integration and national unity. The confidence of linguistic and other minorities, Harijans and weaker sections of society has been seriously eroded. Increase in crime and inadequacy of measures to detect and prevent crime have created a sense of insecurity in the minds of law-abiding people. Disrespect for law and widespread indiscipline have slowed down the wheels of productive endeavour.

The economic situation which the present Government has inherited is a matter of grave concern and anxiety. The last year has witnessed a vicious inflationary spiral with prices registering a rise of about 20 per cent. There has been a severe set-back in agricultural production while industrial production has remained stagnant. The breakdown of infrastructure, particularly in certain parts of the country, has led to sharp reduction in output in key sectors, such as steel and cement. This has necessitated costly imports from abroad while domestic capacity built at considerable cost has remained idle. There has been virtually no increase in the production of coal. The rate of growth of exports has slackened and the balance of trade is seriously in deficit. Lack of effective management has resulted in the deterioration of the national economy. There has been a worsening of industrial relations and a loss of morale in the entire industrial sector.

The massive and broadbased confidence reposed by the people in the new Government reflects a keen desire that the deterioration in the law and order sector as well as in the economy should be halted and reversed. The Government would like to assure the people that this is indeed what it proposes to do with determination and speed.

The Government will do its utmost to put down lawlessness and restore confidence amongst all people, especially those belonging to the weaker sections. The law enforcement agencies at the Centre and in the States will be activated, so that problems are dealt with promptly and effectively.

Hon'ble Members, the new Government has taken charge just over a week ago. The Budget will be presented in the next Session when the socio-economic measures proposed to be adopted in the furtherance of Government's broad objectives will be spelt out. However, there are certain matters which require to be mentioned.

The Government would like to re-affirm its commitment to planning as an essential tool for engineering social and economic change. The great task of nation-building will have to be resumed with redoubled vigour so that coming generations can hope for a fuller and better life.

The Government will devote immediate attention to restoring the economic health of the nation. Measures for the control of prices will be initiated. Stringent action will be taken against anti-social elements such as smugglers, hoarders and black marketeers.

The Government is conscious of its duty to the weaker sections of society. The 20-point economic programme, which had proved a boon to the poor, the landless, the artisans, handloom weavers, scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and other socially backward sections, will be revitalised and implemented in a dynamic manner. The minimum needs programme started during the Fifth Plan will once again be accorded high priority, with special stress on education and health.

Agriculture and rural development, with special emphasis on assistance to small and marginal farmers as well as agricultural labourers, will receive the highest priority in the Government's strategy. Immediate attention will be given to alleviate the distress caused by the widespread drought. All assistance will be extended to the farmers to achieve maximum production by ensuring proper and timely supply of inputs like fertilizers, credit, water, electricity, diesel, kerosene, etc. For this the co-operation of the State Governments will be secured in full measure. It will be the Government's endeavour to ensure proper remunerative prices to the farmer for his produce. While providing for sustained growth of agriculture the Government will devote greater attention to the production of commodities such as oilseeds to eliminate our dependence on foreign sources for such vital necessities.

Infrastructural facilities which had deteriorated leading to transport bottlenecks and inadequate supply of crucial inputs like steel, cement, coal and power will be strengthened and given very high priority. The efficiency of movement by railways and by ships as also prompt clearance of goods at ports will be ensured by close monitoring and timely remedial action.

On the industrial front emphasis will be laid on the rapid increase in industrial production through better utilization of existing capacity, improved labour relations and better management particularly of public sector undertakings. Efforts will be directed to systematic expansion of our exports through better management of both the agricultural and industrial sectors.

The country is faced with a massive energy crisis. We are entering a period of rising energy costs and likely shortages in supplies. The Government proposes to evolve a comprehensive national policy on Energy with emphasis on fuller utilization of renewable energy sources, both traditional and non-traditional.

The steady deterioration of the environment threatens the present and future well-being of the country and the people. Afforestation, flood control, soil conservation, preservation of flora and fauna, proper land use planning, water and air pollution controls, and judicious location of industries must be undertaken urgently. The Government is setting up a specialised machinery with adequate powers to cooperatives in all planned development measures to maintain the ecological balance.

The role of Science and Technology will be strengthened. Steps will be taken to ensure that research and development get their due place in all important sectors of national endeavour.

The Government reiterates its commitment to the freedom of the Press. It believes in providing all possible encouragement for the development of small and medium newspapers including those in regional languages.

An independent judiciary is a necessary concomitant of the democratic process. The Government is anxious that our legal system should provide speedy justice and that opportunities for securing justice are not denied to any citizen by reason of economic or other disabilities. Measures for this purpose and other allied matters are proposed to be initiated.

The Government is committed fully to secularism and will take steps to ensure that the minorities, while preserving their distinct cultural identities, enjoy a sense of full and equal participation in all spheres of national life. Legislation for assuring the minority character of the Aligarh Muslim University will be introduced in the next Session.

In a polity like ours, healthy relations between the Centre and the States are essential for effective functioning. It will be the endeavour of the Central Government to maintain and foster such relations.

In international affairs, the Government will follow the path of non-alignment. India has always stood steadfast in the independence of its judgement in the making of her foreign policy. Neither pressures nor blandishments have swayed us from the pursuit of our own national interests. Consistent with the above principles the Government intends to promote our essential goals without fear or favour. The Government will pursue a dynamic, positive and unifying policy. It will endeavour to narrow the gap between the developed and developing nations so as to ensure enduring peace and equitably distributed prosperity. On the basis of sovereign equality, mutual respect and non-interference in internal affairs, it will maintain and strengthen friendly relations with all countries.

The intervention of outside forces and the induction of armaments in the region as well as in our neighbourhood have created a dangerous situation not only for ourselves but for the entire area. Recent developments in Afghanistan highlight the re-emergence of the cold war. This is a matter of grave concern. The countries of the region should be allowed to devote their energies to the promotion of regional stability and co-operation with one another. The resources of the region are enormous and should be utilised for the welfare of the people there. To subject these countries to Big Power rivalries is totally unacceptable to us. The Government intends to initiate consultations and action to foster co-operation for the well being of the entire region.

With our neighbours, the Government intends to follow a policy of co-operation and friendship. With Pakistan our relations are in the process of normalisation and the Government proposes to continue on the course set in motion by the Simla Agreement of 1972. We hope that the Government's policy will be reciprocated in ample measure.

Sino-Indian moves towards normalised relations, a potentially stabilising factor, were inevitably affected by the Sino-Vietnam conflict. India remains willing to discuss all issues with China including the boundary question in search of a peaceful solution based on equality. We hope to progress also as regards bilateral exchanges.

Our friendship with Vietnam remains a constant factor in our policy. We stand for a Kampuchea able to seek its own destiny free of outside pressure. We intend to continue to improve our relations with ASEAN for whose members we have goodwill and understanding. The need in South-East Asia is for mutual confidence and relaxation of tensions.

Distance has been no bar to our forging close and friendly relations with the countries of Latin America or the far-flung countries of the Commonwealth. Our relations with Japan and the countries of Europe are comprehensive in nature and are mutually satisfying.

With our brethren in Africa we have stood shoulder to shoulder in the struggle against colonialism and racialism. Our solidarity with the Arab cause is based on principles and we believe that a solution to the problems of West Asia cannot be found without conceding the legitimate demands of the Palestinians for their homeland.

Our relations with the Soviet Union have expanded, based on an abiding friendship which demonstrates the virtues of reliability and mutual understanding. We intend to depend and extend this co-operation.

We have many-sided relations with the United States. These will be further consolidated in the context of the common values we cherish as sister democracies. We hope we can both cooperate in our efforts to establish peace and stability with development and co-operation in our region.

President Zia-ur-Rahman of Bangladesh has just concluded his visit to India. President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing of France will be our Chief Guest at the Republic Day celebrations this year. Chancellor Kreisky of Austria and President Castro of Cuba are visiting us shortly. We are confident that such exchanges significantly strengthen our relations with other countries.

Honourable Members, the present Session will be a short one. You have to attend to urgent legislative business, the most important being the Amendment of the Constitution to continue reservations in the legislatures in favour of Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Anglo-Indians.

During the course of your five year tenure, many issues will come before you for consideration. A healthy and functioning parliamentary democracy proceeds according to well laid down rules of the game. Mutual respect has to be shown by the Government and the Opposition for each other. The harmonising of differing points of view in a spirit of accommodation and conciliation rather than conflict and confrontation is a necessary condition of democratic functioning. I urge all sections of the House to lay the controversies and conflicts of the past behind them and approach the urgent tasks confronting the nation in a spirit of co-operation and harmony, keeping in mind the need to serve the people and to uphold all that is in the national interest. I wish you all success in your efforts.

Jai Hind.

ADDRESS TO PARLIAMENT—16 FEBRUARY 1981

Lok Sabha	—	Seventh Lok Sabha
Session	—	First Session of the Year
President of India	—	Dr. N. Sanjiva Reddy
Vice-President of India	—	Shri M. Hidayatullah
Prime Minister of India	—	Smt. Indira Gandhi
Speaker, Lok Sabha	—	Dr. Bal Ram Jakhar

HONOURABLE MEMBERS,

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to this session of Parliament, the first in the year 1981. You have a heavy and important schedule of business ahead of you. Let me extend my best wishes for the successful completion of your budgetary and legislative business.

In the thirteen months since assuming office, Government have gone ahead with speed and determination to repair the damage caused to the national economy by three years of drift and lack of direction. Anti-inflationary policies were vigorously pursued. The focus of these policies was the augmentation of domestic supplies through higher production, better capacity utilisation, improved performance of infrastructure, imports of essential commodities and curbing of anti-social activities which affect domestic supplies. The public distribution system was strengthened and adequate supplies of essential commodities were ensured. Selective monetary and credit policy brought monetary expansion under control. The result has been a significant slowing down of the inflationary rate from 23 per cent to 15 per cent.

The unprecedented drought of 1979-80 created a very difficult situation. To avert its disastrous consequences, the Central and State Governments mounted a massive relief operation. This included the supply of foodgrains, provision of drinking water and vigorous implementation of the food for work programme. It goes to the credit of all concerned that such a gigantic task was successfully accomplished.

In 1979-80 production of foodgrains went down by as much as 23 million tonnes. Production of sugarcane and oilseeds also declined. This Government devoted greater attention to agricultural production programmes in 1980-81.

Fertilizers, pesticides and improved seeds were made available. Irrigation facilities were augmented. These measures helped ensure substantial increases in production of *kharif* crops like cotton, jute and sugarcane. The production of nearly 79.5 million tonnes of foodgrains during *kharif* was an all time record. Prospects of the current wheat crop are promising.

Other sectors of the domestic economy are also showing clear signs of recovery. The upturn in industrial activity, which started in June-July 1980, gathered momentum in the second half of the fiscal year. As against a 0.1 per cent drop in production in June, 1980 over June, 1979, there was an increase of 10 per cent in January, 1981 over January, 1980. Significant gains have been registered in the production of key commodities. Power generation is expected to rise by 6 per cent. Coal production is already about 8 per cent higher than the level achieved during the corresponding period of the last year. Railways are now operating at a higher level of efficiency and are speeding up the movement of essential commodities. National income is anticipated to increase by about 6.5 per cent during 1980-81.

Our economy cannot be insulated from the impact of external inflationary pressures. The balance of payments position continues to cause concern. The full impact of the sharp increase in oil prices since 1979 has been felt only during 1980-81. Because of this and other price increases affecting the country's essential imports, total imports registered a sharp rise from Rs. 6,800 crores in 1978-79 to Rs. 8,500 crores in 1979-80 and will exceed Rs. 11,000 crores in 1980-81, trade deficit in 1980-81 is thus likely to increase considerably.

Government are taking steps to increase exports and achieve import substitution to the maximum extent possible. Measures taken to augment production for exports include permitting export production in excess of capacity, favourable treatment for the import of technology for such production and incentives to cent per cent export oriented units. Government have decided to set up an Export and Import Bank to help improve credit availability for exports.

The climate for industrial investment and growth has been improved. Investment limits for small scale and ancillary industries have been raised, the facility of automatic growth extended to more industries, and licensing and approval procedures, streamlined. Other steps include maximisation of production and employment generation, correction of regional imbalances, strengthening of agro-based industries, and faster development of export-oriented and import substitution industries. A new strategy for backward area development has also been evolved.

Six more banks were nationalised and the banking system was required to actively provide financial support to the implementation of the 20-Point Programme which has been activated specifically for the uplift of the weaker sections.

Government are firmly committed to safeguarding the interests of farmers. Prices of foodgrains, sugarcane, pulses, cotton, oilseeds and other commodities have been raised. Marketing support in the post-harvest period was ensured through procurement operations.

The policies of decontrol adopted by the previous Government led to drastic reduction in the production of sugarcane and sugar. As a remedy Government enhanced the cane prices payable to farmers, provided incentives to new factories and expansion projects, rationalised the pricing formula with due regard to the needs of the weaker units and constituted a development fund. As a result of the various steps taken, sugar production in the year 1980-81 increased substantially.

A major area of concern has been the inadequate growth of oilseeds production. Apart from intensification of oilseeds production in about 100 selected districts of the country, two specific projects have been approved for execution during 1981-82 relating to soyabean and groundnut development. A major effort is also being made to expand summer irrigated groundnut in the command of selected irrigation projects. Various other measures to improve oilseeds production will also be taken.

The economy is on the road to recovery but there is no room for complacency. Demands for higher prices and incomes by various sections aggravate inflationary pressures. Such demands also lead to reduction of resources available for investment and growth. It is thus necessary both in the national interest as well as their own self interest for all sections of the community to exercise restraint in demanding higher incomes and prices.

The Sixth Plan has been formulated in record time, restoring a sense of dynamism to the development process. It provides for an acceleration of the various programmes and an outlay of Rs. 97,500 crores. The Plan seeks to reconcile the requirements of growth and stability, to strengthen the impulses of modernisation, to achieve self-reliance, to reduce inequality, to generate employment and to progressively reduce poverty.

The programme content of the new Five Year Plan has been devised to adequately subserve these objectives. Apart from the necessary provisions in the public sector plan for infrastructure sectors like coal, energy, irrigation and transport, high priority has been given to agriculture and rural development. Additional irrigation potential of about 14 million hectares will be created during the plan period. Social forestry is being given due emphasis. Programmes for the proper growth of cottage, village and small industries have been adequately taken care of. Provision has been made for social services, keeping in view the needs of women and of the socially depressed and economically backward classes. It has also been ensured that the tempo of programmes relating to education, health and family

planning is effectively augmented. The programme for safe drinking water in rural areas will be accelerated.

Conscious of its commitment to equity based growth, central assistance is being provided for the first time to the special plan for scheduled castes. The quantum of assistance for the tribal sub-plans has also been increased. Programmes of direct productive benefit to the poor, which involve the transfer of assets, provision of inputs, credit, training and services, and the generation of wage employment through the National Rural Employment Programme are being undertaken.

The world energy crisis highlights the need for greater self-reliance on internal sources. A massive programme of oil exploration has been embarked upon which will cover both onshore and offshore areas. Exploitation of other traditional sources such as coal and nuclear energy will also be accelerated.

To increase the availability of renewable and other new sources of energy like solar, tidal and wind, the Government have decided to constitute a Commission for new and renewable energy sources. Government are also initiating measures for evolving a long-term energy policy to eliminate waste, to regulate energy consumption, to diversify sources of energy and expedite exploration of oil and other energy sources. Government will also take steps to economise on oil consumption.

Government are aware that optimum utilisation of our sea resources is important for our future economic development. Since a multi-disciplinary approach is required to exploit the vast resources of the ocean, appropriate institutional arrangements are being worked out.

In Science and Technology, the country reached an important milestone in the peaceful uses of outer space with the successful launching of SLV-3 in July last from Sriharikota. A 35 kg. Rohini satellite was put into orbit. Another major step will be the launching of the Indian National Satellite (INSAT) early in 1982. Steps to get the ground systems ready for the use of this operational satellite are well under way. The Space Profile for the decade 1980-90 has been approved.

Government are fully committed to the preservation of the environment. A Department of Environment has already been created. The protection of forests against indiscriminate exploitation is sought to be achieved by making full use of recently enacted legislation.

In order to link the outlying areas to the trunk routes of Indian Airlines, Government has set up "Vayudoot" to operate feeder air services. This Company will initially operate in West Bengal and the North Eastern States and territories. It began operations on 26th January, 1981.

The year 1981 is the International Year of Disabled Persons. Government have drawn up a plan of action for its observance. This will lead to better awareness of the problems of the handicapped and also help them to make useful contribution to society. It is proposed to expand services for the physically handicapped and to take measures for their treatment, education, training, rehabilitation and placement.

Economic growth and social development can flourish only in an orderly environment. The situation had deteriorated considerably because of communal disharmony, caste conflicts, extremists' activities, atrocities on scheduled castes and scheduled tribes, minorities and other weaker sections of society and a general tendency on the part of various interested parties to engineer agitations on different issues. Secessionist activities and regional movements have also aggravated the situation in some parts of the country. All these have resulted in hardship to the people and monetary loss to the nation.

Several administrative and legal steps were, therefore, taken by Government during the last year to control lawlessness and to maintain peace all over the country. The National Integration Council has been reactivated. In the recent past, improvement in the law and order situation has been noticed. It is hoped that with the co-operation of citizens from all walks of life and of all political parties the situation will steadily improve.

The Government have exercised the utmost forbearance and made earnest efforts at various levels to find an early solution to the problem of 'foreigners' in Assam. Several rounds of discussions have been held with the representatives of the agitating organisations, minorities, tribals and leaders of political parties, both at the National and State levels. It is a matter of great regret that despite its conciliatory and constructive approach the agitation has not been called off. The Government will, however, continue their efforts to find a solution acceptable to all concerned.

Hon'ble Members, I now come to our relations with other countries. As we enter the eighties, we apprehend increased threats to the process of *detente* between the big powers. Events in Afghanistan, West Asia and growing military activities in the Indian Ocean involving the big powers have seriously affected our security environment. Government are determined to continue their endeavour to strengthen the forces of tolerance and understanding. India's commitment to peace, apart from being deep-rooted in its ethos and traditions, arises from a perception that reason rather than military force, fair play rather than economic manipulation should be the fundamentals on which the international system should be built. Consistent with this ethos, Government will continue to work for the defusing of tensions and the creation of conditions in which mankind can prosper and live in peace.

We were happy to host the recent meeting of the non-aligned Foreign Ministers in New Delhi. The relevance of the Policy of non-alignment was reaffirmed, and the unity and solidarity of the Movement to which we are deeply committed was consolidated at the meeting. The conclusions reached as well as the New Delhi Appeal issued by the Special Session commemorating the 20th anniversary of the first Summit, demonstrated the continuing determination of the non-aligned countries to make a positive contribution to world peace and progress. The Conference reiterated not only certain basic principles which should govern relations between States but also its opposition to any form of outside interference in the internal affairs of any country. We were happy that in the final declaration of the Conference the demand for the establishment of Zone of Peace in the Indian Ocean was reiterated. Thereby the demand of the littoral states made almost ten years ago was endorsed.

The continuing conflict between Iran and Iraq, two countries with which we have the friendliest of relations has been causing concern. We have participated in and supported all processes which can culminate in a solution honourable to both countries. Government intend to pursue these efforts in the larger causes of peace and non-alignment.

The exchange of visits at the highest level with the Soviet Union has further strengthened our time-tested friendship. Our relations with other East European countries have also grown in volume and variety. The evolving pattern of these relations confirms our conviction in the principles of peaceful co-existence. This reinforces our belief that international peace and stability can be nurtured by countries with differing socio-political systems and ideologies co-operating with one another.

With the USA, we share common values and ideals. It will be our endeavour to strengthen the existing multi-faceted relationship between the two countries. We are heartened at the emergence of a new mutuality of interests with countries of Western Europe, with whom we expect to expand our relations in all spheres.

The Government and people of India were happy to welcome in their midst, last September, the Commonwealth heads of States and Governments belonging to the Asian and Pacific Region. We had meaningful discussions with them on issues of importance to us all.

Consistent with the imperatives of history and geography our relations with our neighbours have continued to develop in a spirit of mutual trust, advantage and good neighbourliness. Government are determined to further develop and consolidate these relations on the basis of equality, reciprocity and mutual benefit so that the peoples of this subcontinent can live in peace and harmony.

From our side, we have made it amply clear that we are determined to expand and strengthen the process of normalisation of relations with Pakistan set in motion by the Simla Agreement. It is our earnest hope that our neighbour will also exert the political will to pursue this path and continue the healthy trend towards settling differences bilaterally and in a spirit of mutual accommodation and reciprocity.

Our willingness to further normalise our relations with China and to discuss all outstanding problems has been made clear repeatedly. We hope that Chinese will demonstrate their willingness to reciprocate.

The visit of Mr. Yasser Arafat and India's granting of full diplomatic status to the PLO mission in New Delhi was in continuance of our support to the just struggle of the people of Palestine for the attainment of their inalienable rights.

The conferment of the 1979 Jawaharlal Nehru Award for International Understanding to the hero of the freedom struggle of South Africa, Nelson Mandela, was symbolic of India's commitment to the cause of the people of South Africa. We rejoiced in the independence of the people of Zimbabwe; we remain steadfast in our support to the cause of the freedom of Namibia. Our relations with other African countries remain close and friendly.

The recent visit of the President of Mexico has added a new dimension to our relations with Latin America. It is our endeavour to build further bridges of understanding and co-operation with the people of Latin and South America.

The international economic situation has further deteriorated. The discussions relating to the Second United Nations Development Decade came to naught and the prospects for bringing about a new international economic order do not appear bright. The developing countries are in a serious predicament in regard to the availability of resources and technologies. It is only by co-operation and mutual give and take that a better future for all can be ensured.

Hon'ble Members, from what I have outlined, it is clear that the country is over the hump, economically and socially. The damage caused to the national economy has been repaired to a large extent, agriculture is expected to reach record levels of production, and the law and order position is better. With unity of effort there are immense possibilities of sustained progress to build a just social and economic order. In a country as large and diverse as ours, there will always be differences of approach. To optimise national endeavour it is necessary to strive for identity of purpose, to harmonise differing points of view in a spirit of accommodation and not to fritter away our energies in fruitless controversies and conflicts.

In the the present session, besides dealing with the pending business, a large number of fresh legislative measures will come up for your consideration. Among these are the Export-Imports Bank Bill, 1981 and the Constitution Amendment Bill, 1981 for redefining the expression "tax on sale and purchase of goods" in the Constitution.

May I urge all sections of the House to approach the urgent and onerous tasks facing the nation in a spirit of co-operation while keeping in mind the need to serve the interests of our people. I wish you all success in your efforts.

Jai Hind.

ADDRESS TO PARLIAMENT—18 FEBRUARY 1982

Lok Sabha	—	Seventh Lok Sabha
Session	—	First Session of the Year
President of India	—	Dr. N. Sanjiva Reddy
Vice-President of India	—	Shri M. Hidayatullah
Prime Minister of India	—	Smt. Indira Gandhi
Speaker, Lok Sabha	—	Dr. Bal Ram Jakhar

HONOURABLE MEMBERS,

It gives me pleasure to welcome you to this first session of Parliament in the year 1982. I extend my best wishes to you for the successful completion of the budgetary and the legislative business ahead.

The year 1981-82 was a year of further consolidation. The rate of inflation was substantially curtailed in spite of the unfavourable international economic environment. The improvement in the performance of the infrastructure in the current year and the formulation of the revised Twenty Point Programme provide the basis for further growth along with stability and greater social justice. During April 1981—January 1982, power generation increased by 11.3 per cent, coal production by 11.2 per cent and railway goods traffic by 14.4 per cent compared to the corresponding period of the previous year. In fact, the Railways, will be achieving this year an all time high loading of over 220 million tonnes, bettering the previous best figure by over 8 million tonnes. All important industries have recorded significant increases during April 1981—January 1982, the notable examples are saleable steel (18.7 per cent), cement (15.0 per cent), nitrogenous fertilizers (51.9 per cent), crude petroleum (61.2 per cent) and petroleum products (18.4 per cent).

There are firm indications that there will be even more impressive production in these and other industries. In fertilizers, with the expected commissioning of three new plants and expansion in existing ones, production capacity, will increase from 45.75 lakh tonnes to 53 lakh tonnes of nitrogen and 12.82 lakh tonnes to 14.90 lakh tonnes of phosphate. In petroleum, the year 1981-82 may close with a total production of over 16 million tonnes of crude oil compared to 10.5 million tonnes during 1980-81. The discovery of oil in structures east of Bombay High, in the Palk Strait, in Sisodra in

Gujarat and Napamua in Assam and of gas in Baramura in Tripura and in Kudara in Gujarat is an assurance that the tempo of production will be further accelerated. Our Refinery capacity increased from 31.8 million tonnes in 1980-81 to 37.8 million tonnes in 1981-82. The production of LPG, which went up by 15 per cent in the current year, is estimated to increase further by about 40 per cent in the year ahead and will show a marked change in the demand-supply position. Production in the six integrated steel plants is expected to touch the highest ever level of 7.2 million tonnes of saleable steel, exceeding last year's production by more than a million tonnes and marking a capacity utilisation of nearly 84 per cent. In September, 1981, Government approved the proposal for the establishment of an integrated steel plant at Paradeep. This, coupled with the earlier decision to set up an integrated steel plant at Visakhapatnam, indicates Government's determination to augment existing capacities to achieve a state of self-reliance in this core sector.

In order to maintain the tempo already generated in industrial production and accelerate economic growth, the year 1982 is being observed as "Productivity Year" and we shall have an intensive drive to maximise utilisation of capacities available in all sectors of the economy.

The outlook for agricultural production in 1981-82 is encouraging. Preliminary assessment indicates that the *Kharif* foodgrains production might reach an all-time level of 79.9 million tonnes. For the year as a whole, foodgrains production is expected to exceed the previous record level of 132 million tonnes. This compares favourably with the production of 129.9 MT achieved in 1980-81, which itself was 18.4 per cent higher than in 1979-80.

The production of sugarcane, which had slumped to 129 million tonnes in 1979-80 had reached 150.5 million tonnes in 1980-81 and is expected to be between 170 and 180 million tonnes this year. The forecast for pulses this year is 12 to 13 million tonnes compared to 8.6 million tonnes in 1979-80 and 11.2 million tonnes in 1980-81. While Government have made arrangements to ensure availability of agricultural inputs in sufficient quantity and in time, the major credit for our improved agricultural performance must go to the enterprise, dedication and hard work of our farmers.

During 1980-81 an additional irrigation potential of 2.4 million hectares was created. Another 2.6 million hectares are expected to be covered during 1981-82, giving an additional coverage of 5 million hectares during these two years. Our objective is to add 3 million hectares per year during the remaining 3 years of the Sixth Plan. This will be the biggest effort by any country in bringing additional land under irrigation in one year. Government have also prepared a National Perspective Plan for Water Resources Development. A National Water Development Agency will be established to carry our investigations and formulate, in consultation with

the State Governments, a plan for the optimum development and utilisation of available waters, initially of the peninsular rivers. Two important developments during the year were the understanding on the utilisation of Narmada waters and the agreement on sharing of the surplus flows of the Ravi and Beas. I congratulate the States concerned.

A Central Land Resources Conservation and Development Commission is being constituted to provide expert guidance in formulating national policies relating to management of land resources and also coordinate activities of the State Land Use Boards. With the enforcement of the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980, diversion of forest land which was of the order of nearly 1.5 lakh hectares per annum in the earlier years, has been controlled. As the Indian Forest Act, 1927 is not applicable uniformly in all the States, it is proposed to bring forward comprehensive legislation to replace the existing law. As part of the social forestry programme, a total number of 135 crore seedlings are expected to have been planted in 1981-82. The enactment of legislation to establish a National Bank to improve the quantity and quality of credit flows to rural areas is a significant step.

The energies of the Government continued to be focused on controlling inflation. The components of the anti-inflationary strategy were higher production, better capacity utilisation, strengthening the public distribution system, imports of essential commodities wherever necessary, fiscal and monetary discipline and curbing the activities of anti-social elements. The annual rate of inflation as measured from point to point movement in the wholesale price index has come down from 22.2 per cent as on the week ended 12 January, 1980 to 14.8 per cent as on the week ended 10 January, 1981 and further to 6.9 per cent for the week ended 9 January, 1982. During the current financial year, *i.e.* 28 March, 1981 to 23 January, 1982, the index has gone up only by 2.8 per cent which is significantly lower than the rise of 14.1 per cent in the same period last year. The number of Fair Price Shops stood at 2.98 lakhs in November, 1981 compared to 2.73 lakhs in March, 1981. There will be no slackening of vigilance in the fight against inflation.

While the present approach promises further results in the fight against inflation, far greater efforts are required to deal with the deterioration in the balance of payments situation. Owing to the sharp increase in the import prices of oil and oil products in 1980-81, the trade deficit increased to about Rs. 5,500 crores in that year compared to Rs. 2,450 crores in 1979-80. To meet the situation and to ensure continued development, Government have entered into an extended agreement with the International Monetary Fund. This agreement will enable the drawing of SDR 5 billion over the next three years.

A series of measures have been taken to promote exports, as a result of which exports are estimated to have shown an increase of 15.4 per cent during April-November, 1981. Further, as a result of the steps taken to

increase the productive capacity of the economy, the rise in the import bill during this period has decelerated to 11.4 per cent. There is reason to believe that the tendency in the last few years for the trade gap to widen will be arrested in 1981-82. Parliament also knows that an Export-Import Bank has been established to help credit availabilities for exports. High priority will continue to be given to export promotion during the coming years.

The overall rate of growth in the output of the public sector industries under the Central Government is estimated as 20 per cent in April-September 1981 over the corresponding period last year. There is scope and need for much better performance. Steps are being taken to streamline and improve the working of these enterprises through better delegation of powers, simplification of procedures and stricter enforcement of accountability.

The Government are vitally concerned with the welfare of workers, who contribute in no small measure to national production and productivity. Legislation is proposed to be introduced in the present session to amend labour laws relating to industrial disputes, trade unions and standing orders to remove procedural delays and secure speedy justice to workers. The industrial relations machinery is being strengthened and streamlined to anticipate labour problems and to take prompt ameliorative action.

The 20-Point Programme has been revised to impart greater dynamism to some key social and economic programmes included in the Sixth Plan. In broad terms, it concretises what the Sixth Plan means for us all, particularly for the weaker sections. Special emphasis is being given to programmes to assist specific target groups through the Integrated Rural Development Programme, the Scheduled Castes Component Plan and Hill and Tribal Sub-Plans, the slum improvement programme and allotment of house sites to rural families. While the thrust of the revised 20-Point Programme continues to be on providing better living conditions for the less privileged sections of the population, the programme as a whole aims at all round improvement in productivity.

The census of 1981 underlined anew the importance of population control. Government give high priority to voluntary family planning as an essential ingredient of people's well-being and national progress and have included it as part of the revised 20-Point Programme. It is our objective to bring down the birth rate to 21 and the death rate to 9 per thousand by the end of the century. I should also like to draw attention to the fact that national programmes for the control of leprosy and blindness have been intensified in furtherance of the objective of Health for All by A.D. 2,000. These two programmes are now being treated as 100 per cent centrally sponsored.

The provision of elementary education for all children, and the covering of the illiterate adult population with appropriate educational programmes is being accelerated. Government have also launched a substantial programme of non-formal education. It is proposed to revise the content of vocational education. In higher education, especially higher technological education, the emphasis will be on quality.

Considerable headway was made in space technology and communications during the year. Three Indian-made satellites were launched—Rohini, with the help of our own satellite launching vehicle, the experimental communications satellite APPLE and the earth observation Satellite Bhaskara-II. India became one of the few countries to have a domestic satellite communications network when in November 1981 with the help of INTELSAT-IV, satellite communication links were extended to remote areas in Leh in Jammu & Kashmir, Aizawal in Mizoram, Port Blair and Car Nicobar in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, and Kavaratti in Lakshadweep. A troposcatter communication-link was established with the Soviet Union, under-sea link with Sri Lanka and a microwave link with Bangladesh. The next major event will be the launching of the multipurpose Indian National Satellite (INSAT) in April 1982 and its utilisation for meteorological capability, communications and radio and television coverage. The microwave link, with TV capability between major cities of India like Madras, Bangalore, Bombay, Delhi has already been established. The link between Delhi and Calcutta and Delhi-Srinagar will be completed by June 1982 and a large number of urban and rural areas will be covered through the satellite and the microwave system.

During the year a Science Advisory Committee to the Cabinet (SACC) was constituted. In order to lessen unemployment among science and technology personnel, Government is establishing a Science and Technology Entrepreneurship Development Board. Other major steps are the establishment of a Commission of Additional Sources of Energy which has already initiated wide-ranging programmes of research and development and demonstration all over the country on a large scale, the decision to form a National Biotechnology Board to ensure co-ordinated work in biotechnology, which has implications for agriculture, medicine and industry, and the setting up of a National Institute of Immunology in Delhi and a Plasma Physics Programme in Ahmedabad.

The Department of Environment has taken up programmes to prevent eco-destruction. It has also set up a National Eco-Development Board. The Department has introduced procedures to ensure environmental impact assessment of large projects and monitoring the implementation of environmental safeguards in such projects.

The Department of Ocean Development, which was established in July, 1981 is preparing a perspective plan of ocean development. It organised a scientific expedition to Antarctica.

The leader is back and the others will soon be returning after successful voyage of over two months. The expedition covers a wide range of scientific investigation in fields like meteorology, glaciology and oceanography.

I now turn to some problems concerning law and order. There cannot be forward movement without the assurance that national energies are not frittered away on agitations engineered by sectional interests. Government are distressed at the outrages perpetrated against members of Scheduled Caste communities at some places and are determined to ensure that all sections of the population live in safety and honour. The guilty will be firmly dealt with. The problems confronting these classes are part of the larger socio-economic problems of the country. The fullest cooperation of the public is necessary to fight against the forces of communalism and casteism, who are often in league with anti-social elements. Programmes for the integrated socio-economic development of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and weaker sections have been intensified and much larger outlays than ever before have been provided. Their implementation will be closely monitored.

As part of their earnest efforts to find a fair and satisfactory solution to the problems of foreigners in Assam, Government held several rounds of talks with the representatives of the agitating organisations and leaders of political parties. These efforts are continuing.

The international situation has deteriorated. Military presences around us have increased. This danger should make all of us determined to safeguard national security and interests through non-alignment and the peaceful resolution of differences. We earnestly hope that the major military powers will realise the futility of confrontation and arrest the diversion of resources from development and welfare to armaments. It is regrettable that the strategic considerations of other countries should cast extra burdens on us. We cannot afford to be complacent. The nation will be called upon to make heavy sacrifices to maintain preparedness at all times to meet external challenges.

With our immediate neighbours we have continued to seek relationships of greater mutual trust and closer friendship. I have just paid useful visit to Sri Lanka, as I did earlier to Nepal and Indonesia. The King of Bhutan will soon be in our country. Our Foreign Minister visited Burma*, Vietnam and Thailand. With Bangladesh we have had a series of useful exchanges of views. Further steps have been taken to improve relations with China. Following the visit of the Chinese Foreign Minister during this year, an official delegation went to Beijing to discuss international and bilateral issues including the question of boundary and territory. As regards Pakistan, Parliament is only too well aware of the nationwide concern after that

* Now known as Myanmar.

country decided to acquire sophisticated arms and the persistent international reports about its nuclear programme. While announcing its move to go in for advanced aircraft, Pakistan also informed us of its desire to have a no-war pact, a suggestion we had put to them several times and in different forms over the years. In December 1981 we gave Pakistan an outline of the principles which might govern our discussions towards that end. This dialogue was carried forward during the recent visit of the Pakistan Foreign Minister. We reiterated our desire for peace and friendship and our stand that issues should be bilaterally resolved. We are glad that Pakistan has accepted our proposal for a Joint Commission to examine, renew and promote the entire range of relations between our two countries.

Elsewhere on our continent, tensions persist. The problem of Afghanistan and the Iran-Iraq conflict remain unresolved. The Palestinian people's rights continue to be obstructed. The Indian Ocean is far from becoming a zone of peace.

There are a few hopeful signs also, such as the renewed elan of the Non-Aligned Movement following the Conference of Foreign Ministers of Non-Aligned Countries in New Delhi last year, the initiatives of the Commonwealth countries to promote greater international co-operation, and the beginning, however tenuous, of efforts for a dialogue between developed and developing countries. The Prime Minister participated in the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Melbourne and in the International Conference on Co-operation for Development in Cancun, Mexico. Her visits during the year to Australia, Bulgaria, Fiji, France, Italy, Kuwait, Kenya, Indonesia, Philippines, Rumania, Seychelles, Switzerland, Tonga and the United Arab Emirates led to further strengthening of friendship with those countries. Since I last addressed you, we have had visits from the Heads of States or Governments of Kenya, the Federal Republic of Germany, Guinea, Tanzania, Britain, Bahrain, PDR Yemen, Zimbabwe, Nauru, Australia, Madagascar, Botswana, Ghana, Venezuela, Uganda, Spain and Sweden, all of which were useful. We look forward to the visit next week of President Nyerere and to the Conference of some developing countries. Greater co-operation among developing countries is mutually beneficial and strengthens them collectively in their dealings with the advanced countries.

In the present Session, besides dealing with pending business a large number of fresh legislative measures will come up for your consideration. Among these are:

The Land Acquisition (Amendment) Bill, 1982; and

The National Waterway Bill, 1982 to declare the Ganga between Allahabad and Haldia as a National Waterway.

Hon'ble Members, the world is passing through difficult times. Our own problems are not inconsiderable. Fortunately we are a nation imbued with a sense of purpose. Our people have also shown commendable capacity to rally together in moments of challenge. Political differences are bound to exist in a democracy which guarantees freedom of opinion and organisation. But differences should not degenerate into discord. The good of the nation is an objective for which we must learn to co-operate, transcending disputes. We have the strength and the resources to move forward speedily. The first two years of the Sixth Plan were years of consolidation. Let us now use this strength to make the next three years of the Plan, years of a march forward.

Jai Hind.



GIANI ZAIL SINGH



ADDRESS TO PARLIAMENT—18 FEBRUARY 1983

Lok Sabha	—	Seventh Lok Sabha
Session	—	First Session of the Year
President of India	—	Giani Zail Singh
Vice-President of India	—	Shri M. Hidayatullah
Prime Minister of India	—	Smt. Indira Gandhi
Speaker, Lok Sabha	—	Dr. Bal Ram Jakhar

HONOURABLE MEMBERS,

I welcome you to this first session of Parliament in 1983. The year ahead is full of challenges and opportunities, which will require the united efforts of Parliament, Government, and the people.

On the economic side, the need is to tone up the economy, enhance production and productivity, eliminate non-productive expenditure and contain prices. In the midst of inflationary pressures in several countries, we can take legitimate pride in our success in containing inflation. Wholesale prices in mid-January 1983 were only 2.8 per cent higher than 12 months earlier. And this in spite of widespread drought affecting 48 million hectares and 312 million (31.2 crore) people. The public distribution system was expanded and made more efficient. About 50,000 fair price shops were opened in the last three years. This year the Central Government would be releasing to the States about Rs. 7,000 million (Rs. 700 crore), the highest in any year for relief to victims of drought, floods and cyclones. Our sympathies go to the people hit by these natural calamities and we admire their courage and the sense of duty of relief workers.

The performance of our infrastructure and our industry has maintained improvement. Between April and December 1982, power generation rose by 7.2 per cent and production of coal by 4.2 per cent, cement by 10.2 per cent and fertilizers by 9.6 per cent. The railways increased the movement of freight by 3.5 per cent. The ports have, by and large, eliminated the waiting time of vessels. There has been a recovery in steel production. The high prices of oil continued to be a burden on the economy but domestic production of crude during the period rose by 30.6 per cent. Against 10.5 million (1.05 crore) tonnes in 1980-81, production was 16.2 million (1.62 crore) tonnes in 1981-82 and is anticipated to be 21 million

(2.1 crore) tonnes in 1982-83. In spite of the difficulties of balance of payments, unfavourable seasonal conditions, and the severe constraint on resources, the economy achieved reasonable growth for a second successive year. The turnover of public sector has increased by 21 per cent in the first nine months of the current year. There has been significant expansion in the small industry sector which has maintained a rate of growth of around 10 per cent. Despite the problems faced by *kharif* and *rabi*, procurement of rice and wheat was higher than in any previous year. Government have given farmers the benefit of higher procurement prices.

The increase in exports is being maintained. In the first seven months of the current financial year exports are expected to be about 17.8 per cent higher than the provisional figure of Rs. 39,600 million (Rs. 3960 crore) in the corresponding period of the previous year. The trend towards rapid increases in imports has been curbed. Although the overall import bill may show a rise to meet the developmental needs of our economy, it will be possible to check the growth of imports further with the accelerated programme of oil exploration and production and increased investments in other sectors such as steel and fertilizers. Prices of the raw materials which developing countries export have fallen sharply, while the prices of manufactured goods which we import have gone up considerably. The high interest rates in the West have further aggravated the situation for countries like India.

The world is going through a critical economic period. Many countries are in the grip of recession and have been cutting down investment. We, however, were able to maintain the tempo of our development. Central Plan outlay has increased by 27 per cent and the total outlay on Central and State Plans put together has gone up by 21 per cent. The Revised Twenty-Point Programme, which was announced on 14 January 1982 with its emphasis on the service of the poor and the weak, has shown heartening results. This year, more than 330 million additional man days of rural employment will be generated under the National Rural Employment Programme. There has also been significant spurt in the activities of Khadi and Village Industries Commission and efforts have been consciously made to link these with the overall effort towards rural employment. Drinking water facilities have been extended to a further 24,000 problem villages. More than 540,000 house sites have been provided. Loans from the Housing and Urban Development Corporation will help the construction of 225,000 dwellings. An additional irrigation potential of 2.35 million hectares is being created during the year.

As a token of the debt which the nation owes to persons who brought us freedom, the Government have enlarged the Freedom Fighters' Pension Scheme.

Government are vitally concerned with the welfare of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and have evolved a three-pronged strategy. This consists of the Special Component plans of State Governments and Central Ministries, special Central assistance in addition to the States' Special Component plans, and the Scheduled Castes Development Corporations. Special Central Assistance for tribal sub-plans has been stepped up from Rs. 850 million (Rs. 85 crore) to Rs. 950 million (Rs. 95 crore) for 1982-83.

The social and economic advancement of the economically weaker sections and of the backward classes of our society will continue to be given priority in Government's development programmes. A centrally sponsored scheme of fishermen's insurance has been launched.

There was a surge of popular support to and participation in the Family Planning Programmes. During the period April 1982 to January 1983, the number of acceptors of all family planning methods was 16 per cent higher than that for the corresponding period of the previous year. Programmes for the control of leprosy, blindness and tuberculosis are being implemented with renewed vigour under the Revised Twenty-Point Programme.

Our concern for industrial workers equals our concern for agricultural workers and farmers. The amendments to the Industrial Disputes Act provide for internal machinery to settle grievances and ensure that labour courts give decisions within a stipulated time.

Programmes and strategies for improving the quality of education, eradication of adult illiteracy and universalising elementary education in the age group of 6-14 continued to receive high priority with special emphasis on the education of girls.

Two significant events of last year which will have a far-reaching impact on the future of our young people, and their physical and mental alertness are the creation of a Department of Sports and the successful holding of Asian Games. The manner in which the Games were organised has been widely acclaimed. The construction and upgradation of 17 stadia and sports facilities conforming to international standards proved our capacity to rise to major challenges. This infrastructure will serve our sportsmen and sportswomen in the years to come.

The Games also provided the occasion for the extension of television to many new areas and the introduction of colour telecasting. Our television policy will give special attention to the needs of our rural population and the utilisation of this powerful medium for education and development.

It has been an eventful year for our science and technology. We have formulated and announced a Technology Policy Statement setting out the considerations that will guide our decisions in the development of indigenous technology and the import of such technology as will strengthen us. We shall pursue our search for technological self-reliance. We are paying

attention to both basic science and to new areas like biotechnology, immunology, fast breeder technology in nuclear science and ocean engineering. Our second scientific expedition is now in Antarctica continuing important experiments and surveying the area for setting up a permanent manned station in future. Our work in the survey of polymetallic nodules on the ocean floor has been rewarded with our recognition, at the Conference of Law of the Sea, as a pioneer investor. We are the only developing country so recognised.

INSAT-1B which will be launched this year will help us attain a high level of telecommunications, television and meteorological capability. It will incorporate the modifications required in the light of our experience with INSAT-1A, the basic design of which was sound.

Honourable Members are aware of the problems we faced in ensuring continuity of fuel supplies for our Tarapur nuclear power reactor. These have now been sorted out in consultation with the Governments of France and USA.

I shall now turn to the domestic political scene. Divisive and disruptive forces are at work fomenting violence and weakening the national fabric. These must be fought resolutely. Government have taken the initiative to associate the Opposition in discussions on major issues like those relating to Assam and the Punjab, and this welcome trend must continue. Communal and anti-national elements have been indulging in objectionable activities in many areas and these will have to be effectively curbed. Extremist organisations have been active in certain north-eastern States and territories. We have adopted a well-coordinated drive to combat these activities and maintain peace and normalcy. Meanwhile the tempo of development effort all over the north-eastern region has been stepped up.

Elections have recently taken place in Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Tripura and the Union Territory of Delhi and in Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Kerala and West Bengal earlier. Polling has just concluded in Meghalaya and is in progress in Assam. These elections have been part of our democratic tradition and a constitutional obligation.

The international situation has deteriorated. The escalation of foreign military intrusion in the Indian Ocean in disregard of the wishes of littoral States, the continuing war between Iran and Iraq, the increasing recklessness of Israel and the sufferings of the Palestinians, the aggressive acts of the racist regime of South Africa against its own people and its neighbours and the lack of progress in the Disarmament Talks and in North-South dialogue are all matters of concern. Political solutions are yet to be found to the situations in South-West and South-East Asia.

Certain developments in our neighbourhood have worsened our security environment. The entire nation is exercised over the acquisition of sophisticated weaponry by our neighbour, Pakistan. Our own policy has

been to pursue initiatives and improve relations with our neighbours. It is hoped that the meetings that have taken place with the President of Pakistan and between officials of the two countries will eventually lead to the conclusion of an enduring relationship of peace, friendship and cooperation.

We have also had talks with the Chief Martial Law Administrator of Bangladesh. These have led to a strengthening of friendly relations. The third round of official-level talks with China on the boundary question and other bilateral matters took place in Beijing last month. Our relations with Bhutan, Nepal, and Sri Lanka have maintained their even course.

Our policy of non-alignment has helped us work unswervingly for the objectives of peace, friendship and stability throughout the world and in our region. As Honourable Members are aware, the Seventh Conference of Non-Aligned Countries will take place early next month in New Delhi. We are playing host to it at the unanimous request of the non-aligned community. It will be the largest gathering of Heads of nations to be held in our country. It is our ardent hope that the summit will make an important contribution to the solution of the problems besetting the international community. Later in the year another major conference is being held in the Capital—the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting. We must put all our energies into the task of making a success of both these conferences.

I should also refer to the visits of my predecessor to Ireland and Yugoslavia and our Prime Minister to the United Kingdom, Saudi Arabia, the United States of America, Japan, Mauritius, Mozambique and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the visits to India of the Presidents of Tanzania and Greece, King of Bhutan, the Presidents of Mozambique, Algeria, Nauru, Pakistan, France, Egypt and Nigeria, the Prime Ministers of the United Kingdom, Nepal and Mauritius, the Chairman of the P.L.O., the Chief Martial Law Administrator of Bangladesh as well as other statesmen. These exchanges have been of mutual benefit.

Hon'ble Members, the economic and political crises in the world have led to a sharpening of tensions which India can withstand only through vigilance, unity and the optimal use of its own productive capacity. Apart from fighting corruption and inefficiency, it must be ensured that differences are not aired in a manner which provokes violence or weakens our secular democratic fabric. In the last three years we have been able to maintain stability and progress. It is my earnest entreaty that the entire nation will work together to maintain India's integrity and enhance its welfare and good name.

I urge Honourable Members to approach the vital tasks before them in a spirit of cooperation and harmony. I wish you all success in the budgetary, legislative and other business that awaits you.

Jai Hind.

ADDRESS TO PARLIAMENT—23 FEBRUARY 1984

Lok Sabha	—	Seventh Lok Sabha
Session	—	First Session of the Year
President of India	—	Giani Zail Singh
Vice-President of India	—	Shri M. Hidayatullah
Prime Minister of India	—	Smt. Indira Gandhi
Speaker, Lok Sabha	—	Dr. Bal Ram Jakhar

HONOURABLE MEMBERS,

It gives me pleasure to welcome you to this first session of Parliament in 1984 and to extend to you my best wishes for the successful completion of the budgetary and legislative business ahead.

In the current year the economy has made impressive recovery and progress overcoming the adverse effects of widespread failure of rains. Agricultural production is expected to grow by 9 per cent as against a decline of 4 per cent in the previous year. The production of foodgrains is likely to exceed the target of 142 million tonnes, compared to the actual production of 128.4 million tonnes in 1982-83 and the previous best record of 133.3 million tonnes. The buoyancy in agricultural production reflects the soundness of the strategies and programmes followed over the years. The irrigation potential, which increased by 2.34 million hectares in 1982-83, is expected to increase further by 2.37 million hectares in 1983-84. Special efforts have been made to improve the utilisation of the potential so created. The high yielding varieties programme has continued to expand and the 1983-84 coverage is expected to be 52 million hectares. Fertiliser consumption during 1983-84 will be well above the Plan target.

Special attention is being paid to dryland farming; 4,246 micro watersheds have been identified for adoption of new technologies which will help the poorest rural communities. A centrally sponsored scheme for assisting small and marginal farmers was also launched in 1983-84.

The recovery of the industrial economy and the improvement of the infrastructure have maintained good tempo. Coal production has shown steady improvement after September and the output during 1983-84 will be close to 140 million tonnes. During the first nine months of 1983-84, power

generation has grown by about 5 per cent over the previous year. The production of crude oil, which was 10.5 million tonnes in 1980-81 and 21.06 million tonnes in 1982-83, is expected to increase further to 26 million tonnes in 1983-84. Special efforts have been made to maintain railway freight at a level higher than the previous year's. Port capacity is being expanded and the total traffic handled by the major ports in 1983-84 is expected to be an all-time-high of over 101 million tonnes.

The growth of the industrial sector, which was sluggish in the first half of the year, improved in the second half and overall industrial growth rate of 4.5 per cent is likely in 1983-84. The manufacturing sector has performed well; textiles, engineering and cement industries have shown substantial improvement.

The industrial relations situation also continued to be satisfactory during the year, in spite of various stresses and strains in different parts of the country. The common worker has responded to the Government's call to maintain the momentum in economic development, which is reflected in increased production.

The growth rate of GNP this year is expected to be 6 to 7 per cent, as compared with only 1.8 per cent in 1982-83. In the first four years of the Sixth Plan, the average growth rate of GNP will be about 5.4 per cent. The country can take legitimate pride in this achievement.

The price situation has caused us anxiety. On January 7, 1984, the annual rate of inflation reached 10.4 per cent. The inflationary pressures on the economy largely reflect the low growth of output on the economy in 1982-83 due to the drought. A number of measures to counteract these pressures and to bring down inflation have been taken. These include: incentives for increasing production of foodgrains, oilseeds and pulses; the expansion and strengthening of the public distribution system; a vigorous procurement drive; timely marginal augmentation of domestic supplies through imports; incentives for increasing industrial production; and enforcement of fiscal and monetary discipline aimed at reduction of excess liquidity in the system. The record crop of 1983-84 and the continuing improvement in the infrastructure and the industrial sector will help in bringing down the rate of inflation in the months ahead. The Government have also taken several steps to curtail expenditure while maintaining the stimulus to production, efficiency and full utilisation of capacity.

The situation regarding our external payments has improved. The trade gap is expected to decline for the second successive year. During April-October 1983, exports (excluding oil) grew by 9.9 per cent compared to the same period of 1982-83, and the value of imports (net of oil exports) declined by 2.5 per cent. The policy of building production capacities in critical sectors and reducing bulk imports has yielded dividends. Another

encouraging factor is the substantial improvement in the flow of funds from Indians abroad.

As our foreign exchange reserves have increased, the Government have decided voluntarily not to make any further drawals under the Extended Fund Facility with the International Monetary Fund after the current year. Out of the total SDR 5 billion we are utilising only 3.9 billion, thus making SDR 1.1 billion available to the IMF to assist other developing countries. Our people can be proud of the success of our external adjustment policies.

Vigorous implementation of the Twenty-Point Programme, with its emphasis on anti-poverty measures, is transforming the condition of the rural poor. Under the Integrated Rural Development Programme, 9 million rural families, including 3.2 million families belonging to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, have been assisted in the first three years of the Sixth Plan. The total outlay on this programme during the first three years has been Rs. 22,530 million. In the current year another 3 million families are being helped. Targets to generate additional employment under the National Rural Employment Programme were fully achieved during the first three years of the Plan and the progress during the current year is satisfactory. A new Rural Landless Employment Guarantee Programme was launched on August 15, 1983. Rs. 6000 million have been allocated for it. There has been excellent response also to the new programme of providing self employment to the educated unemployed. A target of assisting 2.5 lakh educated persons has been set for 1983-84.

Honourable Members of Parliament are aware of the achievements of Indian Science in 1983-84. On April 17, 1983, the Rohini satellite was placed in a near earth orbit. INSAT-1B was successfully launched on August 30, 1983. Since October 15, 1983 it has been serving our telecommunication, television, radio and meteorology programmes. A large expansion of television services has been planned to increase coverage of population from 23 per cent in 1983-84 to 70 per cent by 1984-85. India has signed the Antarctica Treaty and has become the fifteenth consultative member State. So far three expeditions to Antarctica have been organised and a regular station established. For the first time two women scientists have gone to that continent. We have registered ourselves with the International Sea-bed Authority for a pioneer area for extensive survey of polymetallic nodules in the central Indian Ocean. The first unit of the Madras Atomic Power Station, which was designed and fabricated indigenously, attained criticality on July 2, 1983 and has been operating at power levels up to 200 MW.

Parliament has recently approved the National Health Policy which lays stress on preventive, promotive and rehabilitative aspects of health care. The core of the policy lies in community participation and the provision of health services through primary health centres to millions of families in the

far-flung rural areas. Vigorous measures are being pursued for control of tuberculosis, leprosy and blindness. India's efforts in family planning received international recognition when our Prime Minister was given the United Nations Population Award at a special ceremony held on September 30, 1983, in New York. An all-time-high rate of around 25.9 per cent has been achieved in couple protection. The number of acceptors of various family planning methods had increased by 15 per cent in April-December 1983 over the corresponding period of the previous year.

In education the focus of attention continued to be on universalising elementary education in the age group of 6-14, with emphasis on girl's education, and on eradicating adult illiteracy by 1990. Taking advantage of the growth of television and radio, a vigorous programme of non-formal education has been planned. In higher education, it has been our effort to improve the functioning of universities and institutions of higher technology. The work of the two commissions set up to study the role of teachers has made progress.

A National Council of Arts has been established under the chairmanship of the Prime Minister which will formulate policies to improve the national endeavour in various fields of cultural development and conservation of our heritage. A National Book Development Council has also been set up for the development of our book industry.

The country can achieve sustained progress only in a climate of harmony and determination to resist any threats to its unity and integrity. We can ill afford to ignore the harm done by disruptive activities of communal and secessionist elements, violent agitations and systematic efforts to denigrate the many-sided achievements of our people. Together, these trends in our body politic are weakening national cohesion. Some internal as well as external forces are at work to undermine India's political and social stability.

In today's complex international situation, it is essential to intensify our vigilance to preserve our economic and political independence. Every patriotic citizen must cooperate with the Government in putting down forces that seek to divide the people on the basis of caste, creed, region or language. At the recent meeting of the National Integration Council there was a heartening consensus, cutting across differences of political outlook and ideology, that the fabric of national unity must be strengthened and the sense of Indianness promoted. There is agreement amongst most parties against the use of violence in support of agitations and the harbouring of anti-social elements in religious places. The use of places of worship by criminals affects their sanctity and harms the interests of the nation; apart from bringing a bad name to religion. I urge Honourable Members to convert this growing feeling into a national programme to bind different parties in the country and different sections of our people into a strong and vibrant national entity.

In Assam, the State Government have made strenuous efforts to promote peace and stability. This endeavour has been widely supported by the public who have realised that violence leads only to social and economic dislocation on a large scale. Tribunals have started working to facilitate a resolution of the foreigners' issue. Firm measures have also been taken to check illegal immigration. I trust Honourable Members will help in the process of reconciliation.

Punjab has witnessed tragic violence against innocent persons. Some forces have sought to weaken the centuries old fraternal bonds between communities. It is however heartwarming that the majority of the people, irrespective of the community to which they belong have refused to be misled by the sinister propaganda of hate let loose. It is imperative to restore normalcy and peace in that State. The Government have always been anxious that the problems in Punjab be solved through dialogue between all concerned.

A distressing development is the recent spread of communal violence to Haryana. I hope that peace will soon be restored in the affected areas.

The Government have been seriously concerned over the acceleration of the activities of communal and anti-national elements which constitute a serious threat to the security and integrity of the country. The dastardly assassination of an Indian diplomat in the United Kingdom by a gang of terrorists who claim to represent a secessionist movement in Jammu & Kashmir has emphasised the need for vigilance and preparedness on our part. The wider repercussions of such developments should be kept in mind.

Our polity has sufficient strength and resilience to overcome these difficulties. The health of our democratic institutions is sound. The Indian people have time and again shown their determination to protect their hard-won freedom and unity. It is up to us to harness their unbounded energy and idealism for the strengthening of the nation.

The international situation is disturbing. The arms race has continued unabated with the global expenditure on armaments exceeding \$ 600 billion annually. Disarmament negotiations have not registered any progress. The talks between the USA and the Soviet Union on the limitation of the Intermediate Nuclear Forces have been suspended. The prospect of redressing economic disparities is equally bleak.

The security environment in our own region has worsened. The militarisation of the Indian Ocean area continues. The induction of highly sophisticated weapons in our neighbourhood causes concern. We prefer to spend our scarce resources on development, but we cannot afford to be blind to our defence requirements. In spite of this build up all around us,

we have persevered in our policy of seeking friendship with all our neighbours. We should like the Government of Pakistan to respond positively to our desire for better relations and our proposals for friendship, peace and cooperation and to take steps to curb the propaganda directed against us. The ethnic violence in Sri Lanka, in which Indian nationals and Tamils and others of Indian origin suffered heavy casualties and loss of property, naturally caused deep concern to the entire country. It is gratifying that the Sri Lanka Government accepted our offer of good offices to facilitate a viable political settlement. We hope that the All-Parties Conference will lead to a lasting and satisfactory solution. Efforts aimed at the normalisation of relations with China, including the settlement of the boundary question are continuing. A number of visits have been exchanged and discussions held with the countries of the region with a view to resolving outstanding problems and further improving bilateral relations. A positive development was the launching of an integrated programme of South Asian Regional Cooperation. We were privileged to have the King of Bhutan as our chief guest on Republic Day in this year.

An event of high significance in 1983 was the Seventh Conference of Non-Aligned Countries in New Delhi. The Conference reaffirmed the continued relevance and validity of the policy of non-alignment. The Prime Minister, as Chairperson of the Movement has already taken a number of initiatives to promote peace, disarmament and economic cooperation. The most significant initiative was the organisation of informal consultations at summit level in New York at the time of the UN General Assembly. These consultations were widely acclaimed as having contributed to a useful process of dialogue on some of the critical issues of the day. Another step was the sending of a non-aligned ministerial group to West Asia in connection with the developments with the Palestinian Liberation Organisation. The Government firmly adhere to the principled policy of extending every possible support to the PLO and to liberation movements in South Africa and Namibia. We also played host to the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in November. It brought together Heads of the Government belonging to industrialised as well as developing countries and gave new support to initiatives for peace and international cooperation.

The tradition of friendly cooperation with the Soviet Union and the Socialist countries is growing. We were deeply grieved at the passing away of Mr. Yuri Andropov, the General Secretary of the CPSU and President of USSR. The Prime Minister flew to Moscow to convey India's sympathy to the Soviet people in their sorrow. She had a useful meeting with Mr. Konstantin Chernenko, the new General Secretary of the CPSU, at which the desire to strengthen mutual relations was reiterated.

The Prime Minister had a useful exchange of views with President Reagan in New York. Preparations are under way for the holding of Festivals of India in the United States and France. Our relations with the countries

of Western Europe were further strengthened by various high-level visits in both directions.

I paid State visits to Czechoslovakia, Qatar and Bahrain. The Prime Minister visited Yugoslavia, Finland, Denmark, Norway, Austria, Cyprus and Greece. She also met the President of France in Paris. In addition to the participation of Heads of State/Government at the NAM Summit and CHOGM, we also had the privilege of playing host to a number of distinguished visitors from abroad. Queen Elizabeth II combined a State visit to India with the opening of the CHOGM. The President of Bulgaria, the Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany, the President of the Republic of Maldives and the Prime Minister of Czechoslovakia were other distinguished guests. These visits have helped strengthen the friendly ties and cooperation between India and these countries.

Honourable Members, the Republic is passing through a period of stress. Important national tasks require steadfast devotion on the part of its public servants and people's representatives. We must give more to the nation than we take from it. A re-dedication to national ideals is needed so that all of us may give our best to the cause of national unity and progress.

I wish Honourable Members all success in their strenuous endeavours that lie ahead.

Jai Hind.

ADDRESS TO PARLIAMENT—17 JANUARY 1985

Lok Sabha	—	Eighth Lok Sabha
Session	—	First Session after the 8th General Election
President of India	—	Giani Zail Singh
Vice-President of India	—	Shri R. Venkataraman
Prime Minister of India	—	Shri Rajiv Gandhi
Speaker, Lok Sabha	—	Dr. Bal Ram Jakhar

HONOURABLE MEMBERS,

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to this first session of the Eighth Parliament. I felicitate the members of the new Lok Sabha and trust that they will make a significant contribution to the nation's progress.

For India, 1984 was a year of trial and tribulation. But in the midst of sorrow and anguish, there was also hope and strong affirmation of the principles the nation has chosen and cherished.

In the earlier part of 1984, subversive and anti-national elements stepped up their activities in Punjab. The process of dialogue was frustrated. A serious threat to the unity and integrity of the country was posed by extremists and terrorists. The Army had to be called in aid of the civil authorities. The series of events which compelled the Government to use the Army to deal with the threat to India's unity and integrity have been chronicled in the White Paper issued on July 10, 1984.

On October 31, 1984, our beloved leader and Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi, was assassinated in an act of perfidy.

A Commission of Inquiry headed by Justice M.P. Thakkar has been appointed to enquire into the facts and circumstances leading to the assassination.

Indira Gandhi has joined the ranks of the immortals of world history. The saga of her life will inspire generations to come. Every moment of her life was devoted to the consolidation of the unity of India and to the strengthening of the Indian people in all spheres. No memorials can fully capture the magnificence and radiance of her personality. The best homage

that we can pay to her memory is to follow the path she illumined till her last breath.

Disturbances and violence in Delhi and in some other parts of the country, following Indira Gandhi's assassination, resulted in loss of life and property. Stern and effective action was taken to control the situation within the shortest possible time. My Government extend their deepest sympathy to the families which suffered during the violence. Rehabilitation of the affected persons is a priority task to which both the Central and State Governments are attending with a sense of urgency.

Government express their deepest sympathy with those families which were victims of the gas tragedy in Bhopal. Rehabilitation of families which have lost their bread-winners is being attended to. Action is also being taken to secure compensation for the affected families. Government are undertaking a thorough examination of the location policy and safety measures of industrial establishments with a view to preventing the recurrence of such disasters.

The maturity and strength of India's democratic system were demonstrated by the smooth and orderly election of Shri Rajiv Gandhi as the new leader of the Congress (I) Parliamentary Party. Elections to the Lok Sabha were promptly called. The fair and peaceful manner in which they were held is tribute to the democratic genius of our people.

The elections of 1984 mark the resurgence of Indian nationalism, transcending all barriers of community, caste and region. The unprecedented mandate received by the ruling party under the leadership of Shri Rajiv Gandhi shows the overwhelming concern of our people for the unity and integrity of the nation and their desire for a strong and stable Government at the Centre.

The unambiguous verdict of the people is also for continuity of the basic policies which have given strength to our country with dynamic responses to changing situations.

The economy has made significant progress during the last five years. The average growth rate in the Sixth Plan period is likely to hit the target level of 5.2 per cent. Foodgrains production rose from 109.7 million tonnes in 1979-80 to 151.5 million tonnes in 1983-84, exceeding the year's target by as much as 9.5 million tonnes. Agricultural production in the current year is expected to maintain its buoyancy. The enterprise and hard work of our farmers and agricultural workers have written a new chapter of high achievement of which all of us can be proud. The most noteworthy feature of the acceleration in agricultural growth is the spread of the Green Revolution to the Eastern and the Central regions of the country.

Industrial production during the Sixth Five Year Plan has also recorded an increase of nearly 24 per cent upto 1983-84. In the first six months of the year a growth rate of over 7 per cent has been recorded. This will give a strong thrust to the economy. The working class, in accordance with its traditions, has made a notable contribution to the increase in production.

There has been a remarkable improvement in the performance of infrastructural industries during the Sixth Plan period. By the end of 1983-84 coal production had increased by 32.9 per cent and electricity generation by 32.6 per cent. Production of crude petroleum had registered a growth of 121 per cent. Production of fertilizers and cement have also registered increase of 52.3 per cent and 53.6 per cent, respectively. During the current year these sectors have registered further growth.

The price situation has shown considerable improvement. During the current year till the end of December 1984, the wholesale prices rose by only 4.8 per cent as against 7.7 per cent in the corresponding period of 1983. The annual rate of inflation as at the end of December, 1984 was 5.4 per cent as against 10.7 per cent at the end of December, 1983.

The success in containing inflationary pressures was due to the efficient management of the demand and supply position. Efforts were made to check the pace of monetary expansion and also to restrain government expenditure. On the supply side a number of initiatives were taken to increase availability of essential commodities. Larger production in response to Government policies of providing remunerative prices and of supply of key inputs, adequate imports of essential commodities wherever needed and the building up of large buffer stocks of foodgrains have helped in this process. The public distribution system has played a key role in maintaining price stability.

The external payments position has continued to improve. It may be recalled that the Government had voluntarily given up the balance part of the SDR 5 billion available under the IMF arrangement after drawing only SDR 3.9 billion. The reserves position has since been further strengthened. Foreign exchange reserves increased from Rs. 4265 crores at the end of 1982-83 to Rs. 5498 crores at the end of 1983-84. They increased further to Rs. 6250 crores at the end of December, 1984. However, this is an area in which there can be no room for complacency.

Through the 20-Point Programme, vigorous efforts continued to be made for the alleviation of poverty. In the first four years of the Sixth Five Year Plan the Integrated Rural Development Programme covered 4.7 million families belonging to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and 7.9 million families of economically weaker sections comprising various other communities. This, together with an additional 19.45 lakh families covered during the current year upto November, 1984 bring the total number of families covered under the Programme to 14.5 million. The National

Rural Employment Programme (NREP) and the Rural Landless Employment Guarantee Programme (RLEGP) have substantially expanded employment opportunities for the rural poor. In implementing these programmes special emphasis has been given to benefiting women and minorities.

Under the rural drinking water supply programme, out of 2.31 lakh problem villages 1.52 lakh had been covered till March 31, 1984. During 1984-85, nearly 42,000 more villages will have been covered.

Additional irrigation potential of 11.5 million hectares is expected to be created during the Sixth Plan. The total irrigation potential of the country by the end of the Sixth Plan is expected to be of the order of 68 million hectares against the ultimate potential of 113 million hectares. The multi-purpose development of Narmada Valley has been taken up.

The all-round progress of the economy in the Sixth Plan testifies to the soundness of the strategy of planned development and is a tribute to the dynamic leadership provided by Shrimati Indira Gandhi. Government are now formulating the Seventh Five Year Plan in the light of the Approach Paper. The priorities in the Seventh Plan were summed up by Shrimati Indira Gandhi as 'Food, Work and Productivity'. The country has now to make disciplined and vigorous efforts to reach a higher stage of development in which the imperatives of technological advances and social justice reinforce each other.

The new Government have inherited a coherent and principled foreign policy from Jawaharlal Nehru and Indira Gandhi. The continuity and wide acceptance of our foreign policy rests on our firm adherence to the principles and purposes of the United Nations Charter, commitment to non-alignment and stout opposition to colonialism, old and new, and racial discrimination.

As Chairman of the Non-Aligned Movement, India has worked together with other nations to build a just world order and helped reduce tensions and resolve conflicts between member States. The single most important challenge today is the threat of nuclear war. Last year, Leaders of Argentina, Greece, Mexico, Sweden, Tanzania and India collectively called upon the nuclear weapon States to declare a nuclear freeze and to substantially reduce nuclear stockpiles. In a few days from now, the leaders of these six countries will meet in New Delhi to consider what further action they can take to contain the nuclear peril.

We welcome the resumption of talks in Geneva between the USA and the USSR and hope that they would lead to meaningful disarmament measures.

Government attach high priority to developing close relations with all our neighbours. We are keen to see progress in the South Asia Regional Cooperation framework.

The militarisation of the Indian Ocean is continuing. This brings tensions and the possibility of conflict close to our shores. Government are committed to the objective of demilitarisation of the Indian Ocean so that the tensions are removed from this region and the littoral States, which are mostly developing countries, can devote their resources, attention and energy to the all-important tasks of development.

The induction of sophisticated armaments in our neighbourhood is a matter of grave concern. We hope Pakistan will respond positively and constructively to the several initiatives taken by Government.

The ethnic violence in Sri Lanka is a matter of deep concern to us. We are convinced that use of force cannot lead to a solution. A political process, in which all the concerned parties are involved, can alone result in a just settlement. Conditions must be created in Sri Lanka to enable the return of the large number of refugees who have been forced to take shelter in India.

Our relations with China have shown improvement. We shall persevere in seeking a solution to the boundary question.

Our friendly relations and cooperation with the Soviet Union and other socialist countries continue to develop.

We welcome the increasing cooperation in economic, scientific, cultural and educational fields with the United States of America.

We have noted with satisfaction the uninterrupted development of our bilateral relations with countries of West Asia, South-East Asia, and the Pacific region, East Asia, Africa, Western Europe, Central and South America and the Caribbeans.

We are distressed at the unprecedented drought and famine in parts of Africa. We have contributed 100,000 tonnes of wheat for famine relief and have offered medical help. The world community must come to the aid of the African nations in distress.

During the past year, I paid State visits to Argentina, Mexico, Mauritius, the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen and the Yemen Arab Republic. The late Prime Minister visited the USSR, Libya and Tunisia. We also had the privilege to host visits by the King of Bhutan, the Amir of Qatar, the Presidents of Sri Lanka and Yugoslavia, the Federal Chancellor of Austria, the Prime Ministers of Czechoslovakia, Japan, New Zealand and Vanuatu, the Secretary General of the Communist Party of Vietnam and the Chairman of the Burma Socialist Programme Party. All these exchanges have helped in further promoting friendly ties and cooperation between India and these countries. Leaders of 102 countries were in New Delhi in early November to attend the funeral of Shrimati Indira Gandhi, bringing to us the sympathy of their peoples in our hour of sorrow.

I now turn to future tasks. The Prime Minister has already expressed Government's determination to find solutions to the problems in Punjab and Assam.

Government are committed to a clean public life. They intend to initiate wide-ranging discussions on electoral reforms with political parties and would welcome their cooperation.

In consonance with the objective of a healthy political system, Government intend to bring forward in this session of Parliament an anti-defection Bill.

Government will pursue vigorously the reforms of the administrative system in order to make it more efficient and responsive to the people's needs and aspirations.

Textile industry is in a poor state of health and this problem needs immediate attention. Government will formulate and announce a new policy for the industry.

Comprehensive reforms will be introduced in the educational system and a new National Education Policy will be formulated.

Our judicial system has an important role in upholding the Constitution and in protecting the fundamental rights of the people. Some aspects need attention. The underprivileged sections of society must have easier access to judicial remedies. Speedier justice has to be ensured. Government intend to introduce measures for fulfilling these objectives.

Government will accord high priority to the social, economic and cultural development of women. An important step in this direction will be the provision of free education for girls upto the end of higher secondary stage. Government will frame a new national programme for women. In both the formulation and implementation of this programme, voluntary organisations will have an important role.

1985 is being observed as the Year of Youth. Our youth have already shown great promise in promoting national integration undertaking social work and achieving excellence in all fields of human endeavour. The need of the hour is to let the youth come forward to participate enthusiastically in nation-building. Appropriate programmes in this regard will be implemented.

Government have constituted a separate Department of Forests and Wild Life in recognition of the vitally important national task of conserving and developing our forest wealth. A new forest policy will be announced soon. A Wasteland Development Board is being setup to give new impetus to afforestation as a people's movement. Steps are being taken to deal effectively with the problems of air and water pollution.

My Government are establishing a Central Ganga Authority to stop the pollution of the Ganga. The Ganga is no ordinary river. With it are bound long memories of our past, our song and poetry and our search for Truth. A cleaner Ganga is thus a matter of the deepest satisfaction to our people.

Government attach high importance to the preservation of our cultural heritage. Equal importance will be given to promotion of creativity in the arts. Encouragement of science and technology and the application of scientific knowledge for solving the problems of the people will continue to receive high priority.

These are some of the priorities of national effort. Our duty as representatives of the people is to canalise the tremendous upsurge among the masses into cooperative and disciplined endeavour to accelerate development and to prepare the country for the 21st century. I wish you success in this great and exciting task.

Jai Hind.

ADDRESS TO PARLIAMENT—20 FEBRUARY 1986

Lok Sabha	—	Eighth Lok Sabha
Session	—	First Session of the Year
President of India	—	Giani Zail Singh
Vice-President of India	—	Shri R. Venkataraman
Prime Minister of India	—	Shri Rajiv Gandhi
Speaker, Lok Sabha	—	Dr. Bal Ram Jakhar

HONOURABLE MEMBERS,

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to this first session of Parliament in 1986. I felicitate the new members.

The year has seen Parliament transact its business in a purposeful manner and in an atmosphere of cooperation. I extend to you all my best wishes for the successful completion of the budgetary and legislative business that lies ahead.

In July 1985, the Government took a major initiative to resolve the complex and difficult problems in Punjab. Our prime concern was to strengthen the forces of unity and integrity. Policy was governed by the perspective of serving the highest national interest. The democratic process triumphed over terrorism. The peaceful elections in Punjab testified to the desire of the overwhelming majority of the people for peace and normalcy in the State.

A great responsibility rests on those who have secured the mandate of the people. Their supreme task is to isolate those who are resorting to violence to disturb communal harmony and peace. In this task they will have the support of all political forces committed to the unity and integrity of India. There cannot be, and must not be, any compromise with the forces of disintegration. It is imperative that all secular and democratic forces join hands in a mass campaign to safeguard the values enshrined in our Constitution—nationalism, secularism, democracy and socialism—the bedrock of India's unity.

The Assam settlement was followed by elections to the Legislative Assembly and the Lok Sabha. A new Government has taken office.

Government are committed to the fullest implementation of the Punjab and Assam Accords.

Government express their deepest sympathy with the families of all those who lost their lives, or were injured, or suffered loss of property in violent incidents in different parts of the country. Violence in public life is the very antithesis of the ethos of our civilization. The frequent resort to violence to settle what are perceived as grievances of one group or another should deeply disturb those who uphold democratic values. While governments must firmly put down violence wherever it may occur, it is essential that political parties committed to democratic values should deal with the root causes of violence through purposive and sustained work among the people. The temptation to seek short-term advantages from communal and other types of violence must be eschewed.

Communalism continues to pose a serious threat to national unity. It is being reinforced by religious fundamentalism and fanaticism. These trends represent a reactionary social outlook, directed against the struggle of the poor and the underprivileged against the vested interests. The reconstituted National Integration Council will have to act decisively and systematically to strengthen secularism.

In my Address on January 17, 1985, I had outlined the major policies and programmes of the Government. I recapitulate the main points:

- (i) Commitment to a clean public life;
- (ii) Administrative reforms;
- (iii) Judicial reforms;
- (iv) A new national education policy;
- (v) A new national programme for women;
- (vi) Participation of youth in programmes for promoting national integration and achieving excellence;
- (vii) Establishment of a Wasteland Development Board;
- (viii) Formation of a Central Ganga Authority;
- (ix) A new textile policy; and
- (x) Thorough examination of safety measures for industrial establishments.

My Government have fulfilled in substantial measure the tasks they had set for themselves for the past year.

The anti-defection Act is now on the statute book. Contributions to political parties by the companies have been permitted by law. Government have endeavoured to set a new tone in public life. This has strengthened

national confidence. A strong sense of involvement in public affairs among all sections of the people and a buoyant spirit have characterised the year that has gone by. We have to build on these assets to raise the standards of public life.

Vigorous steps have been taken to combat corruption and to improve the performance of the public services. Strong emphasis has been laid on sound personnel management and training of personnel at all levels. Machinery for redressal of public grievances is in place. Its results are being continuously evaluated. A new Ministry has been set up to monitor the implementation of various programmes. All Departments of Government have been directed to formulate detailed action plans for the coming financial year, against which their progress will be judged. Administrative reform is a continuous process. Detailed exercises are underway to reorient the system to speedier decision making and better implementation.

Government are determined to eliminate delays in dispensation of justice. The experiment of Lok Adalats has proved that an innovative approach is required to cure this malady. The establishment of Administrative Tribunals will also lighten the burden of the courts, enabling them to devote more time to the liquidation of arrears. However, these are just the first steps in tackling the basic problem of making justice inexpensive and easily accessible to the poor. Drastic changes are needed. Government have entrusted to Law Commission the task of recommending such changes.

Government published in August 1985, a status paper entitled "The Challenge of Education". This was intended to stimulate wide and intensive national debate on issues and alternatives. Government note with satisfaction that the debate has involved all sections of the people and many useful ideas and approaches have emerged. A draft of the new Education Policy will be presented shortly to Parliament.

Government have set up a new department to look after the development of women. A comprehensive national programme for women is being worked out. It will aim at enabling women to play their full part in developing a strong and modern nation.

Programmes for youth development have made considerable headway but much more has to be done in this area.

The Wasteland Development Board has been set up and has started work on an ambitious programme of afforestation. In a recent meeting, all the State Governments endorsed an integrated approach to a National Land Use Policy as well as the strategies and policies for wasteland development.

The Central Ganga Authority has come into existence. With the cooperation of the concerned State Governments, work has started in full swing on stopping the pollution of the Ganga.

A new textile policy was announced in June 1985. It aims at production of cheaper cloth for the people. An equally important objective of the policy is to protect the interests of handloom weavers. It is envisaged that in the Seventh Plan the entire production of 700 million sq. metres of controlled and Janata cloth will be transferred to the handloom sector. The Handlooms (Reservation of Articles for Production) Act, 1985 has been passed to strengthen this vital sector which provides livelihood to millions. Steps are being taken to ensure full and efficient implementation of the policy.

Government have completed examination of issues relating to industrial safety and management of hazardous substances and legislation will be introduced in this session of Parliament.

Government will establish seven zonal cultural centres-three have already been set up-to promote a sense of cultural cohesion. These centres, cutting across territorial and linguistic boundaries, would project the rich diversity of regional cultural traditions and their underlying unity. They would take the best of our culture to the masses, harmonising it with their lives and struggles. Their essential thrust would be to break the artificial barriers created during the colonial era between the masses and the living tradition of India's age-old culture in all its forms. The centres will also aim at revitalising folk art which has enriched the country's cultural life.

I would now refer to the major trends in our economy.

The Seventh Five Year Plan was approved by the National Development Council. The basic strategy of the Plan is cast in a longer term perspective of eradication of poverty and building a strong, self-reliant and modern economy. The Plan sharpens the focus on the anti-poverty programmes which will have an expanded coverage. It also envisages adequate investments in the core sectors to strengthen the growth potential of the national economy.

The fulfilment of the Plan requires total commitment and determination to mobilise adequate resources for investment. To translate the vision of a strong, prosperous, self-reliant India into reality requires unremitting toil and capacity to sacrifice and to bear hardship. Adequate savings have to be mobilised to pursue a non-inflationary path of development. More importantly, these savings have to be used effectively. The challenge has to be met. There are no shortcuts to development, no alternatives to hard work.

Vigorous implementation of anti-poverty programmes yielded significant results. The Sixth Five Year Plan aimed at assisting 15 million families under the Integrated Rural Development Programme; 16.6 million families were actually covered, of which 6.4 million belonged to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. These programmes are being strengthened and surplus foodgrains stocks will be used in 1986-87 to expand the National

Rural Employment Programme and the Rural Landless Employment Guarantee Programme to cover one million additional families. An amount of Rs. 100 crores has been provided annually during the Seventh Five Year Plan for the construction of housing for the Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes and freed bonded labour.

By the end of March, 1985, of a total of 2.31 lakh problem villages lacking safe drinking water supply, 1.92 lakh villages had been provided with at least one source of water supply. During 1985-86 the programme was further accelerated.

In 1985-86, agriculture continued to make steady progress. In November, 1985, foodgrains stocks with Government were higher by nearly 15 per cent over 1984. This has enabled Government to launch a scheme for distributing wheat and rice at specially subsidised rates in tribal areas and to other vulnerable sections, especially the Scheduled Castes, expectant mothers, children, etc. A comprehensive crop insurance scheme has been introduced in specified areas for the *kharif* crop. Government are considering further expansion of such schemes.

During the first seven months of 1985-86, industrial production grew at the rate of 6.3 per cent. The policy initiatives of Government have created a buoyant investment climate. The infrastructural industries have performed well. Compared with the first nine months of the last year, power generation was up by 8.2 per cent; saleable steel production by 12.9 per cent; fertilizer production by more than 10 per cent. Our ports handled 13.2 per cent more cargo and the railways created an all time record in freight traffic movement.

In 1985-86 Central Plan outlays were stepped up by 15 per cent over 1984-85, specially on anti-poverty programmes, human resource development, and infrastructure. There was considerable increase in the outlays of State Plans. Government will have spent in 1985-86 Rs. 1650 crores on food subsidy and ₹ 2050 crores on fertilizer subsidy. Public distribution system was strengthened and prudent management of supplies prevented shortages. It is gratifying that a significant increase in public investment was achieved.

Tax collections have been buoyant, belying gloomy forebodings. The collection of direct taxes is up by about 23 per cent compared to the corresponding period last year. Indirect tax collection has increased by 22 per cent. Total tax collections have increased by 22 per cent which is the highest in the last decade. An effective drive was launched against tax evaders, smugglers and blackmarketeers. Action has also been taken against personnel found guilty of colluding with economic offenders. Government are determined to cleanse the economic life and to fight the evil of black money.

For the first time, a long-term fiscal policy co-terminous with the Five Year Plan has been announced. A long-term direction to economic policy has been provided. Government are confident that the policy will ensure economic growth and speedier expansion of productive investment and employment opportunities.

It is necessary to focus attention on the structural problems of the economy to further our basic objective of growth with social justice. India's development depends upon steadily rising levels of public investment. How are these investments to be financed? Massive investments made in the previous Plans must yield adequate returns. Costs of production have to be reduced. Every paisa of national savings has to be put to the most productive use. Otherwise it will be difficult to find real resources for the larger and larger investments required for maintaining the tempo of self-reliant growth, for enlarging our anti-poverty programmes and for preserving our economic independence. Sooner or later, sooner rather than later, we have to face the realities of the situation. No one should be under the delusion that growth, social justice, price stability and self-reliance are achievable without efficiency, discipline and sharing of burdens. Contemporary history warns us of such pitfalls.

We must reduce the costs of our inputs and prices of final products and services. We cannot afford the luxury of pricing ourselves out of both the domestic and the export markets. A modern industrial society cannot rise on the basis of continuing low levels of productivity and high costs of production. New jobs cannot be created if existing enterprises incur losses year after year. Operational inefficiency increases the cost of production and is inevitably reflected in increased prices which are a burden on the people. It raises costs all round, reducing real investment.

The future of the planning process depends on our capacity to face up to difficult questions and to take hard decisions, decisions that may involve sacrifices but without which forward movement will not be possible. Growth is absolutely vital to raise the standards of living of the poor. Can we evade decisions that protect and strengthen this development process? Nations are built by generations that sacrifice for a better tomorrow.

The balance of payments position poses a similar challenge. Our exports have remained sluggish in 1985-86 but our imports have increased. The imports of petroleum products and edible oils are well above the limits the country can afford. The question basically is whether we want to stand on our own feet or not. If we do, there is no question that we have to curb the growth of consumption of petroleum products and we have to be self-sufficient in oilseeds. We also have to have a fresh look at our imports of capital goods. We do not want to shut out new technology because that will harm us, but we have to make sure that such technology meets the rigorous

criteria of essentiality. External financial flows are needed but Government are determined that India is never at the mercy of foreign banks and institutions. Economic independence and self-reliance are central to our philosophy of development. We shall pay whatever price is required to maintain our economic independence.

The primary objectives of our foreign policy continue to be the promotion of non-alignment, advocacy of peace and nuclear disarmament, enlarging the area of friendship and cooperation and building of a just world order.

We welcome the resumption of high level dialogue between the USSR and USA. It is imperative to take urgent steps to bring about a freeze in the nuclear arms race and a comprehensive nuclear weapon test ban treaty. The Six-Nation initiative has called for these measures. The Delhi Declaration of January, 1985 has had a good impact on public opinion throughout the world. The leaders of the six countries are in touch with one another about further steps.

During the last one year the atmosphere in the subcontinent has distinctly improved. We have succeeded in making progress with our neighbours in many fields. But we remain concerned about the ethnic situation in Sri Lanka and Pakistan's continued pursuit of a nuclear weapon capability. We remain convinced that the situation in Sri Lanka can be settled only through political means; attempts to seek a military solution will fail and will only result in the loss of a large number of innocent lives.

The Government welcome the establishment of South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) launched in Dhaka in December, 1985. We expect that it will help strengthen forces of friendship and cooperation in our region.

The Government have made untiring efforts towards the resolution of the major areas of tension. At the Commonwealth Meeting in the Bahamas in October, in which the Prime Minister participated, our delegation played a leading role in the adoption of the Commonwealth Accord on South Africa. We continue to demand comprehensive mandatory sanctions against the racist regime in South Africa. If the authorities there, and other Governments in a position to influence South Africa, do not act in time, violence on large scale will become unavoidable.

The Prime Minister also attended the 40th anniversary of the United Nations. The Nassau Declaration on World Order, adopted by Commonwealth leaders, contained a strong plea for adherence to international norms and principles and the strengthening of the United Nations. Support for the United Nations system is one of the corner-stones of our foreign policy. We are concerned at the growing threat to the multilateral institutions and the increasing tendency to resort to unilateral action. Government support

international efforts to combat international terrorism, while recognising the rights of people under colonial occupation to use all means to attain their just objectives.

The Government deplore the fact that the Palestinian people continue to be denied their inalienable rights, including the right to an independent homeland of their own. Until this basic problem is tackled, West Asia will not see a lasting peace.

The Prime Minister paid official visits to the USSR, Egypt, France, Algeria, the USA, Bhutan, the UK, Cuba, the Netherlands, Vietnam, Japan, Oman and Maldives. Our traditionally close and friendly relations with the USSR have been further strengthened following the Prime Minister's discussions with Soviet leaders in Moscow. The visit to the USA has significantly enlarged the content of our bilateral relations with the USA. The Prime Minister visited Dhaka to express our solidarity with the people of Bangladesh during the cyclone disaster and participated in the meeting of Heads of State and Government for launching the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation. The Prime Minister addressed the UNESCO during his visit to France. He addressed the annual conference of the I.L.O in Geneva. We had the privilege to host visits by the Kings of Nepal and Bhutan, the Queen of the Netherlands, the Presidents of Mexico, Maldives, SWAPO, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Indonesia and Pakistan, the Chairman of PLO, the Head of State of Ethiopia, and the Prime Ministers of Poland, Yugoslavia, Mauritius, Britain, New Zealand, People's Democratic Republic of Yemen and Trinidad & Tobago. The Crown Prince and Princess of Norway and the Pope also visited India.

Let me now outline some priority areas for 1986-87 and beyond.

The need of the hour is to enable the poor to better their lives. Science and technology have to support this fundamental objective. To this end, Government are mounting technology missions in the following areas:

- (i) Drinking water for all villages;
- (ii) Eradication of illiteracy;
- (iii) Vaccination and immunisation of children;
- (iv) Production of oilseeds and manufacture of edible oils;
- (v) Improved communications.

In the course of the year more thrust areas will be identified with the object of using technology for improving productivity in industry and agriculture. In selected areas science and technology missions will endeavour to place India in the front rank of scientific activity.

A comprehensive agriculture policy will be formulated to promote an optimal cropping pattern, to improve water and soil management, to increase productivity of all crops, to enhance the incomes of small and marginal

farmers and to enlarge our hard-won self-sufficiency in foodgrains through higher production of oilseeds and pulses. A time-bound action plan will be drawn up to take the green revolution to the eastern region.

It is gratifying that a national consensus has emerged on treating water as a national resource. Government attach high priority to the evolution of a national water policy which would optimise the use of water for agricultural, industrial and other social needs.

Government have carried out an in-depth analysis of our family planning programmes. Profiting from the experience of the past, a more effective strategy for family planning is being worked out and will be announced shortly.

The focus on anti-poverty programmes will be sharpened. A new programme, which builds on the success achieved by the revised 20-Point Programme is being formulated and will be announced soon. It will bring together all the elements, policies and programmes for a major national effort to tackle the problem of mass poverty in all its manifestations, specifically the problems of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. Programmes for the social, economic, educational and cultural development for the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and other weaker sections will be vigorously implemented. The implementation of the 15-Point Programme for the development of minorities, with special emphasis on increasing economic opportunities, will be closely monitored.

To rapidly increase employment to stimulate development in backward areas and to enhance the efficiency of Indian industry to serve the masses better, a more comprehensive framework of industrial policy is required. Many changes have already been made in our industrial policy which now reflects the new thrust for modernisation, absorption of new technologies and promotion of indigenous technologies. High cost and inefficient industry hurts the poor, because it absorbs resources that are needed to create new jobs for them. A vast increase in the production of goods and services for the masses in rural and urban areas is central to our strategy for the removal of poverty. This necessitates a fresh look at policies governing scale of production, capacity utilisation, the role of indigenous technology, labour productivity, the detailed regulatory mechanism, the future perspectives for small and medium industry and the existing administrative and management apparatus. Industry must serve the large masses.

To meet the challenge of maintaining a viable balance of payments position, a major thrust for promotion of exports and tourism is called for. Any slackening of progress on this front will jeopardise our overall development strategy. Government will take new initiatives in this critical area.

It is imperative to effect changes in our administrative system to bring it in tune with the objective of growth with social justice. Management in Government has to be imbued with a new social outlook. It is not a question of imposing something from above. The impetus to reform must come from within. The national community as a whole must debate issues affecting the working of the administrative system. A concrete agenda of action will thus emerge for implementation. Our watchwords must be improvement of efficiency and enforcement of accountability.

To safeguard the health and vitality of our basic political institutions, changes will be needed in our electoral and other laws. Government will hold wide-ranging consultations with the leaders of political parties with a view to formulating concrete proposals to ensure cleaner public life.

The vision of a mighty India will be realised only in the actual lives of men and women who have strength of character, tenacity of purpose and commitment to excellence. Government's strategy for human resource development aims at developing these qualities in our national life. The new education policy will be an integral part of this strategy. It will aim at the physical, intellectual, cultural and moral development of society in a harmonious fashion.

It is not enough to state objectives. A national mobilisation is essential to ensure that the resources required to implement the education policy are forthcoming. Even more important is the involvement of the youth, students, teachers, the intelligentsia, workers and farmers in giving a new direction to the national effort in this area. Education has to be transformed from an activity in the classroom to a social process for building the India of our dreams. It has to be integrated more closely, both with production and our commitment to conserve and enhance our cultural heritage—to make us proud to be Indian.

The years ahead are years of challenge. Government have taken a number of measures to accelerate growth, to modernise the economy and to give new content to our programmes for achieving social justice. It is imperative to impart a sense of urgency to the task of implementation.

Much has been achieved this past year, and the hopes and expectations of our people are high. As their representatives, you have the onerous duty to fulfil their aspirations. Above all, people's representatives and organisations of all political persuasions should work together to strengthen the secular and democratic foundations of our society. The forces of violence and fanaticism have to be fought. The economic capabilities we have built up since independence have brought us to a point where determined and concerted efforts to take us forward and to remove poverty are feasible. Now is the time to ensure greater political cohesion so that the battle against poverty and backwardness can be won. I wish you all success in the tasks ahead.

Jai Hind.

ADDRESS TO PARLIAMENT—23 FEBRUARY 1987

Lok Sabha	—	Eighth Lok Sabha
Session	—	First Session of the Year
President of India	—	Giani Zail Singh
Vice-President of India	—	Shri R. Venkataraman
Prime Minister of India	—	Shri Rajiv Gandhi
Speaker, Lok Sabha	—	Dr. Bal Ram Jakhar

HONOURABLE MEMBERS,

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to this first session of Parliament in 1987. I extend to you my best wishes for the successful completion of the budgetary and legislative business ahead.

In 1986 many of the gains made from the thorough and comprehensive policy changes initiated in several key areas were consolidated. At the same time it was a year in which the country was called upon to grapple with challenges, external as well as internal, to its unity and integrity. Our secular, democratic structure is boldly facing the forces of communalism and separatism. Nothing will ever shake the people of India from their adherence to the basic principles of democracy, secularism and socialism which inform our Republic.

In Punjab the forces of democracy, unity, progress and secularism continue to be engaged in the struggle to isolate and wipe out the anti-national elements which are guided and controlled by foreign sources. Under the leadership of the Chief Minister, Shri S. S. Barnala, the State Government and the people of Punjab, have shown exemplary courage in upholding the values of secular democracy. The people of Punjab have always been in the forefront to defend the unity and integrity of India. They played a historic role in the freedom struggle which has left the imperishable imprint of secularism and democracy on their mind and spirit. It is, therefore, not surprising that they have stood up to the blatantly unconstitutional effort to subvert the democratic process through a sinister exploitation of religious sentiments. In flagrant violation of the sacred tenets and traditions of the great religion founded by Guru Nanak, a small section has turned religious functionaries and holy shrines into instruments of terror and subversion. Today this is the central issue in Punjab.

Government will not allow the enemies of India's unity and integrity to abuse and misuse religion for their nefarious ends of creating communal disharmony and of unleashing violence and hatred in Punjab. All patriotic, secular, democratic and progressive forces have to unite to build the strength of the people to overcome the reactionary, fascist and anti-national elements who are misguiding and confusing the masses in the name of the religion. The challenge faces us all. No one can remain on the sidelines.

As the nation approaches the 40th anniversary of our freedom, it is fully conscious of the dangers posed by religious obscurantism and communalism. It was in April, 1948 that the Constituent Assembly (Legislative) passed a resolution calling upon Government to take steps to eliminate communalism from India's political life. The Father of the Nation had been assassinated barely two months earlier. Memories of the ghastly killings were still fresh in the minds of our Constitution makers. The threat to the unity of India from communalism loomed large before them. As we went ahead on our path of planned development, we began to assume that social and economic progress would automatically weaken the communal outlook. Experience has, however, shown that the communal and fundamentalist forces, aided and abetted by external elements, are challenging our basic values of nationalism, secularism, democracy and socialism. Indiraji's martyrdom was to defend the same sacred cause of the unity and integrity of India against the evil designs of communalists and reactionaries. These nefarious forces constitute a deeper malady which has persisted in spite of demonstrable progress in socio-economic spheres. The situation clearly calls for a reappraisal and Government propose a national dialogue for this purpose. Our precious heritage of unity in diversity can be preserved only by fighting all divisive forces.

There can be no better way of celebrating the 40th anniversary of freedom and the birth centenary of the architect of modern India, Jawaharlal Nehru, than concerted and resolute action to remove the cancerous cells of communalism from our body politic. The National Committee for these celebrations headed by the Vice-President of India, will devise a comprehensive programme to inculcate secular values and scientific temper.

While the Government were engaged in controlling extremist activities in Punjab, a new danger appeared on our borders. In January, 1987, Pakistan deployed strike formations in a menacing posture threatening Punjab and Jammu & Kashmir. As Members are aware, our borders are largely manned by para-military forces. Faced with this situation, the Government had to deploy our armed forces for safeguarding the borders. Serious tension was generated by the forward movement of Pakistani forces. The Prime Minister took the initiative for immediate talks between the two Governments. An agreement on measures to de-escalate the situation was reached during

negotiations between the two Governments held in Delhi recently and Pakistan agreed to withdraw their Army Reserve North from the Ravi-Chenab corridor. Further talks will be held in Islamabad. India's policy is based on peace and cooperation with all nations. Government have taken various measures to strengthen cooperation with our neighbours. While determined to preserve our sovereignty and integrity, India is prepared to remove all causes of tension and distrust between the two countries in the spirit of bilateral cooperation embodied in the Shimla Agreement.

The Mizoram Accord, signed in 1986, brought to an end decades of insurgency and strife in that beautiful part of our country. Pursuant to this Accord, Statehood has been conferred on Mizoram and elections have been held. A new Government has taken office.

The aspirations of the people of Arunachal Pradesh for a full-fledged State have been fulfilled by the enactment of Parliamentary legislation to confer the Statehood on Arunachal Pradesh. The new state came into existence on February 20, 1987. A new chapter in the history of the people of Arunachal Pradesh has begun.

Government are committed to safeguarding the rights and interests of minorities. The solemn assurances contained in our Constitution regarding religious, cultural and linguistic matters have been and are being implemented in letter and spirit. Government have continued to carefully monitor the implementation of the 15-point programme formulated by Shrimati Indira Gandhi to ameliorate the condition of minorities.

In my address on February 20, 1986 I had outlined the priority areas for 1986-87 and beyond. The main policy thrusts were:—

- (i) Formulation of the revised 20-point programme;
- (ii) Formulation of the new education policy;
- (iii) Formulation of technology missions to improve the condition of the rural and urban poor;
- (iv) A new orientation to our agricultural policy and taking the green revolution to the eastern region;
- (v) A more effective strategy for family planning;
- (vi) Intensification of industrial growth;
- (vii) Promotion of exports and tourism;
- (viii) Reforms in the administrative system; and
- (ix) Changes in electoral laws.

My Government have taken action in all these areas and positive results are beginning to flow.

The 20-point programme of 1986 has sharpened the focus on measures to eradicate poverty. The main features of the restructured programme are:—

- (i) Poverty alleviation programmes which aim at expansion of rural employment and improvement of productivity and production;
- (ii) Programmes for ensuring justice to scheduled castes and scheduled tribes;
- (iii) Reduction of income inequalities and removal of social and economic disparities;
- (iv) Strengthening of the movement to ensure equal status for women;
- (v) Creation of new opportunities for youth;
- (vi) Provision of safe drinking water for all villages;
- (vii) Protection of environment;
- (viii) Supply of energy for the villages; and
- (ix) Evolving a more responsive administration.

The new education policy has been formulated. It is an effective instrument in our fight against poverty. Its major aim is to reach out to the poor and the deprived and to place in their hands the means to gain control over their own destiny. Programmes such as the Operation Blackboard, non-formal education, adult education, vocational education and Navodaya Vidyalayas will bring about qualitative changes in education. They will directly help socially and economically backward sections of the community. The new policy will also strengthen national integration. We have emphasized the importance of spreading an awareness and involvement of all our people in the heritage of India. The newly established zonal cultural centres have begun undertaking this task with enthusiasm and have organised innovative Festivals of our culture in Punjab, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Meghalaya, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Goa, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram and *Apna Utsav* in the capital.

Five technology missions have been set up in the following areas:—

- (i) Drinking water for all villages;
- (ii) Eradication of illiteracy;
- (iii) Universal immunisation of children;
- (iv) Production of oilseeds and manufacture of edible oils;
- (v) Improved communications.

Government are considering issues relating to an effective management and monitoring system for the missions. The key idea here is to involve the people in activities relating to the missions so that they realise the potential for individual and social development.

The reorientation of agricultural policy has proceeded satisfactorily. Growth of productivity in the eastern region has vindicated Government strategy. To increase and stabilise production and productivity in the major part of our land resources, a national programme of rain-fed agriculture through watershed development has been launched during the current year in 16 major rain-fed/dryland farming States. A National Pulses Development Project, with an outlay of Rs. 50 crores, has been started in 1986-87 to increase production of this essential protein crop.

We have formulated a new family planning strategy with major emphasis on voluntary acceptance of the two child norm. The programme will be integrated with health care, nutrition and education programmes. Government have decided that the leading role in promotion of the family welfare programme should be played by voluntary agencies.

In the sphere of industry, the dynamic thrust for efficiency and modernisation has begun to show results. Industrial production has picked up significantly.

Intensive efforts have been made on the basis of a coordinated approach to promote exports of both primary commodities and manufactured products. In our strategy manufacturing has been assigned the role of growth sector. A concessional rate of duty has been allowed on imports of modern capital goods for export production. Contemporary technology is being permitted for the thrust sectors. Significant fiscal and financial measures such as the new cash compensatory scheme, the duty drawback system, availability of MODVAT in respect of 38 specified chapters, deduction in respect of profits for exports, sharp reduction in the rates of interest on pre-shipment and post-shipment credit for exports and the new computer software policy are intended to boost exports.

The process of reform in our administrative system has gathered momentum. There has been a positive response of the civil servants to the new imperatives of accountability, social responsibility and a new work ethic. Government are determined to carry forward the task of bringing about qualitative improvements in Government management with the cooperation of all sections of the work force.

The basic structure of our electoral system has stood the test of time. It has ensured free and fair elections to Parliament and State Legislatures and has been recognised and acclaimed as such by the whole world. Based on the report of the Chief Election Commissioner of 1986, Government have formulated certain suggestions, which are to be discussed with the various political parties and also thrown open to public debate. Necessary legislation will be initiated, as in the past, on the basis of consensus evolving from such discussions.

1986 will be remembered for significant legislation affecting important areas of national life. Stringent and comprehensive environment protection legislation has been enacted. It was brought into force on November 19, 1986 as a fitting tribute to the memory of Shrimati Indira Gandhi who did more than anyone else to raise environmental consciousness.

- The rights of the consumers are now part of the statute book.
- Radical laws have been passed to improve the status of women.
- The Suppression of Immoral Traffic in Women and Girls Act, 1956 was amended to protect all persons sexually exploited for commercial purposes. Stricter punishment has been prescribed for living on the earnings of prostitution of children and minors.
- The Dowry Prohibition Act was amended, shifting the burden of proving that there was no demand for dowry on the person who takes or abets the taking of dowry. Offences under the Act have been made non-bailable.
- Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act has been passed under which depiction of figure of a woman, her form or body, which has the effect of being indecent, derogatory or which denigrates women has been made punishable.

A significant feature of these laws is that legal remedy can be invoked by citizens. In implementing these far-reaching laws, the cooperation of public, spirited and socially conscious citizens is of vital importance.

Let me now turn to the major trends in the economy.

Notwithstanding an indifferent monsoon the growth in gross national product in 1986-87 will be around 5 per cent. Thus the targeted growth rate of the Seventh Plan will be achieved for the second year in succession.

The foodgrain output will be somewhat higher than last year in spite of inadequate rains for the third year in succession. Government are concerned over the fact that even though agricultural production has reached higher levels, it is showing signs of levelling off. It is partly the result of three consecutive years of poor precipitation. The basic strategy for increasing agricultural production is sound. Vigorous implementation of projects and programmes for increasing irrigation potential and popularising the use of high-yielding varieties of seeds is expected to achieve the targeted growth rates of the Seventh Plan. Government have taken major policy initiatives to increase the domestic production of oilseeds.

The industrial infrastructure has performed remarkably well both in 1985-86 and 1986-87. The average annual growth rates for the last two years are likely to be 9.5 per cent in power, 6 per cent in coal, 7.7 per cent in saleable steel, 6.8 per cent in hot metal, 8 per cent in railway freight

and 16.5 per cent in fertilizers. The significant aspect of the infrastructural scene is that annual performance has continuously improved, extending over every quarter. In many cases, the lowest production in a quarter has been higher than the highest production recorded in any quarter of the preceding year. The infrastructure has begun to use investments in an efficient manner.

The revised index of industrial production (base 1980-81=100), with wider and more representative coverage than the old index, provides evidence of satisfactory industrial growth. In 1985-86 industrial production grew at the rate of 8.7 per cent. In 1986-87 growth rate is expected to be 7-8 per cent. There has been impressive growth in electronics during the previous two years at the rate of around 40 per cent per annum. The public sector has continued to play the key role in our economic development. At the end of 1985-86, the total investment in Central public enterprises stood at Rs. 50,341 crores, registering an increase of Rs. 14,947 crores compared with 1984-85. The financial performance of Central public enterprises has shown an encouraging trend. Measures have been taken to strengthen the autonomy of public enterprises and to make them accountable for results.

Public stocks of foodgrains have continued at high levels and stood at 23 million tonnes in December, 1986. This has enabled Government to make additional allocations of rice and wheat to States for public distribution, to provide rice and wheat at concessional rates to integrated tribal development projects and nutrition programmes and to make higher allocations for the National Rural Employment Programme and the Rural Labour Employment Guarantee Programme. Comfortable stocks of foodgrains also enabled Government to give adequate quantities to drought-stricken States for the food-for-work programme.

There has been a major reorientation of policy to stimulate sugarcane and sugar production. The new two-year sugar policy aims at providing sugarcane farmers with more remunerative prices. It has also created a stable environment by announcement of the statutory minimum price a year in advance. As a result of this policy, sugar production increased by almost one million tonnes in 1985-86, and is expected to increase further in 1986-87. This has enabled Government to reduce sugar imports.

The technology mission for boosting oilseeds production has started functioning. A programme with an outlay of Rs. 170 crores during 1986-90 has been launched to increase production of oilseeds to 18 million tonnes in 1989-90. In *Kharif* 1986, productivity of oilseeds is estimated to have gone up by 10 per cent and production by 7 per cent over *Kharif* 1985, despite adverse weather conditions which reduced average by 3 per cent. Edible oil imports were reduced to provide an incentive to domestic production. In 1985-86 imports were reduced by 55 per cent in value terms

and over 15 per cent in quantity terms. Fiscal incentives have been provided to ensure processing of greater quantities of minor oilseeds and rice bran into edible oils.

In 1986-87, anti-poverty programmes received stronger emphasis. The Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP) and the Employment Programmes are the kingpin of the antipoverty strategy. In 1986-87, an outlay of Rs. 543.83 crores was provided for the Integrated Rural Development Programme. This may be compared with Rs. 207.7 crores provided in 1984-85 and Rs. 205.9 crores in 1985-86. Upto the end of December 1986, 2.07 million families have been assisted. New features have been introduced in the implementation of the programme. They are higher level of investment per family, provision for forward and backward linkages, emphasis on training of beneficiaries, involvement of voluntary organisations, introduction of concurrent evaluation and increasing the assistance to women. Under all these programmes the basic thrust is to provide maximum assistance to the poorest of the poor and to scheduled castes and scheduled tribes.

The National Rural Employment Programme and the Rural Landless Employment Guarantee Programme were strengthened in 1986-87. Employment aggregating to 550 million mandays is expected to be created. There has been a noteworthy step up in outlays on NREP. In 1986-87 a total outlay of Rs. 479.75 crores was provided by the Centre compared with Rs. 230 crores for 1984-85 and Rs. 337.21 crores for 1985-86. Under RLEGP, which is wholly funded by the Centre, an outlay of Rs. 731.10 crores was provided for 1986-87 which may be compared with Rs. 400 crores for 1984-85 and Rs. 606.33 crores for 1985-86.

The 20-point programme of 1986 emphasises the provision of safe drinking water for all villages. In 1986-87, a total amount of Rs. 794.05 crores was allocated for the drinking water programme in Central and State plans taken together. 40,000 villages are expected to be covered exceeding the target of 35,930 villages. Special attention is being paid to provision of water supply for scheduled castes and scheduled tribes.

In 1986-87, the outlay for the annual plan was stepped up substantially. For the first time in our planning history, 40 per cent of the Five Year Plan was financed in real terms in the first two years of the plan period. In allocation of resources, high priority was accorded to anti-poverty programmes and to strengthening the core sectors of the economy. A massive increase of 65 per cent was made in the outlay for major anti-poverty programmes. The outlays for agriculture, rural development and irrigation were stepped up by nearly 30 per cent. The plan provision for education was increased by 60 per cent. The Central Plan for 1986-87 envisaged an outlay of Rs. 22,300 crores, representing an increase of 20.5 per cent over

the last year's outlay. The actual outlay of the plan is likely to be higher at around Rs. 23,000 crores. Nothing could illustrate better the strong commitment of Government to the pivotal role of planning in India's development.

Government have taken steps to implement the basic proposals outlined in the long term fiscal policy. The tax structure is being reformed and simplified, strong emphasis has been laid on mobilising resources for development by better administration and enforcement to improve compliance; a stable fiscal environment is being created to stimulate savings and investment, and a more open approach has been adopted in regard to fiscal policy.

Central Government revenues which increased by 23 per cent in 1985-86 have shown a further increase of over 17 per cent in April-December, 1986. Personal income-tax collection recorded an impressive growth of 30 per cent in 1985-86; they have grown by another 16 per cent in April-December, 1986. The continued buoyancy of Central revenues has vindicated Government's fundamental approach of reasonable tax rates combined with strict enforcement of tax laws.

A Cabinet Committee on Exports was set up to expedite decision making on policies and programmes for promotion of exports. Exports grew by 17.3 per cent in April-November, 1986 over the corresponding period of last year. Imports increased by only 1.4 per cent over the same period. As a result the trade deficit has shown a substantial decline. We cannot, however, afford to be complacent. The challenge of self-reliance and of building a fully independent economy demands unremitting effort.

In the current year we crossed the one million mark in foreign tourist arrivals. Foreign exchange earnings from tourism are estimated at Rs. 1,600 crores as compared to Rs. 1,300 crores during 1985-86.

Domestic tourism is being given special importance to promote national integration. Central Government is providing assistance for wayside facilities, wildlife sanctuaries, sound and light shows, and cheaper tourist accommodation.

While impressive results have been achieved in the matter of resource mobilisation, a similar effort has to be directed to controlling expenditure. The imperatives of growth with social justice compel serious attention to the task of containing unproductive expenditure.

The consumer price index gives cause for concern. However, inflation, as measured by the wholesale price index has been kept within reasonable limits. Government will continue to pursue policies to counteract inflationary trends in our economy.

During the last two years, a positive trend of improvement was seen in industrial relations. Strikes and lockouts declined from 2094 in 1984 to 1716 in 1985 and 1234 in 1986 (January to October). The loss of mandays due to industrial disputes fell from 56.03 million mandays in 1984 to 29.37 million mandays in 1985 and 19.41 million mandays during 1986 (January to October). Government have taken a number of steps to ensure that unorganised workers receive entitled benefits.

Industrial workers have made a notable contribution to raising production and productivity in the last two years. Government are committed to safeguarding their interest and to enlist their cooperation for accelerated industrial growth.

Government have continued to pursue our non-aligned foreign policy objectives of peace, disarmament, development and cooperation with all nations for building an equitable world order.

The Six Nation Five Continent initiative in which Argentina, Greece, India, Mexico, Sweden and Tanzania are taking part, has produced a favourable impact on public opinion throughout the world for intensive and sustained effort to bring about nuclear disarmament. At Reykjavik radical proposals of ending the nuclear arms were placed on the table. It is unfortunate that no agreement was reached. We have continued to urge both the USA and USSR to persevere in their efforts to fulfil the aspirations of humankind for peace and for a world free from nuclear weapons.

At the Non-aligned Summit at Harare, India handed over the chairmanship of the movement to Zimbabwe. The Summit acclaimed the role of our country has played in strengthening non-alignment and in reaffirming the basic objectives of the Movement. The Summit entrusted to our Prime Minister the chairmanship of the newly established AFRICA Fund Committee to carry forward the struggle against apartheid and to support the efforts of the Frontline States. The AFRICA Fund Summit held in Delhi on January 24-25, 1987 has given concrete shape to the concept articulated at Harare. Government are convinced that comprehensive mandatory sanctions alone will compel the racist regime in South Africa to forestall bloodshed and listen to the voice of reason. Governments that are in a position to influence South Africa, because of their commercial and economic relations, have to mount pressure through comprehensive mandatory sanctions.

India's policy of expanding cooperation in our region has achieved significant results. The successful SAARC (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation) Summit held in Bangalore* in November, 1986 under India's chairmanship has demonstrated the benefits of regional cooperation. A permanent Secretariat of SAARC has since been established in Kathmandu.

* Now known as Bengaluru.

New areas including control of drug trafficking children's welfare, broadcasting, tourism and scholarships have been identified for the programme of SAARC cooperation. Our Prime Minister took the opportunity of SAARC meeting to hold useful bilateral discussions.

Despite the set-back caused by the deployment by Pakistan of its troops on our borders, efforts are continuing to create a basis for cooperation with Pakistan. The main hurdles in the way of normalisation are Pakistan's clandestine effort to acquire nuclear weapons capability, its arms programme with serious implications for our security environment and its support to anti-national and secessionist elements in Punjab.

It is unfortunate that the promise held out by our bilateral discussions with Sri Lanka at Bangalore* and of subsequent high level consultations in December, 1986 has received a set-back. The negotiating process has been hindered by the hesitations of the Government of Sri Lanka in regard to their own formula of December 19, 1986. The massive military operations undertaken by the Sri Lanka security forces and the economic blockade of Jaffna area have created further complications. We are deeply affected by the hardship, suffering and loss of life of the Tamil civilian population of Sri Lanka. The ethnic issue in Sri Lanka can only be resolved through political dialogue.

My Government continues to strive for a just and peaceful settlement of the border question with China. The question remains crucial to full normalisation of our relations. The unfortunate development on the border continues to cause concern. Our position on the border question is well known. We are in discussion with China on the issue.

We uphold the unalienable rights of the Palestinian people. We support the liberation struggle of the peoples of Southern Africa. We have repeatedly urged an early end to the fratricidal war between Iraq and Iran. We continue to support the efforts of the Contradora group to achieve a peaceful and lasting settlement of the crisis in Central America. We have also supported the UN Secretary General's initiative on Afghanistan. We welcome the flexible responses to the outstanding issues in regard to Afghanistan and trust that conditions will be created soon to ensure the status of Afghanistan as an independent, non-aligned country free from outside interference and intervention.

During the last year I paid goodwill visits to Nepal, Greece, Poland and Yugoslavia. The Vice-President visited France and Botswana. The Prime Minister paid bilateral visits to the Maldives, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Angola, Tanzania, Mauritius, Mexico, Indonesia, Australia, New Zealand and Thailand. The Prime Minister also participated in the Commonwealth Heads of Government Review Meeting in London, the Summit Meeting of the Six

* Now known as Bengaluru.

Nation Five Continent Peace Initiative at Ixtapa and the Eighth Non-aligned Summit in Harare, besides visiting Sweden to attend the funeral of the late Prime Minister OloF Palme.

We had the privilege to host the Prime Minister of Greece, the Prime Minister of the Republic of Korea, the Prime Minister of Turkey, the President of Seychelles, the Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany, the President of the African National Congress, the President of SWAPO, the President of Bangladesh, the Prime Minister of Yugoslavia, the President of Nicaragua, the Prime Minister of Zambia, the King of Jordan, the Prime Minister of Denmark, the President of Peru, the Prime Minister of Malaysia and the President of Finland. The then Prime Minister and the current President of the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen and the Prime Minister of Italy made transit visits to India. President Zia-ul-Haq of Pakistan paid an unofficial visit.

These bilateral visits have strengthened our friendly relations with these countries. A large number of agreements have been signed to further bilateral cooperation in economic, commercial, scientific and cultural fields.

In the context of the close and friendly relations that have characterised the four decade history of Indo-Soviet cooperation, the visit of Mr Gorbachev, the General Secretary of CPSU, was a landmark. The Delhi Declaration signed by Mr Gorbachev and our Prime Minister has provided a qualitatively new framework for international relations based on non-violence, justice and equality. It will have worldwide significance in establishing new attitudes and values relevant to the crucial problems of humanity.

The thrust of Government policy is to improve the welfare of economically and socially weaker sections of the community. The primary focus of policies and programmes initiated during the last two years has been to assist the landless agricultural labour, the small and marginal farmers, artisans and craftsmen, handloom weavers, women, children, the urban poor, scheduled castes and scheduled tribes and other backward classes. Our strategy of development will continue to strongly emphasize social justice as its foremost objective.

In spite of the many difficult problems we are facing, the people have high confidence in their capacity to build a strong and prosperous India. This confidence comes from our impressive achievements. India stands as a symbol of stability and progress. Our commitment to basic values and our determination to preserve our cultural heritage have enabled us to march forward with our head held high. We still have much to do. With the cooperation and unbounded enthusiasm of our people, my Government will take the country forward on its chosen path.

Our tasks are anchored to basic national priorities. National cohesion will be strengthened. Communalism will be fought tooth and nail. The anti-poverty programme will be implemented with vigour. The core sectors of our economy will be strengthened and expanded to ensure self-reliant growth. The energy and vitality of our youth will be harnessed to nation building. The spirit of sacrifice which permeated the struggle for freedom must be recaptured to face the challenges that confront us. A passion for nation building must fill our hearts. For the accomplishment of these momentous tasks, I give you my good wishes.

Jai Hind.

SHRI R. VENKATARAMAN



ADDRESS TO PARLIAMENT—22 FEBRUARY 1988

Lok Sabha	—	Eighth Lok Sabha
Session	—	First Session of the Year
President of India	—	Shri R. Venkataraman
Vice-President of India	—	Dr. Shankar Dayal Sharma
Prime Minister of India	—	Shri Rajiv Gandhi
Speaker, Lok Sabha	—	Dr. Bal Ram Jakhar

HONOURABLE MEMBERS,

It is a privilege for me to address you for the first time as President. I welcome you to this session of Parliament. I particularly felicitate the new members, who for the first time, include a representative from the newly constituted constituency of Daman and Diu. I give my good wishes to the people of Goa, which has attained statehood.

A few weeks ago, we were deprived of the presence of a great soul. A link with the stirring days of the freedom struggle is no more. A close associate of Mahatma Gandhi, Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan was a symbol of the spirit of non-violence and secularism. His life was a saga of unsurpassed courage and sacrifice. I also pay tribute to the other colleagues who have left us, including the former Prime Minister Shri Charan Singh, and Shri M. G. Ramachandran, Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, who through his farsightedness worked for and strengthened national unity.

Our vision of India is of a land whose unity and integrity are invulnerable to external threats or internal weaknesses:

- where the ideals of democracy, secularism and socialism enshrined in our Constitution are fully realised;
- where social justice prevails, with equality of opportunity for every human being;
- where science and technology have helped to wipe out poverty and disease;
- where economic development does not exhaust the bounties of nature, but creates wealth in harmony with it;
- where industrialisation and modernization are fused with moral and spiritual values;

- where all religions and cultures flourish in an atmosphere of mutual respect and cooperation.

We want an India whose interaction with the nations of the world is dedicated to peace and international cooperation, and a new world order based on equality, freedom and justice.

In the last 40 years we have progressed along this path, illumined by Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru. We shall adhere to it, come what may, with the determination and courage instilled in us by Indira Gandhi.

The struggle for independence was the precursor to the struggle for self-reliant progress, the struggle for social emancipation, the struggle to recover for India her traditional, historic place in the vanguard of human civilization. Our achievements have been notable. More notable still has been the consistency of our endeavour, the sincerity of our effort, the dedication and hard work of our people. Our primary goal has been the rapid amelioration of poverty and its eradication. The key to the alleviation of poverty lies in a rapid and sustained expansion of employment opportunities in both rural and urban areas. Our strategy has been to combine direct intervention in favour of the poorer segments of society through asset-creation and employment-creation anti-poverty programmes, with faster and more diversified growth, underpinned by a massive programme of quality education. We seek to realize the full potential of our unmatched human resources while harmonizing the country's educational profile with the growth requirements and employment needs of our economy. We have moved purposefully towards the achievement of our aims. The pace of progress has markedly quickened in the last seven years. The Eighth Plan must provide for even faster growth, the maximization of employment opportunities, and the vigorous reduction of regional disparities. We need both a higher rate of growth and a composition of growth which matches the basic needs of our people and the evolving requirements of our economy and society.

We have pursued growth within the framework of two crucial parameters: the freedom of our country and the freedom of our people. To this end, we have built strong institutions to guarantee the democratic rights of our citizens and to overcome the many challenges to our independence, integrity and nationhood. Efforts have been mounted, from outside and within, to subvert, suborn and undermine our democratic political system. Our ever-vigilant people have thwarted all such efforts.

The failure of the rains has tested the resilience of our economy and the strength of our purpose. Our farming community, and indeed the nation as a whole, has responded to this serious economic challenge in a most heroic manner. The people are co-operating magnificently with the Government. The nation's economic performance is a tribute to the soundness and strength of our development strategy.

With a determined and concerted national effort, the challenge of terrorism is being met in Punjab and elsewhere. Following President's Rule in Punjab, the law-enforcing agencies have harnessed the resurgent will of the people of Punjab and mounted a determined campaign against misguided anti-national elements. The foremost task is to crush terrorism and isolate the secessionists. The terrorists have lately stepped up their depredations. They have to contend with the high morale, regenerated professionalism and strict vigilance of our security forces. They also have to contend with the people's refusal to be browbeaten or cowed. There can and will be no compromise over the nation's integrity and unity. In the search for a non-violent political solution of the problem within the framework of the Constitution, Government stands ready for a dialogue with all those who eschew violence. The nation mourns the loss of innocent lives. We salute those who have laid down their lives in the cause of national unity.

In Tripura, the extremists stepped up their campaign of terror. The escalated violence and mounting loss of innocent human lives left Government with no option but to declare Tripura as a disturbed area. We are determined to put down violence there.

We are unflinching in our determination to root out communalism, fundamentalism and other fissiparous tendencies. Committees of the National Integration Council have been active in devising measures for the promotion of communal harmony. The Centre and the States must make sustained efforts to implement the Fifteen Point Programme for the welfare of the minorities.

We are committed to the elimination of the consequences of centuries of ostracism, discrimination and oppression. We have reorganised the National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, and strengthened the office of the Commissioner. The importance we attach to the welfare and development of these disadvantaged sections of our society is reflected in the Seventh Plan outlay of over Rs. 14,000 crores in their favour. It is a matter of particular satisfaction that coverage of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes under the IRDP has reached 41 per cent, far exceeding the target of 30 per cent.

During the year elections were held in Jammu and Kashmir, Kerala, West Bengal, Haryana, Nagaland, Meghalaya and Tripura.

The provisions of Article 356 of the Constitution were invoked in Tamil Nadu in view of the situation that developed there in January. Elections in the State are proposed to be held at an early date.

The Commission on Centre-State relations which was set up under the chairmanship of Shri Justice R.S. Sarkaria has submitted its report. The views of Parliament, States and members of the public will be taken into account before arriving at decisions.

The National Policy on Education is our pledge to the coming generations and our gauge to the future. Quality education for all is the key to national development. A programme of action for the implementation of the Policy was presented to Parliament in 1986. Major steps were taken during the year in pursuance of the Policy. Our concern for primary education is paramount. Operation Blackboard was launched to improve the quality of instruction and the infrastructure in primary schools. Particular attention is being paid to the educationally backward States. The massive programme for training 5 lakh teachers annually has been continued. A national core curriculum is being developed to impart an awareness of our heritage and a sense of national cohesion. The number of Navodaya Vidyalayas has risen to 206. An analysis of admission tests to these schools for 1986 shows that 41 per cent of the selected children belong to families below the poverty line. 77 per cent come from rural areas, and the percentage of children from Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes is much higher than their percentage in the total population. The scheme for free secondary stage education for girls is now being implemented in all States. A comprehensive scheme has been drawn up for the vocationalisation of education. Government are working on a number of measures to enhance the quality of higher education and technical education.

The promotion of the small family norm is a high national priority. Last year we recorded 20 million acceptors of contraceptive coverage : the highest level ever achieved. The problems of family welfare and health are interlinked. They are, therefore, being tackled through an integrated set of measures. Immunisation programmes have accelerated over the last two years.

The emancipation of women from all forms of prejudice, discrimination and abuse, deprivation and oppression is a national duty and a national task. Their full and equal participation in the nation's life is a national imperative. Government have prepared a perspective plan up to the year 2000 to deal with the problems of women. Government have also reconstituted the National Committee on Women to review and advise on policies and programmes for women. A National Commission has been established to look into the problems of women in the unorganised sector. Its report is expected shortly.

Following the barbaric incident at Deorala, the Commission of Sati (Prevention) Act, 1987, was passed. Government are determined to root out this evil practice. These efforts should be backed by the widest possible mobilisation of public opinion.

A very significant feature of our changing society is the transformation taking place in the country's demographic profile. As a people, we are growing younger. Therefore, meeting the needs of our youth and fitting

them for their role in the nation's life are matters of high priority. The Nehru Yuvak Kendras have been galvanised into a high level of activity. Intellectual and physical discipline, and a sense of enterprise and adventure, are being instilled in lakhs of our boys and girls through the-NSS, the Bharat Scouts and Guides and the National Cadet Corps. The Sports Authority of India has done commendable work in affording opportunity to the athletic prowess of our youth.

Harmonious industrial relations were a significant feature of the year. We compliment both labour and managements on their constructive attitudes. We want to promote a participatory management culture in industry. Government intend to bring forward a comprehensive Bill on industrial relations and a Bill for major changes in the Employees' Provident Fund Act.

While segments of our workforce have organized themselves to secure and safeguard their rights, the overwhelming majority of our working people are unorganized and, therefore, exploited. Data about their conditions of work is inadequate and action to ameliorate their lot unsatisfactory. We are deeply concerned about their welfare and progress. We are committed to the improvement of their conditions. We have, therefore, appointed the National Commission on Rural Labour. We have also framed a National Policy on Child Labour. Voluntary agencies are being associated in the identification and rehabilitation of bonded labour.

The Twenty Point Programme has infused new hope in the countryside. It accounts for 30 per cent of the total Plan outlay for the current year. IRDP, NREP and RLEGP are our major instruments in the attack on rural poverty. In the last seven years, IRDP has assisted 23.4 million families belonging to weaker sections and other backward groups below the poverty line. Women now constitute 16 per cent of the beneficiaries. During the period April 1987 to January 1988, NREP and RLEGP generated 471 million mandays of employment.

Water for the first time has been recognized as a vital national asset. The new National Water Policy derives from the national consensus on this point. This paves the way for effective planned development and efficient utilization of our national water resources.

The Ganga Action Plan has caught the nation's imagination. It is in full swing in 25 towns and cities. The protection of the environment has emerged as a major national priority. Environmental standards have been notified for 24 priority industries. Parliament has already amended the law on air pollution. Stringent legislative action is planned to protect our forests and prevent the pollution of water.

Government undertook legislation in the winter session of Parliament to establish a National Housing Bank. One of its major tasks will be to

finance housing for the weaker sections. In this session, Government will bring forward a National Housing Policy for providing dwellings for the unsheltered millions.

A major item of the Twenty Point Programme is the development of a more responsive administration, especially in its interface with the weaker sections. A series of workshops of District Collectors on the subject of responsive administration is being held. The machinery for the redressal of public grievances is being strengthened. Special programmes are being organised to train officials of the District Planning Cells.

Plans to provide speedy and inexpensive justice for the underprivileged made headway. A Committee, with the Chief Justice of India as Patron-in-Chief, has been entrusted with the implementation of legal aid schemes.

A new impetus was given last year to the drive against smuggling, foreign exchange racketeering and drug trafficking. The Central Economic Intelligence Bureau is coming down hard on syndicates of smugglers and racketeers.

The menace of drugs is assuming worrying proportions. If we are not careful, the flower of our youth could be endangered, the physical and moral fibre of the nation could be sapped. We are determined to fight this evil. The Narcotics Control Bureau made major seizures of drugs during the year. Programmes have been launched for the de-addiction and rehabilitation of the unfortunate victims of drug abuse.

We are consciously directing science and technology to the removal of poverty, particularly in rural India. This is the aim of our five technology missions. The tasks assigned to these five missions are: to provide potable water to all villages in the country; to immunise 20 million pregnant women and 18 million infants against vaccine-preventable diseases; to impart functional literacy to 30 million adults; to augment the production of oilseeds and edible oil; and to provide increased access to telecommunication services. These missions have formulated their operational plans for 1988-89 and 1989-90. The plans are being closely monitored and carefully evaluated.

Government have adopted the approach of integrated energy for rural areas. Natural and perennial sources of energy like solar, wind, biomass, mini-hydel sources and improved chulhas are being popularised.

Oil exploration and exploitation are being intensified. Refining capacity will be further augmented. A Centre for High Technology has been established to acquire, develop and adapt modern technologies in refineries. The first section of the HBJ pipeline was completed during the year.

Significant strides have been made in electronics. India has emerged as one of the few countries with its own technology for manufacturing electronic exchanges. Software exports are shaping up as a major new area of growth.

In nuclear science, we are among the few with a mastery of the complete nuclear fuel cycle for the production of nuclear power. A landmark in this area has been the designing of 500 MW e-capacity reactors. The Nuclear Power Corporation has been established to enhance the nuclear power programme.

August 1987 was a landmark in our effort to develop capabilities in seabed mining. The Preparatory Commission of the International Seabed Authority registered India's claim for a mine site in the Indian Ocean for exploration and development. It is a matter of pride that India is the first country to be granted such a claim by the Authority.

The first Indian Remote Sensing Satellite, designed and developed by the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), is being launched next month by a Soviet launcher. The second flight of the augmented Satellite Launch Vehicle with the SROSS-II satellite will be launched in April. This satellite will carry a joint ISRO-West German payload. In June, our communication satellite INSAT-1C will be launched on the French Ariane launcher.

Our economy has demonstrated its resilience in the face of one of the worst climatic set-backs in memory, namely the wide spread drought in most parts of the country and the floods in the eastern region. We have stood up well to the challenge and warded off a crisis because the development strategy followed by Indira Gandhi, and the new initiatives of the past three years, have imparted an intrinsic strength to our economy. We will ensure the restoration of momentum in agricultural growth as soon as normalcy returns to climatic conditions.

About 45 million hectares of land spread over 269 districts in 15 States and 6 Union Territories was affected by the drought. In many areas, it was the second successive year of failure of rains; in some, the third or the fourth. A shortfall of 7 to 10 per cent in foodgrains production, as compared to the 1986-87 level, is apprehended. A comprehensive strategy was evolved to combat the impact of the drought. Central relief assistance was expeditiously provided to the States for employment, drinking water and the supply of fodder. The flow of essential commodities through the Public Distribution System was greatly expanded. A package of debt relief and additional credit assistance was made available to farmers. For those affected for three or more years, this included a moratorium on principal and interest payments. A strategy for maximising *rabi* production has been adopted.

We have always believed that the nation can be strong only if the farmer and farming are strengthened. Our quest for self-reliance in foodgrains has served us well. We built substantial buffer stocks. These have helped us tide over difficult situations. In recent years, rice productivity has increased in the Eastern States covered by the Special Rice Production

Programme. Government are making determined efforts to ensure that foodgrains output reaches 175 million tonnes by the end of the Seventh Plan. Emphasis will be placed on increasing the productivity of dry land farming. A Task Force has been set up to work out the details of the strategy. A recent innovation is agricultural planning on the basis of agro-climatic zones.

The funds needed for drought relief greatly exceeded the amount originally budgeted. It became necessary to take fiscal counter-measures to check inflationary pressures. A temporary surcharge was introduced on Income Tax, Wealth Tax, Corporation Tax and Customs Duty. Strict economy was enforced in public expenditure. The Reserve Bank also took measures to mop up excess liquidity in the banking system and tighten selective controls. Inflationary pressures have been much less than in earlier droughts. In 1979-80 the Wholesale Price Index had risen by over 21 per cent. In contrast, the increase upto the third week of January 1988 has been only 9.8 per cent.

The performance of the industrial sector has been commendable. It reflects the success of Government policies in stimulating investment and production, and promoting technological upgradation. A special tribute is due to our industrial workers who responded well to the call for raising productivity. Since 1984-85, industry has grown at a rate between 8.5 to 9 per cent per annum. The momentum continued into 1987-88 with the general index of industrial production showing a growth of 10.2 per cent in April-November 1987. For the year as a whole, it is likely to exceed 8 per cent as the effects of the drought become evident in the non-agricultural sectors. The small-scale sector has contributed significantly to the rapid growth of industry in this period. A National Equity Fund has been established to provide financial support to small-scale manufacturing units. The Board for Industrial and Financial Reconstruction, set up under the Sick Industrial Companies (Special Provisions) Act, 1987 became operational last May.

The infrastructure, which is almost exclusively in the public sector, has performed very well. This segment of the economy had shown healthy growth in 1986-87, with power generation expanding by 10.2 per cent, coal by 7.5 per cent and railway freight by 7.4 per cent. All these continued to show their strong performance in the current year. Power generation in April-December 1987 was 7.6 per cent higher than the previous year, despite a substantial decrease in hydel generation due to drought. Thermal power generation grew by 16.1 per cent. The Plant Load Factor in April-December 1987 has averaged 55 per cent, compared with 52.2 per cent during the same period in the previous year. The growth rate in coal in the first 9 months of 1987-88 was 10.2 per cent. Railway freight expanded by 5.4 per cent.

The public sector occupies the commanding heights of the national economy. It safeguards the economic independence of India. It must and will continue to play this pivotal role in our development strategy of building socialism. For this very reason, Government have stressed the need for improving its efficiency and financial viability. We are giving the public sector greater operational autonomy through Memoranda of Understanding.

The balance of payments position has been managed successfully despite a difficult external situation. Government's efforts at promoting exports have yielded results. Exports have shown a healthy growth of 24.7 per cent in value terms in the first nine months of the year, while the increase in imports has been kept at 13.5 per cent. The trade deficit over April-December 1987 was lower than the deficit in the same period last year. Government will keep the balance of payments position under close watch.

Central Sector Plan outlays have been ahead of Seventh Plan targets. While this is gratifying, we have to pay much closer attention to the achievement of physical targets. The Mid-Term Review of the Seventh Plan has been completed by the Planning Commission and will shortly be presented to the National Development Council and Parliament.

From the earliest times, the Indian mind has transcended "narrow domestic walls" and seen all of humanity as one large family. Ours is a millennial heritage of tolerance and compassion, of the self-confident assimilation and synthesis of all that is best, from wherever it comes. Our struggle for freedom was guided by the ancient principles of truth, of non-violence and of humanity as one. The basic tenets of our foreign policy derive from this integrated and deeply entrenched world-view. The philosophy and practice of Non-alignment is modern India's outstanding contribution to contemporary international relations. It was a philosophy conceived and elaborated by those great men of vision, Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru. First a minority view, deprecated and even derided, it has grown to embrace two-thirds of the international community, profoundly influencing thinking people everywhere, crucially contributing to the shaping of a new world order. Our foreign policy has safeguarded our sovereignty, promoted our national interests and made a vital contribution to the building of a just, equitable and democratic world order. We believe in the peaceful resolution of international disputes. We seek the enlargement of our friendship and co-operation with all countries. We are committed to the promotion of peaceful co-existence and nuclear disarmament.

While defence strategists remained mired in obsolete concepts of deterrence, in a world threatened with extinction by nuclear weapons, on the very morrow of Hiroshima, Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru grasped the catastrophic implications of the advent of nuclear weapons. The elimination of these weapons became a principal plank of independent

India's foreign policy. Throughout the last forty years, India has worked steadfastly for a non-violent world without nuclear weapons. The Six-Nation Initiative, in which Indira Gandhi played a leading part, contributed significantly to the resumption of the deadlocked disarmament negotiations. The initiative has mobilised opinion world-wide in favour of nuclear disarmament. It has helped set the stage for the agreement between the United States and the Soviet Union signed in Washington last December on the elimination of land-based intermediate and short-range missiles. While welcoming this agreement as a historic first step towards nuclear disarmament, we have emphasised the need to ensure rapid progress towards further and substantial reductions in nuclear arsenals, and the induction of all nuclear-weapon powers into the process. The Stockholm Summit of the Six-Nation Initiative last month spelt out the steps which need to be taken in the wake of the INF treaty with a view to ensuring the global elimination of all nuclear weapons within a specified period of time.

Our future is also threatened by the growing degradation of the environment. We must ensure environmentally sustainable development. We support international efforts to realize this objective. We hosted a meeting of the World Commission on Environment and Development. The Prime Minister addressed the United Nations during the special debate on the Commission's Report.

In July 1987, we concluded the historic Indo-Sri Lanka agreement which has been welcomed in Tamil Nadu and all other parts of India as the harbinger of peace in Sri Lanka and justice for the Tamil minority in that country. The agreement has been internationally acclaimed as an act of the highest statesmanship. The provisions of the agreement meet all the legitimate aspirations of the Sri Lanka Tamil minority while ensuring the unity and integrity of Sri Lanka. The agreement paves the way for durable peace and stability in that country. It meets important security concerns of ours and strengthens Non-alignment in our region. As provided for in the agreement, and in response to the urgent request of President Jayawardene, the Indian Peace Keeping Force was sent to Sri Lanka. They have done an outstanding job in the most difficult circumstances. We pay tribute to our gallant soldiers. To those who have made the supreme sacrifice, we pledge that their sacrifice shall not be in vain. We are firmly resolved to secure the full implementation of all provisions of the agreement. We are giving further momentum to the processes envisaged under it. We are ensuring that the objective of achieving a durable solution to the ethnic problem in Sri Lanka is realized in full measure.

Regional co-operation in South Asia is an important dimension of our foreign policy and of growing significance in our region. Under our Chairmanship, regional cooperation was consolidated and several major initiatives were promoted. The third Summit at Kathmandu carried forward

the process. We must realise the immense untapped potential for South Asian co-operation.

The peoples of India and Pakistan share much in common. We wish the people of Pakistan well. We want to promote trust and friendship through greater interaction between our peoples. We hope the Government of Pakistan will reciprocate our sentiments and help create the atmosphere for enduring peace and friendship. Unfortunately, our efforts in this direction have been hampered, and many of our initiatives thwarted. Pakistan continues its clandestine efforts to acquire nuclear weapons. They also continue to assist terrorist and secessionist elements in India. Is this the path of friendship and co-operation? My Government still believe that reason and good sense will prevail and the Pakistan Government will make a fresh assessment of its policy towards India.

We attach importance to building friendly relations with China. Outstanding issues have to be resolved in an amicable manner, consistent with our national interest. It is important to maintain peace and tranquillity along the border.

We support the continuing efforts of the Secretary General of the United Nations on Afghanistan. There are signs of positive movement, although hurdles are being put in the way of a settlement. We welcome the announcement made by General Secretary Gorbachev regarding the withdrawal of Soviet troops in accordance with the stipulated schedule. We hope the forthcoming proximity talks at Geneva will lead to a final settlement. We have been in touch with the parties concerned. We will work together with them to ensure the status of Afghanistan as a sovereign, independent and non-aligned country.

The travails of the Kampuchean people have caused us much distress. We have followed with sympathy and deep interest the efforts of the Kampucheans to rebuild their country, protect their independence and sovereignty, and safeguard their non-aligned status. We are helping in the peace process. We have contributed towards bringing together those who must jointly work out a solution to the Kampuchean question. We shall continue our efforts in cooperation with the parties concerned.

We have been deeply sympathetic to the cause of the Palestinian people since the days of our freedom movement. The partition of India and the partition of Palestine took place in the same year. We have stood by the Palestinian people through their trials and tribulations and the terrible suffering they have undergone. We deeply deplore the brutal repression of Palestinians by Israeli forces in the Occupied Territories. There can be no solution that ignores the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. They must have a State of their own in their homeland. To find a lasting solution, an International Peace Conference should be immediately convened, with

the participation of the Palestine Liberation Organisation and others concerned.

The Iran-Iraq war is a matter of great sorrow. It has led to an increasingly volatile situation in our neighbourhood and the proliferation of external military presences in the region. We shall continue our work with others in the arduous search for peace.

Apartheid is a blot on civilization, repugnant to our commitment to the unity of the human family. Since Mahatma Gandhi's early experiments with truth in South Africa, the elimination of racial discrimination has been an integral part of our freedom struggle and as yet an unfulfilled mission of our foreign policy. Apartheid survives because of the economic and military sustenance which Pretoria receives from a few rich and powerful countries. The only way of ending this abomination without too much bloodshed is through comprehensive, mandatory sanctions under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter. We have striven for this at the UN, Non-aligned and in Commonwealth forums. All Commonwealth countries, with one exception, agreed at the Vancouver Summit last October to intensify their sanctions against apartheid. The AFRICA Fund, which we conceived of as a practical measure of support, has received a gratifying response from countries all over the world.

The moves in Fiji to deprive people of their rights solely on a racial basis have caused deep resentment. Fiji's constitutional arrangements must ensure fair and just representation in Parliament for all communities.

We welcome the agreement signed in Guatemala by leaders of five Central American countries. We earnestly hope the agreement will lead to a just and lasting settlement ensuring the security, sovereignty and independence of all States of the region.

There has been substantial progress in our bilateral relations with the United States of America, particularly in the technological and economic fields. The Prime Minister had wide-ranging talks with the US President. We continue to impress upon the United States the seriousness of our concern about the supply of armaments to Pakistan notwithstanding that country's relentless pursuit of nuclear weapons.

India's relations with the Soviet Union have always been warm and friendly. The Delhi Declaration of November 1986 affirmed the common commitment of both countries to non-violence and peaceful co-existence. In the last three years, we have enlarged and enriched the content of our relationship. There has been an unprecedented increase in high-level visits, an unparalleled expansion of trade, and new dimensions and new vistas added in areas such as science and technology, further expanding our already wide ranging co-operation. The mutual goodwill of our peoples has

found spectacular expression in the Festivals held in the two countries. During the year, the Prime Minister of India visited the Soviet Union and the Prime Minister of the Soviet Union visited India.

Honourable Members, with the united endeavour of the nation we can meet with confidence the challenges that confront us and accomplish the tasks that lie ahead. We shall be faithful to the ideals and goals of our Republic. We shall place the national good above any sectional interest. I wish you all success in your endeavours in the year before us.

Jai Hind.

ADDRESS TO PARLIAMENT—21 FEBRUARY 1989

Lok Sabha	—	Eighth Lok Sabha
Session	—	First Session of the Year
President of India	—	Shri R. Venkataraman
Vice-President of India	—	Dr. Shankar Dayal Sharma
Prime Minister of India	—	Shri Rajiv Gandhi
Speaker, Lok Sabha	—	Dr. Bal Ram Jakhar

HONOURABLE MEMBERS,

I welcome you to this session of Parliament. I extend to you my best wishes for the successful completion of the budgetary and legislative business which you have before you.

We are celebrating this year the centenary of the birth of Jawaharlal Nehru. A great son of India, his was a role of crucial significance in our freedom struggle and in our formative years as an independent nation. He erected the pillars of our modern nationhood: democracy/secularism, socialism and non-alignment. His ideals are of enduring value. In celebrating his centenary, we rededicate ourselves to his ideals and to his grand vision of an India restored to its rightful place in the front rank of human civilization.

India's basic policy framework was fashioned by Jawaharlal Nehru. Nehru's vision of a democratic, secular and socialist society has continued to guide our social and economic strategy. To Indira Gandhi, we owe its creative development through a period of intense struggle against the vested interests. The planning process, the key element of that strategy, was infused with a new vitality by Indiraji with her renewed emphasis on social justice as an integral part of our pattern of growth. For both Nehru and Indiraji, the defence of India's sovereignty and territorial integrity and India's development as a modern nation were intimately linked with a foreign policy devoted to peace, disarmament and an equitable world order.

As we enter the final year of this Parliament, we can look back with satisfaction to four years of constructive endeavour. Then, we were just emerging from the terrible trauma of the assassination of Indiraji. Terrorists, insurgents and secessionists, on the one hand, and various disaffected

elements, on the other, were attempting to throw into question the unity of the country, challenging its integrity and undermining its stability. But democracy asserted itself and returned a government with a massive mandate. Four years on, the nation is, in much greater measure, in harmony with itself. Discussion and negotiation have paved the way to settlements and accords. The whole of the north-east is now deeply involved in the nation's democratic mainstream. The message has reached all corners of the country that violence will be met firmly but grievance will be met justly, provided only that arms are forewarn and conformity to the Constitution ensured.

In these four years, economic growth has scaled unprecedented levels of achievement. And this despite a drought of the severest intensity. Government and the people together faced up to the calamity with fortitude and resolute determination. Whereas every comparable drought in the past had always spelt a major set-back, for the first time in the economic history of the country, despite the ravages of the drought, the economy actually recorded a positive growth rate of 3.6 per cent, higher even than the average growth rate till the eighties. Reflecting the deep resilience and self-reliance with which government policies have imbued the economy, we are now set on a long-term growth path that is upward of 5 per cent and targeted at 6 per cent or more in the Plan to come. Our frontal assault has been on poverty. We have striven to make a dent on unemployment. Our guiding principle has been justice and opportunity for the weaker, the deprived and the oppressed.

Abroad, there is greater appreciation of the policies followed by India. An increasing number of countries is recognizing that the path to sustain to situation peace is the one indicated by Jawaharlal Nehru and lit up by Indira Gandhi through four decades of escalating nuclear confrontation and unrelenting power bloc rivalry. The first indication of the dawn of a new era was the adoption by the Soviet Union of the principle of non-violence through the Delhi Declaration. Later, negotiations between the USA and the USSR led to the dismantling of a whole category of nuclear weapons, marking the first-ever act of nuclear disarmament since the invention of these terrible weapons. The relaxation of tension is reflected in the scaling down of conflict in several areas of the world. These developments constitute a vindication of what Nehru and Non-alignment have stood for. They also constitute a challenge to us, as the inheritors of this great philosophy, to persist till the international community is persuaded to free the world of nuclear weapons and anchor the world order in non-violence. The task for us begins in our region. We have maintained peace on our borders, promoted peace in our region and created an ambience of cordiality and cooperation as has not existed with China for a generation.

All this has been possible only because of our unflinching adherence to the great principles on which the edifice of our nation is being built:

democracy which reaches down to every village, secularism which respects all religions and protects the minorities, socialism which seeks the removal of poverty and the ending of unemployment, and non-alignment which guarantees our independence and self-reliance and makes our voice count in the world, an influence both beneficial and decisive.

It is Government's policy to resolve all disputes and differences peacefully. The local sentiments of the people will be respected, but there can be no compromise on the question of preserving the unity and integrity of the nation. The democratic path of dialogue and discussion, conciliation and consensus is open to all those who eschew violence and work within the Constitution. This was demonstrated in 1985 in Assam, in 1986 in Mizoram and in both Tripura and the Darjeeling Hills last year.

We are determined to eliminate terrorism. We shall persist and persevere till terrorism is rooted out in Punjab. The most powerful weapon in the fight against terrorism is the people themselves. In the face of threats and provocation, the people of Punjab have stood firm against terrorist violence and maintained communal harmony and relations of amity among themselves. They are our greatest strength. It is on them that the Government relies in its endeavours to find a political solution to the problems of Punjab. Government is open to dialogue. Meanwhile, steps are being taken to prevent support and assistance reaching the terrorists from abroad.

There has been a resurgence of extremist activities in Andhra Pradesh and Bihar. The spurt of extremist violence has been more marked in Andhra Pradesh. Government are closely monitoring the situation.

For thousands of years, our civilization has survived vicissitudes of every kind only because it has been rooted in religious tolerance and the celebration of diversity. The major threat to contemporary India comes from the forces of narrow-minded chauvinism. Chauvinism takes many forms: religion fundamentalist, communalist and casteist, regional and linguistic. It is most dangerous when these forces come together. Fortunately, the people of India have never been narrow in outlook. With the support of the people, Government is determined to fight these forces.

The future of our country belongs to its youth. Already the bulk of our population is young. The country's population profile grows more youthful with every passing year. It is the aspirations of its youth which the country must meet, it is the participation of its youth which the country must seek. The voting age has been reduced to eighteen. We now call upon our youth to play their full part in the building of the nation.

Electoral reform has been extended to other areas. Commitment to the Constitution has been made the *sine qua non* for participation in the democratic process. The civic rights of the weaker sections have been

better assured by making booth-capturing a cognizable offence. Those convicted of offences against women and the weaker sections have been disqualified from standing for election.

Government is determined to ensure separation of religion from politics. An Act to prevent the misuse of religious institutions was passed last year. Other steps will follow.

When I addressed you last year, our people were facing the challenge of an exceptionally severe drought. The Prime Minister took a personal initiative in extensively touring drought affected areas around the country. He established a Cabinet Committee on Drought to work up and monitor our response to the challenge. At the instance of the Central Government, and with its massive financial and advisory support, the infrastructure for development built up over the years was effectively utilised for drought relief, drought-proofing and the creation of permanent assets for the community. The Public Distribution System was strengthened and dynamised to meet the needs of the people. The people, at large, and the kisans in particular, ranged themselves behind the efforts of Government. We have emerged from this testing trial, resolute and resilient, strong and self-reliant, an impressive example of effective management of a major natural calamity.

The experience of concerting measures to face the drought was utilised to equally concert measures to take full advantage of last year's good monsoon. A special foodgrains production programme was launched. In consequence, we have a record *khari* output and there is every indication of a very good *rabi* crop. Outstanding performance has been recorded in cereals. Cotton and sugarcane reached record levels of output. Oilseeds touched a new high, reflecting the achievements of the Technology Mission on Oilseeds.

The year under review has been a year of exceptional economic performance. Having weathered the drought with remarkable resilience, the economy bounced back with renewed vigour. GDP growth will exceed 9 per cent. In the first four years of the Plan, growth will be above the target of 5 per cent. It augurs well for a decisive spurt in growth rates in the Eighth Plan. The nation can be confident that we eradicate poverty and banish unemployment.

The kisan is the focus of Government's attention. Finance for the farmer has been a major priority. The target for direct lending to agriculture by commercial banks has been raised to 17 per cent of bank credit NABARD's line of credit has been enhanced by 30 per cent from Rs. 1,800 crore to Rs. 2,550 crore. Rural and semi-urban branches of commercial banks have been entrusted and empowered to meet the credit needs of villages in their service areas. Village profiles and credit plans have been prepared for

half a million villages. A new loan scheme has been launched for the marketing of agricultural produce which enables farmers to receive a loan upto Rs. 10,000 against the hypothecation of his crop to the local co-operative.

A new Ministry of Food Processing Industries has been established to ensure better utilisation of farmers' output by inducting modern technology into the processing of food products thus augmenting the income of farmers and generally increasing incomes and employment in rural areas. A new seeds policy has been adopted to provide access to high quality seeds and plant material for vegetables, fruits, flowers, oil seeds and pulses, without in any way compromising the quarantine conditions. For the coordinated development of inland and marine fishing, a National Fisheries Advisory Board has been established.

Beginning in 1985, Government have taken several policy initiatives to stimulate production and investment in industry, increase efficiency and productivity, promote greater competition and technological upgradation. In consequence, industrial growth has exceeded 8 per cent per annum over the last four years. Overall industrial growth for the first six months of the current year was 9.5 per cent. Growth in the manufacturing sector touched 10.6 per cent. The small scale sector registered a 13 per cent increase in production. Strong emphasis has been laid on rural industrialisation to remove regional imbalances and give greater employment opportunities. Industrial relations have remained stable and Government have undertaken many measures to improve conditions in different industries.

Equally, Government policies have ensured impressive results in the infrastructure sector. For the three years ending 1987-88, the average annual growth rate has been 7.3 per cent in coal, 7.6 per cent in railway freight, 7.6 per cent in saleable steel, 7.9 per cent in port handling, 9.6 per cent in power, 10.3 per cent in cement and 12.5 per cent in fertilizer. The most encouraging part is that the performance has continued to improve from year to year. Compared with the first eight months of 1987-88, in the comparable period this year coal is up by 7.1 per cent, power by 7.6 per cent, port handling by 10.2 per cent, saleable steel by 11.5 per cent, cement by 12.2 per cent and fertilizer by 34.5 per cent. Telecommunications too have recorded significant advance in the indigenous development and manufacture of rural automatic exchanges and other telecommunication equipments. A Telecom Commission has been established for expediting the development of telecommunication services in the country.

The public sector has performed well. There has been impressive investment in the public sector in the last four years. Production and profitability are up. As envisaged by Jawaharlal Nehru, our public sector not only holds the commanding heights of the economy but is also becoming efficient and dynamic. A strong and vibrant public sector needs full

operational autonomy. The results achieved this year reflect Government's desire to give public sector management greater authority and freedom to secure the best results.

After a slow start initially, export performance has improved considerably in the last two years. Exports grew by 25 per cent last year and by a further 25 per cent in the first nine months of the current year, representing growth of over 50 per cent over the two year period.

We have undertaken a significant expansion in our nuclear power programme. Ten new nuclear powered reactors, based on indigenous know-how, will add nearly 4000 MW to the country's power generating capacity, in addition to a 2000 MW nuclear power facility being established on the basis of Soviet technology. The emergency preparedness and safety systems in nuclear installations have been significantly upgraded.

Science and technology are being pressed into the service of development. The Indian Remote Sensing Satellite is helping solve problems of rural development such as the location of groundwater and flood warning. Many biotechnology products have been developed for application in health and agriculture. The technology of embryo transfer in cows, developed within the country, is being applied to upgrade the stock of milch cattle. Government is planning to involve CSIR laboratories in greater measure in programmes of the Khadi and Village Industries Commission.

Technology Missions have begun yielding results. One lakh and six thousand problem villages have been provided with sources of drinking water. With the involvement of over 500 voluntary organisations, a mass mobilisation campaign has been launched for extending adult literacy in many States. Government has launched a Sixth Technology Mission on Dairy Development to give a boost to rural incomes through improved animal productivity and increased milk production.

There are two points of pressure in the economy: prices and the balance of payments. Prices have risen but it needs to be recognised that the price rise is much less than had been experienced during previous droughts of comparable magnitude. All instruments of fiscal and monetary policy are being deployed for the effective management of the inflation rate. Prices of essential commodities are being closely monitored. The Public Distribution System is being strengthened.

We need to be very vigilant about the balance of payments. The spurt in exports has to be sustained and reinforced by larger volumes and higher foreign exchange earnings. Imports have to be carefully monitored, with the emphasis on efficient import substitution wherever feasible.

Faster growth, especially faster agricultural growth, is the necessary precursor for the removal of poverty. But it is not in itself enough. Therefore, the frontal assault on poverty continues. Government are spending more than ever before on programmes of asset-creation and rural employment to serve the interests of the poor, the weak and the backward. The integrated rural development programme (IRDP) has reached over 25 million beneficiaries. Nearly half the beneficiaries belong to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. NREP targets for the terminal year of the Plan have been achieved in the fourth year itself. More than four lakh houses have been completed under the Indira Awas Yojana. The Million Wells scheme has been launched for the benefit of Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and freed bonded labour. TRIFED, a marketing organisation to ensure a fair price to tribals for their produce, has been started. A National Finance and Development Corporation for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes has been established.

The National Housing Policy has been passed in Parliament. It accords priority in promoting access to shelter to the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and freed bonded labour. They, as also the rural landless, artisans, economically weaker sections and low-income groups are to be assisted in securing affordable shelter. So also are single women, widows and households headed by women. In urban areas, the most seriously affected are the pavement dwellers. A scheme has been launched in metropolitan cities to provide pavement dwellers with dwelling units. A National Housing Bank has been established. Constraints on house building, such as inadequate land and capital, are being progressively removed. The report of the National Commission on Urbanisation is being examined.

The implementation of the National Policy on Education made significant progress during the year. Under Operation Blackboard, almost 40 per cent of the blocks in the country have already been covered. High priority is being given to the universalisation of elementary education. An effective beginning has also been made in the vocationalisation of secondary education. 256 Navodaya Vidyalayas have so far been established. 40 per cent of the children studying in these vidyalayas are from families below the poverty line. Almost 80 per cent of the students come from rural areas.

Within each of the disadvantaged sections of Indian society, women constitute the most disadvantaged segment. A National Perspective Plan has been prepared to accord to women their rightful place in the life of the nation and to help them overcome the burdens imposed on them by family and society. The Plan seeks to outline a long-term policy for the upliftment of the Indian women. It aims at strengthening their economic independence and raising their social status. It attempts to assist them in participating to the full in the development of the country.

The development process has much more than an economic dimension. At our present stage of development, the process confronts three major challenges: the preservation of the environment, the conservation of our culture, and the involvement of our people.

To ensure better environmental protection and to better maintain the ecological balance, the National Forest Policy has been substantially revised. The Forest Conservation Act has been strengthened. The law on water pollution has been made more stringent. The Ganga Action Plan has made significant progress. For the cleaning of the Ganga, Government have sanctioned 262 schemes costing Rs. 256 crores. Forty-five of the schemes have already been completed. The rest are being implemented expeditiously. An institutional framework has been envisaged to regulate installations producing hazardous chemicals and to deal with disaster.

In a period of rapid economic and social change, our moral and spiritual values come under strain. We are confronted with the insidious danger of crude acquisitiveness in disregard of compassion, tolerance and the common weal as the underpinnings of our value system. Culture is among the most effective of vehicles for the conservation of our quintessential values, for national integration, for the celebration of our diversity, for preserving our unity in diversity, for keeping ourselves open to wholesome cultural influences from outside, and of evolution through synthesis. It is these characteristics which through millennia have ensured the continuity of our civilization. It is therefore crucial that we preserve and develop our mosaic of cultures—classical, folk and tribal. It is even more important that we disseminate to the people at large an awareness and familiarity with our glorious heritage. It is these objectives and priorities which inform Government's cultural policy.

There is pressing need for genuine participation in the planning process of the people at the grass roots. That is the only way in which local needs and local priorities will receive the emphasis they require. We must entrench the third tier of our democracy to ensure representative institutions at the village, tehsil and district levels to effectively and efficiently undertake the planning, implementation and monitoring of development programmes. Therefore, a major priority for Government this year will be the revamping of Panchayati Raj institutions and the recasting of their powers and functions. Government intend to bring forward a major legislative programme to devolve power to the people.

We are now preparing the Eighth Plan. Government will endeavour to build the Plan upwards from the district level or even lower to State Planning Commissions and Yojana Bhavan. We have targeted a growth rate of 6 per cent per annum in the Plan. Employment generation is receiving special emphasis. We attach the highest priority to providing productive work and employment to the youth of our country. It is only thus that the

twin problems of poverty and growth can be successfully tackled. This is the key to the involvement of our youth in the great task of building the nation.

As we survey the international scene today, there are reasons for optimism, though not for complacency. An important step towards nuclear disarmament has been taken with the INF Treaty. Better understanding between the major military powers is also reflected in a reduction of tension in several parts of the world, even solutions to seemingly intractable problems. Confrontation is increasingly giving way to dialogue. It is a matter of satisfaction that these constructive trends have their philosophical underpinning in the principles of non-alignment, Panchsheel and the Delhi Declaration of 1986. There is, however, the need to ensure that in the process of finding solutions, we contribute to the building of a better and more democratic world and that the interests of the countries concerned are not bypassed. At this historic juncture in international affairs, it is incumbent on the Non-aligned Movement to play a decisive role in taking the processes of disarmament and peaceful co-existence to their logical conclusion. The objective, as set out in the Action Plan which the Prime Minister presented to the United Nations in June 1988, must be the elimination of all nuclear weapons and the reduction of conventional arms and forces to minimum defensive levels along with the need to root the world order in non-violence.

Within our region, the process of co-operation through SAARC has begun achieving tangible results. People to people contacts have begun to expand, opening the way towards making regional co-operation into a peopled movement. Agreements on food security and the suppression of terrorism are in place. 1989 has been declared the SAARC year against Drug Abuse. A useful start has been made in exchanging operational information on trafficking in drugs transiting through countries of the region, as also in exchanging ideas on drug counselling. Work has begun on a comprehensive study on preserving the environment and dealing with natural disasters. The decision to draw up a regional perspective plan on basic needs will help focus on common problems of the region.

With the Prime Minister's recent visit to China, we have embarked on a new and positive phase in our relations with that country. The cordial and constructive discussions held with Chinese leaders have opened the way for a stable, peaceful and mutually beneficial relationship between the two countries. This is a development of great significance for regional and world peace as India and China, together, represent a third of humanity. There is to be a Joint Group on economic relations, trade and science and technology. A Joint Working Group is being set up to consider measures for resolving the boundary question in a fair, reasonable and mutually acceptable manner. Both sides have reiterated their commitment to the Five Principles

of Peaceful Co-existence in their bilateral relations and as the basis for building a new international order.

We have welcomed the emergence of a democratically elected Government in Pakistan. We look forward to working with the new Government in reducing tension and expanding co-operation. During his visit to Islamabad, the Prime Minister had extensive discussions with Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto. Three agreements were signed, which should help to build mutual confidence and trust and promote greater interaction among our peoples. We have agreed to continue this constructive dialogue.

There has been significant progress in implementing the provisions of the Indo-Sri Lanka Accord, thus meeting the legitimate aspirations of the Tamils within the framework of Sri Lanka's unity and territorial integrity. Elections were held to the North-Eastern Provincial Council and a popularly elected Provincial Government is now in place. Legislation has been enacted to make Tamil an official language and to resolve the pending problem of stateless Tamils of Indian origin. Presidential and Parliamentary elections have been conducted successfully. With the improvement in the situation we have been able to withdraw some of our troops. We salute the dedication and bravery of our armed forces in discharging their duties.

Our friendly neighbour Maldives was faced with an armed threat to its freedom and democratic order. We responded promptly to Maldives' request for assistance to counter this threat.

For his bold and imaginative initiatives, which have contributed significantly to the improvement in the international climate, Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev was awarded the Indira Gandhi Prize for Peace, Disarmament and Development. Relations between India and the Soviet Union have reached new levels of closeness, range and importance. The significance we attach to our friendship with the Soviet Union is highlighted by the extensive exchange of visits between the leaders of the two countries. The wide-ranging discussions which the Prime Minister had with President Gorbachev have further strengthened our understanding, provided an impetus for intensifying exchanges and given a new direction to our future co-operation. Our programme for co-operation in science and technology is particularly promising. My own visit to the Soviet Union for the closing ceremony of the Festival of India provided an opportunity to have very useful discussions with Soviet leaders. The Festivals have enriched the friendship, goodwill and understanding among our peoples.

Our relations with the United States have improved considerably with an expansion in technical exchanges and economic co-operation. The U.S.A. is now our largest trading partner and an important source of high technology. There is a better awareness of the need to build a constructive relationship and understand each other's point of view.

The withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan has been completed. The need of the hour is a peaceful political settlement so that further bloodshed can be averted in that country and conditions created for the safe return of the refugees. The Geneva accords must be fully honoured by all the parties concerned for ensuring the independence, integrity and non-aligned status of Afghanistan.

India was among the first countries to accord full recognition to the independent Palestinian State. Chairman Yasser Arafat visited Delhi for consultations. We have welcomed the commencement of a dialogue between the United States and the PLO. It is our hope that it will soon be possible to convene an International Peace Conference on West Asia, under UN auspices, with the participation of all concerned.

There are prospects of progress on the question of Kampuchea. We have been in touch with all parties concerned. The Prime Minister had extensive discussions with General Secretary Nguyen Van Linh of Vietnam. We are ready to assist in efforts to find a political solution which ensures the sovereignty, territorial integrity, independence and non-aligned status of Kampuchea.

We have welcomed the accords on Namibia. However, Pretoria must be forestalled in any attempt to subvert Namibia's transition to independence by preventing free and fair elections. International pressure must be maintained on Pretoria to end apartheid. In Fiji too, moves to institutionalise racial discrimination must be resisted.

During the year, I visited the USSR, Mongolia, the Netherlands, Finland, Czechoslovakia, Cyprus, Bhutan and Pakistan. The Vice-President visited Mauritius, Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana and Surinam. The Prime Minister paid visits to Japan, Vietnam, Syria, the Federal Republic of Germany, Hungary, Jordan, Yugoslavia, Spain, Turkey, China and Pakistan. These visits have promoted mutual understanding and co-operation.

We also received many foreign dignitaries including the Premier of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the Prime Minister of Singapore, the Crown Prince of Jordan, the President of Afghanistan, the President of Mozambique, the President of Bangladesh, the King of Nepal, the President of Kenya, the Chairman of the PLO, the President of Angola, the Prime Minister of the Netherlands, the Governor General of Mauritius, the Prime Minister of the People's Republic of Kampuchea, the President of SWAPO, President Gorbachev, the President of the Maldives, the Prime Minister of Malta, the General Secretary of the Communist Party of Vietnam, the President of France, and the Prime Minister of Australia.

Ahead of us lie exacting challenges and exciting opportunities. You are the repositories of the people's will. In you vests the responsibility of

realising the people's dream. We are launched upon one of the greatest essays in social transformation ever undertaken in the history of humankind. The task is so great, and sometimes so daunting, that we are often overwhelmed by how much more needs to be done. We sometimes tend to belittle how much has already been achieved. A balanced perspective is needed. There has been more growth, more social justice in the last 40 years than in several preceding centuries. Our people are being liberated from the shackles of poverty. The pace needs to be accelerated. Our youth are being offered vistas of expanding opportunities. These vistas need to be broadened even more rapidly. Centuries of social oppression and discrimination are being ended. The process needs to be pushed forward even quicker. We will succeed, and succeed soon, because we build on firm principles, principles bequeathed to us by our millennial civilisation, principles steeled in the furnace of the freedom struggle, principles tried and tested in four decades of nation building. So long as we remain true to these principles, true to our priorities and true to our goals, the new India will emerge from this transition and fulfil its destiny.

Jai Hind.

ADDRESS TO PARLIAMENT—20 DECEMBER 1989

Lok Sabha	—	Ninth Lok Sabha
Session	—	First Session after the 9th General Election
President of India	—	Shri R. Venkataraman
Vice-President of India	—	Dr. Shankar Dayal Sharma
Prime Minister of India	—	Shri Vishwanath Pratap Singh
Speaker, Lok Sabha	—	Shri Rabi Ray

HONOURABLE MEMBERS,

It gives me great pleasure to address both Houses of Parliament at this first session after the Ninth General Election to the House of the People. I extend my felicitations to the members of the new Lok Sabha.

The General Election, just concluded, has demonstrated the maturity of the Indian electorate. The people have given a clear verdict in favour of change.

The Government took charge just a fortnight ago and has commenced in right earnest the task of working out the details of various policy initiatives and thrusts which it intends to adopt. In this Address I am confining myself to the broad issues that the Government proposes to tackle.

My Government pledges itself to fulfil the mandate given to it by the people. The Government will work to restore the dignity of the nation and of the individual. The Government proposes to adopt an alternative model of governance and development based on socialist ideals of economic equality and social justice, federalism and decentralisation, institutional accountability and human rights. Government will take steps to establish an Inter-State Council and to accord constitutional status to the Planning Commission.

My Government is committed to a process of national reconciliation and the evolution of consensus to solve the many problems facing the nation.

The Punjab problem has defied solution so far. Over the past few years, we have witnessed widespread violence. There will be no compromise with

separatism and no yielding to extremists, but there is admittedly a compelling need for a national endeavour to resolve the problem. The Government will hold wide ranging discussions with leaders of cross-sections of the people to evolve a national consensus. A beginning has already been made in the All Party Meeting held on 17th December, 1989. Action on the report of the Ranganath Misra Commission of Enquiry will be expeditiously completed.

The situation in Jammu and Kashmir is extremely delicate and fraught with serious implications. There will be no compromise on the country's unity, sovereignty and integrity. The people of Jammu and Kashmir, who have been second to none in the nation's freedom struggle, will be enabled to play their rightful role in the process of national growth and development. The problems of the people of the state will be gone into in depth with a view to finding speedy and durable solutions.

The North-East region requires our immediate attention. We are committed to the speedy economic development of the region and for the settlement of the issues which concern the tribal peoples in the region, including Assam, through dialogue and discussion.

In recent months, the country has witnessed riots and violence arising from sectarian issues. A secular India is the very basis of our emotional unity and national integrity. Violence has no place in the land of Mahatma Gandhi, the apostle of non-violence. The need of the hour is the generation of an atmosphere of amity and goodwill in order to avoid any communal divide. Government seeks the support of the people in its unrelenting efforts to promote national unity and integrity. The National Integration Council is being re-constituted and will function as forum for effective initiatives and interaction on issues of national concern.

A healthy and vibrant democracy hinges crucially on the sanctity and strength of democratic institutions. The Government is fully committed to the restoration of the dignity and vitality of institutions which have been weakened in recent years. Power flows from the people. It is imperative that the people themselves should have the final say in governing themselves. My Government will promote on the basis of national consensus a genuine devolution of powers, functions and resources to Panchayati Raj institutions enabling the fullest participation of the people in the developmental process. It will secure, with the cooperation of the states, adequate representation in these bodies for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Backward Classes and women. Indeed the whole process will be one of strengthening the federal structure of the polity at the Centre, the State, the District and the Panchayat levels.

A clean public life is the bedrock of democracy. Over the past few years, there has been a growing erosion of norms and values in public life. The law will take its own course in respect of matters of corruption in high

places. The Government will introduce legislation during this session for setting up a Lok Pal, whose jurisdiction will include the Prime Minister also.

My Government firmly believes that a participative democracy requires an enlightened and informed electorate. It also believes that an open Government functioning in full public view, will minimise the possibility of wrong doing. The Official Secrets Act will be suitably amended so that people have increased access to information. Doordarshan and AIR will be given autonomy to ensure free flow of information. A Bill to this effect will be introduced in this session. The 59th Amendment to the Constitution which seriously jeopardised the citizen's right to life will be repealed. The Postal Bill which sought to interfere with the citizen's right to privacy will be withdrawn. Similarly, the amendments to the Commissions of Inquiry Act which sought to permit withholding of vital information from the people and Parliament will be removed from the Statute book. My Government will, by amending the Constitution, ensure the citizen's right to information.

The Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes continue to be victims of social and economic injustice. Government's primary aim will be to ensure economic and social justice to them so that they can lead their lives with dignity and honour. The reservation for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in the legislatures will be extended by a further period of 10 years.

Government will take appropriate steps to implement the recommendations of the Mandal Commission.

The problems of ex-servicemen will receive full consideration particularly in regard to their demand for one-rank-one-pension and their post-retirement employment.

The Government will spare no efforts to guarantee that minorities live without fear and as equal partners in the country's progress.

The Constitution provides equal status to men and women. However, women continue to suffer from discrimination and indignity. My Government will take all steps to provide equal opportunities for women.

The youth have a special role to play in the progress of the country. Their vast energies have to be tapped and channelled for the task of nation building. They are the harbingers of change and it is they who have to lay the foundations of a new and just social order. Government will take steps to facilitate the harnessing of youth power for unleashing social forces to transform society. The educational system will be reformed so that it responds to the needs and aspirations of the new generation.

It will be the endeavour of this Government to ensure integration of the scientific and technological capabilities with our other efforts for national development. Science and Technology will be used for increasing agricultural

production, developing technologies that would lead to employment generation, for the proper utilisation of natural resources, and for generally benefiting the population at the grass roots level.

Government will give priority to the expansion of productive employment opportunities in the economy. It will strive to ensure appropriately to all citizens the right to work, to enable them to participate in the nation building process.

There are disquieting trends on the economic front. Unbridled government expenditure and consequent increase in money supply and proliferation of black money have stoked the fires of inflation. The fiscal imbalance has shown up in the form of a huge budgetary deficit. The balance of payments is under severe strain.

The Government attaches the highest priority to curbing inflationary pressures. In recent months, prices of many essential commodities have risen sharply. This has further impoverished the poor and the under privileged. Government intends to tackle the problem of inflation in all possible ways.

Deficit financing has reached staggering levels. Steps will be taken to reduce wasteful government expenditure. Effective control over Government spending and deficit is an essential prerequisite for restoring external and internal stability to our economy.

A number of medium-term factors have placed a strain on the balance of payments. Much more needs to be done by way of import management and export growth. The Government will formulate an Action Plan which will aim at correcting the imbalance in our external payments position.

The rise in prices of essential commodities has affected the common man adversely. The public distribution system will be strengthened and closely monitored, Production of articles of common consumption will be encouraged. These steps will ensure that such commodities are within the reach of the vulnerable sections of the society.

Poverty and unemployment continue to confront the nation. Economic disparities have increased in the past few years. All sections of the people have not shared equally the fruits of growth. Government is committed to redress this imbalance and redirect the benefits of development to the poorer sections of society. The Minimum Needs Programme, aimed at the poor, will be strengthened and in particular, Government will undertake a time-bound programme to provide all villages with potable drinking water.

The vast majority of our population live in the villages. There has been a flight of resources—both human and otherwise, from our rural areas. This trend has to be stopped. A substantial portion of Government's investment

outlay has to be channelled to rural areas. Government's policies will be designed for the poor and the toiling masses. The Government will take steps to see that the terms of trade for the agriculture sector are improved and our farmers receive remunerative prices for their produce. Government will take appropriate steps to provide debt relief for marginal farmers, landless agricultural labourers, artisans and weavers on loans below Rs. 10,000. My Government will revise the existing laws to bring about equitable distribution of land and other natural resources like water and make the tiller of the land its owner. All land reform laws, will be included in the Ninth Schedule of the Constitution.

My Government will promote industrial development in such a way as to maximise employment. An important role will be assigned—and all support given—to small-scale industries, to agro processing industries and industries based on the craft of rural artisans as also village industries of particular benefit to women and rural households. The Public Sector will be streamlined so as to augment the surpluses generated so that they can be ploughed back for future expansion or utilisation for developmental activities. Labour participation in management will be made effective to promote an environment of productivity and industrial peace.

In order to prevent the degradation of environment and consequent erosion of our natural resource base, Government will make preservation of environment a priority area of State Policy. Programmes for regeneration of biomass will receive fullest emphasis.

My Government's foreign policy is deeply rooted in the ideals and principles which inspired the freedom struggle. This is reflected in its firm adherence to non-alignment and our struggle against imperialism, colonialism, neo-colonialism, racial discrimination and all forms of domination and exploitation. The rapidly changing international environment presents both challenges and opportunities for India, underlining the need for further strengthening the national consensus.

My Government attaches importance to revitalising and strengthening ties with our neighbours in South Asia, and to imparting fresh dynamism to the process of regional cooperation within the framework of SAARC. The Government will spare no effort to resolve outstanding bilateral issues with our neighbouring countries, consistent with our national interests. The Government will further endeavour to usher in an era of stability, confidence and cooperative endeavour in our region. In the pursuit of this objective talks have already been initiated with the Government of Sri Lanka.

The process of further understanding and cooperation between India and China will be continued by my Government. It is hoped that the boundary question can be resolved in a fair, reasonable manner in consonance with our national interests.

My Government will further strengthen the traditional friendship with the Soviet Union; build upon the new trends of a constructive and cooperative relationship with the United States; and strengthen economic cooperation with Japan and the European Community.

My Government recognises the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people to achieve a homeland of their own in a peaceful West Asia. The Government's support and solidarity to this end will always be there. It will also be my Government's endeavour to maintain pressure on the Pretoria regime to commence early negotiations for the dismantlement of apartheid. The emergence of a united democratic and non-racial South Africa is our objective.

Honourable Members, the present session is a short one. Yet it is historic in its importance and is summoned immediately following the constitution of the Ninth Lok Sabha in order to place before Parliament the new agenda of work.

I wish you all success in your endeavours.

Jai Hind.

ADDRESS TO PARLIAMENT—12 MARCH 1990

Lok Sabha	—	Ninth Lok Sabha
Session	—	First Session of the Year
President of India	—	Shri R. Venkataraman
Vice-President of India	—	Dr. Shankar Dayal Sharma
Prime Minister of India	—	Shri Vishwanath Pratap Singh
Speaker, Lok Sabha	—	Shri Rabi Ray

HONOURABLE MEMBERS,

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to this first session of Parliament in 1990. I extend to you my best wishes for the successful completion of the budgetary and legislative business ahead.

The elections recently held to the Legislative Assemblies in nine States and one Union territory have, by and large, reaffirmed the verdict of the people in the last Lok Sabha elections in favour of change.

My Government assumed office only a hundred days ago. In this short span it has already taken a number of positive initiatives in several spheres to fulfil the pledges it had made. My Government has responded to the sacred trust reposed in it by our people.

The situation in Jammu and Kashmir, which had deteriorated for the last few years, continues to be serious. Government has noted with particular concern that external forces have tried to encourage terrorism, to internationalise the issue, and to organise intrusions across the border. My Government has acted firmly against these forces. J&K is an integral part of India and my Government will not brook any interference from others in our internal affairs. The State Government is taking all possible measures to check and curb terrorism and secessionism and to restore normalcy. My Government will take positive steps to remove all legitimate grievances and to accelerate development activity in the State.

Government attaches high priority to restoring normalcy in Punjab and generating a feeling of confidence among the people of that State. Steps have been taken to involve all sections of the people and find a solution to the problem in a spirit of reconciliation and consensus. The State administration will be firm and fair and there will be no compromise with

terrorism and secessionism. The Government has fulfilled the promise of repealing the 59th Constitution Amendment which contained special provisions for promulgating emergency applicable only to the State. My Government seeks the cooperation of all to create conditions conducive to the restoration of the democratic process in the State.

We are proud of the secular basis of our nationhood. Government is taking measures to strengthen secularism. The National Integration Council has been reconstituted and will meet soon.

The communal situation has improved visibly since the Government assumed office. My Government has taken a fresh initiative with a view to resolving the Ram Janam Bhoomi—Babri Masjid dispute amicably. The solution of such an emotive issue should be arrived at through dialogue and consensus. A three member Committee has been set up by the Government to find an acceptable solution.

Government has initiated several measures to provide for relief and rehabilitation of those affected by communal violence, including the victims of the 1984 riots in Delhi and the 1989 riots in Bhagalpur. Special Courts have been set up in Delhi and Meerut to try cases connected with communal riots. The Bihar Government has been asked to set up Special Courts to try cases connected with the riots in Bhagalpur. No effort will be spared to guarantee full protection to the minorities and to maintain communal harmony. Government is effectively monitoring the implementation of the 15 Point Programme for the welfare of minorities. A panel has been set up to suggest steps for the implementation of the Gujral Committee recommendations on the promotion of Urdu.

To strengthen the national fabric it is of utmost importance that the Centre and the States work together in a spirit of cooperation, goodwill and harmony. To ensure smooth Centre-State relations Government has decided to set up an Inter-State Council. The first meeting of the Council will be held soon.

Government has decided to set up a National Security Council with a view to evolving long term policies appropriate to the regional and international environment.

My Government would like to assure our people regarding the high state of our defence preparedness and the morale of the armed forces. We are fully prepared to meet any external threat.

The problems of ex-servicemen will receive full consideration. Government is examining the modalities for implementing Government's commitment to the proposal of "one-rank-one-pension" for ex-servicemen.

The dignity of the nation and the individual rest in no small measure, upon strong and vibrant democratic institutions. These in turn are closely linked with certain sound and lasting values in our public life. My Government will fight those trends which have, in recent years, sapped our democratic institutions of their vitality and strength. Government is taking steps to ensure that our election system is rid of the debilitating effect of money and muscle power. A Committee on Electoral Reforms has been constituted comprising representatives of political parties and eminent persons. A Bill has been introduced in the Parliament for the creation of the institution of the "Lok Pal". Even the highest political offices in the country, including that of the Prime Minister, will be placed under the purview of the "Lok Pal". The Government will introduce suitable legislation to set up a high level Judicial Commission for the appointment of High Court and Supreme Court Judges and for the transfer of High Court Judges. I have also asked the Parliament to reconsider the Post Office (Amendment) Bill. The Bill had created widespread concern that it would seriously interfere with the citizens' right to privacy.

A free media imparts strength and vitality to the democratic process. My Government has already initiated steps to grant autonomy to the electronic media. The "Prasar Bharati Bill" was introduced in the last session of Parliament. Government is committed to ensure freedom of the Press. Concrete steps will be taken to guarantee the people's right to information and legislation will be introduced to amend the Official Secrets Act.

The year 1989-90 has been a difficult year for the economy. The growth of production slowed down in both agriculture and industry compared with growth in the previous year. The deceleration in the industrial sector was especially sharp with production growing by only 4.2 per cent in the first six months. The slow down in growth has been accompanied by an intensification of macro-economic imbalances which have built up in the past few years.

The budgetary situation deteriorated significantly in the course of 1989-90. When the new Government took office, the budget deficit had reached Rs. 13,790 crores. Prices came under pressure in 1989 despite the fact that it was the second year of good harvests. The balance of payments, which had already come under strain in 1988-89, continued to show a large financing gap in 1989-90. The external debt position deteriorated further.

Since assuming office, my Government has given the highest priority to improving the management of the economy. The procurement of rice has touched a new high at 9.32 million tonnes. Foodgrain stocks in the central pool have been augmented and now stand at 11.67 million tonnes compared to 8.34 million tonnes at this time last year. Special efforts are being made

to augment supplies of essential commodities through the public distribution system and to improve the functioning of the system. Prices of essential commodities such as rice, sugar and tea which had risen sharply earlier have shown a downward trend in the three months since the new Government assumed office. However the Government is fully aware that the overall price situation continues to be difficult. There will be no complacency on this front and control of inflation will continue to be our first priority in economic management.

The balance of payments problem demands urgent attention. This problem is also basically a reflection of the fiscal crisis facing the country and resolution of the problem requires the restoration of the fiscal balance. There is significant scope for efficient import substitution and reducing the growth in consumption of bulk commodities where our dependence on imports is increasing. However, the only lasting solution to our external payments difficulties is to greatly strengthen the export effort. There are distinctly positive trends in the current year with exports growing very much faster than imports. A concerted national effort has to be mounted to intensify our export drive. Rapid growth of exports, especially exports involving high domestic value addition would receive a high priority in the strategy for economic management. Efficient import substitution combined with rapid growth in exports will ensure that the economy remains on the path of self-reliant growth. A new three-year Import-Export Policy is being introduced in April. The policy aims at simplifying cumbersome procedures which lead to unnecessary delays and breed corruption. The policy will contain special incentives designed to boost exports.

The Planning Commission has been reconstituted and has begun to work on the approach to the Eighth Five Year Plan. The approach will be finalised shortly and submitted to the National Development Council for approval. The thrust of the Eighth Plan will be to ensure rapid growth with a special focus on the critical objectives of employment generation, alleviation of poverty and redressal of the imbalance between rural and urban areas. A key feature of the Eighth Plan will be the introduction of structural and institutional changes to ensure decentralisation of planning and plan implementation.

Our farmers are the backbone of our economy. Their well-being and prosperity are the strength and prosperity of India. Sustained growth in rural incomes is a necessary condition for successful industrialisation. Government will pay special attention to the needs of the agricultural and rural sectors, including its requirements for economic and social infrastructure. Our aim will be to achieve substantial increases in the yield of major crops, especially in un-irrigated rain-fed and dry land areas. Government is firmly committed to assuring remunerative prices to farmers, backed by adequate market support arrangements. To this end, the

Government will introduce changes in the formula for computing costs of production in order to ensure full accounting of all costs. This new system will be reflected in the support prices to be announced for the next *kharif* season. Government would also associate representatives of the farming community in the formulation of agricultural policies. With this in view, a Standing Committee on Agriculture including representatives of the farming community has been set up. Government is committed to a genuine Panchayati Raj system to enable the rural population to participate fully in planning and development. Specific proposals in this regard, as well as proposals for civic bodies will be put before the Inter-State Council.

Water resource development is vital for our agricultural strategy and my Government will give high priority to this sector. Government is also committed to find solutions for inter-State water disputes through dialogue and negotiations with the concerned States.

The prosperity of the agricultural sector is inseparable from the well-being of agricultural and other rural labour. This vast segment is still unorganised and exploited. My Government is committed to working out arrangements for giving them fair wages and a larger share of the fruits of rural development so as to provide them a better quality of life. As an earnest of our commitment to the weaker sections some more Land Reform Laws are being placed in the Ninth Schedule of the Constitution to protect them from any challenge by vested interests. Government also propose to introduce a scheme of debt relief for small farmers, landless agricultural labourers, artisans and weavers on loans upto Rs. 10,000. A detailed scheme in this regard will be announced in this session.

Efforts to accelerate agricultural growth must be accompanied by measures to encourage rapid growth of industry. My Government's industrial policies will be designed to serve the objectives of growth, expansion of productive employment, and balanced regional development. Healthy growth of the industrial sector requires a sustained growth in productivity and technological modernisation. Our industry must be made more competitive internationally to provide the basis for sustained growth in export performance. My Government will take steps to ensure the spread of industry to the rural and backward areas of the country. Development of small scale and agro & rural industries will receive special attention to facilitate harnessing of local resources and skills and the creation of gainful employment. Towards this end, a new Department called the Department of Small Scale Industries and Agro & Rural Industries has been set up.

My Government accords great importance to the public sector. The productivity of this sector and its ability to generate adequate investible resources is vital to our economic growth. Government are committed to ensuring functional autonomy of the public sector and creating conditions

conducive to its efficient functioning within a framework of wider public accountability. My Government will present a White paper on the public sector later this year.

Science and Technology have an important role in our efforts to attain self-reliance and raise the standards of living of our people, particularly of the weaker sections. Science & Technology inputs will be used for generating and sustaining employment and increasing productivity in rural areas. We are proud of our scientists. Their achievements in the frontier areas of Science and Technology, such as atomic energy, space research, advanced materials and biotechnology, have been substantial and scientific effort in these areas will get all encouragement from the Government. Our scientists have played a valuable role in strengthening our development and they deserve our fullest support. The remarkable achievements in the indigenous missile development programme are the result of their dedicated and laudable efforts and are landmarks in our technological development.

The labour force plays a role of crucial importance in the production of assets and yet their interests are not always adequately protected. Workers' participation in management can overcome this problem and also make for better productivity. To ensure this, suitable legislation is under examination.

Government will strive to ensure for all citizens the right to work to enable them to earn a livelihood and to become participants in the task of nation building. Government will introduce a Constitution Amendment Bill to enshrine the right to work as a Fundamental Right in the Constitution.

Protection of environment is essential for sustainable development. While conserving natural resources like forests, the basic needs of the people, especially the weaker sections, will be taken care of. Particular attention will be paid to the interests of the tribals.

The Bhopal gas tragedy is still vivid in our memory. There has been an unconscionable delay in providing relief and succour to the victims. My Government has already announced the decision to provide interim relief to those victims resident in the 36 affected municipal wards in Bhopal. The quantum of interim relief to be provided is Rs. 360 crores. Various social action groups have filed petitions in the Supreme Court on the issue of an adequate compensation for the Bhopal gas victims. My Government has supported their petitions before the Supreme Court and will pursue the case for adequate compensation in the Court. Government will also introduce legislation making it compulsory for factories and installations using hazardous chemicals to have a minimum compensatory insurance cover. This would ensure that innocent victims of accidents occurring in these plants are provided immediate relief.

The Scheduled Castes and Tribes are one fourth of our population. There can be no real progress for us as a nation, unless we enable them to live with dignity. My Government is committed to strong affirmative action to redress the economic and social injustices which the Scheduled Castes and Tribes continue to suffer. A beginning has been made and several concrete measures have already been taken. The Constitution has been amended to extend, for another 10 years, reservation for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in the Lok Sabha and the State Vidhan Sabhas. Legislation for preventing atrocities against them which was passed in 1989 but was not operationalised has been brought into force with effect from 30th January, 1990. A decision has been taken to fulfil the long standing and legitimate aspiration of the Scheduled Caste converts to Buddhism by extending to them the facilities available to the Scheduled Castes. A Bill to give effect to this decision will be introduced during this Session of Parliament. The other Backward Classes constitute another area of special concern to us and a Cabinet Committee has been set up to consider implementation of the Mandal Commission recommendations.

As a measure of our concern for a section of our society facing the most severe form of discrimination, it has been decided to accelerate the programme of finding alternative avenues of employment for scavengers.

The welfare of the handicapped is engaging special attention of my Government and it is proposed to give new depth to programmes for the rehabilitation of the handicapped.

Women are among the most underprivileged section of Indian society. They continue to face discrimination, despite the constitutional guarantee of equality. Our policies and programmes will have, as their basis, the recognition of women's dignity and equality in law and every day life. Government is considering legislation to set up a National Commission on Women.

Youth have an important role in the transformation of society. My Government is sensitive to the concerns and aspirations of our youth. We look to our youth to build a new India based on equality and social justice. Society, on its part, owes a special responsibility to the youth. The best possible opportunities should therefore be open to them. We shall re-orient youth policies to make them especially responsive to the need and aspirations of the rural youth. The Government has raised the upper age limit for the Civil Services Examination from 26 to 28 years, to help, in particular, youth from rural areas.

Education is essential for the full development of the people. However, we are still very far from our goal of universal literacy. My Government has taken steps for a review of education policy to make it relevant to the needs of our people, and to provide equal opportunities to all.

A sound health care system is an important individual and social requirement. To achieve the goal of Health for All by 2000 A.D. greater emphasis will be laid on preventive and promotive aspects of primary health care. Effective control of population is also essential if we are to consolidate our economic gains and achievements and improve the quality of life of our people. Concrete steps are necessary to reflect the high priority which should be given to this area. There is need for a national consensus on this.

Our foreign policy is rooted in our commitment to non-alignment and our aspirations for peaceful world, free of domination, exploitation and war. We welcome the profound changes that are taking place in the international scene and the transition from conflict and confrontation to cooperation and consensus. We will continue to contribute to cooperative global endeavours to promote disarmament, strengthen peace, eliminate racial discrimination, provide environmental protection and build a more equitable world economic order.

Consistent with the high priority attached by my Government to revitalising relations with our neighbours, we have initiated an intensive dialogue for finding mutually acceptable solutions to outstanding problems, strengthening our friendship and enlarging the areas of our cooperation. These efforts are already showing results.

The two visits to India by the King of Bhutan and the signing of the new Agreement on Trade and Commerce reflects the further consolidation of our traditionally close ties with Bhutan.

Our cordial relations with Bangladesh have been strengthened by the recent visit to that country by the Minister of External Affairs.

Our close friendly relationship with the Maldives was enhanced by the holding of the first meeting of the Indo-Maldives Joint Commission in Male. The President of Maldives will pay a State visit to India later this month.

My Government has taken early initiatives for a comprehensive solution of all outstanding problems with Nepal. Recent talks at the Foreign Ministerial and official level have led to greater understanding of mutual interests and concerns. Our close and age-old relationship with the people of Nepal will be further strengthened.

The bulk of the Indian Peace Keeping Force in Sri Lanka has returned home and we hope to complete the phased de-induction by the end of this month. Our Armed Forces have done a highly commendable job under difficult circumstances. On behalf of the Nation, I would like to pay a tribute to the valour, dedication and discipline of our Armed Forces and their sacrifices. India stands for the unity and integrity of Sri Lanka. We expect the Government of Sri Lanka to fully honour all their obligations

under the Indo-Sri Lankan Agreement and ensure the safety, security and democratic aspirations of its Tamil speaking population. My Government believes that this would be in the interest of peace in Sri Lanka, harmony among all sections of the Sri Lankan people, and stability in the region.

Our relations with Pakistan, have unfortunately, come under strain as a result of its continued efforts to encourage and aid terrorism and secessionist activity in Jammu and Kashmir and Punjab. My Government has made it very clear that we will not tolerate such interference in our internal affairs. We have impressed on the Government of Pakistan the need to abide by the letter and spirit of the Simla Agreement, which has helped to maintain peace and provide an enduring framework for our relations. We hope such saner counsels will prevail in Pakistan as would preserve peace and enable us to normalise relations with that country.

We believe that ties between countries in South Asia must be maintained in tune with global trends towards dialogue, openness and cooperation. SAARC provides a valuable institutional framework for promoting such regional cooperation. We hope to expand the activities of SAARC to encompass cooperation in key economic areas, for the benefit of all the people of our region.

We value our traditional relationship with Afghanistan and are taking steps to strengthen it further. We hope that there will be an early stoppage of bloodshed in Afghanistan, with strict implementation of the Geneva accords and a political solution, arrived at by the Afghans themselves that would preserve Afghanistan's status as a sovereign, independent and non-aligned country.

We have continued to strengthen our ever growing time-honoured friendship and multi-faceted cooperation with the Soviet Union. Our relationship is firmly anchored in the Indo-Soviet Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Cooperation. Our close understanding with the Soviet Union is manifested in a shared vision of a nuclear weapons free and non-violent world.

Our relations with the United States of America continue to grow and diversify. The United States is our major trading partner and an important source of high technology. Our growing bilateral cooperation in various spheres reflects greater maturity in the mutual appreciation of the longer term interests and objectives shared by our two democracies.

The pace of diplomatic exchanges between India and China is being accelerated, contributing to the development of mutually beneficial cooperation on the basis of Panchsheel. The Foreign Minister of China will be visiting India soon to carry forward the dialogue. We will continue our efforts to find a fair, reasonable and mutually acceptable settlement of the boundary question, consistent with our national interests.

We hope to see an early end to the conflict in Cambodia. A comprehensive solution should be based on full respect for Cambodia's sovereignty and integrity and should ensure the non-return of the genocidal policies of the recent past.

It is a matter of deep satisfaction that the last bastion of colonialism in Africa is at long last crumbling, with Namibia poised for independence. The Prime Minister will represent our people in the Independence Day ceremonies in Namibia next week. In South Africa, too, signs of change are discernible. We share the worldwide rejoicing in the release of Nelson Mandela, the symbol of the struggle against apartheid, and we look forward to his visit to India. A national Committee for felicitating Mr. Mandela has been formed under the chairmanship of the Prime Minister. My Government firmly believes that sustained international pressure must continue to be maintained on the South African regime to bring about the early dismantling of apartheid.

We pledge our continued support to the valiant people of Palestine in their just struggle for a homeland of their own in a peaceful West Asia. We look forward to President Yasser Arafat's visit to India later this month.

Members will be called upon in this session to consider various measures. The Railway Budget and the General Budget will be brought before you. You will also be considering the Finance Bill, 1990-91, the Prasar Bharati (Broadcasting Corporation of India) Bill, 1989, the Lok Pal Bill, 1989, the Wild Life Protection (Amendment) Bill, 1990, and various other legislative measures.

There is a fresh hope in the atmosphere. My Government is working purposefully for building a strong India, an India based on the dignity of the individual, an India where the benefits of development flow to all, particularly the weaker sections, the poorest of the poor. The task is not easy. The challenges are tremendous. But we shall overcome. We are determined to see that our people shall have a brighter tomorrow.

Jai Hind.

ADDRESS TO PARLIAMENT—21 FEBRUARY 1991

Lok Sabha	—	Ninth Lok Sabha
Session	—	First Session of the Year
President of India	—	Shri R. Venkataraman
Vice-President of India	—	Dr. Shankar Dayal Sharma
Prime Minister of India	—	Shri Chandra Shekhar
Speaker, Lok Sabha	—	Shri Rabi Ray

HONOURABLE MEMBERS,

It is my privilege to welcome you to this new session of Parliament. I wish you the very best for the successful completion of the budgetary and legislative business before you.

You are meeting at a time of great stress and challenge. The unity and integrity of the country are under severe threat. Communal and fissiparous elements pose a menace to the nation. The economic situation is a difficult one. Inflation and an adverse balance of payments position, aggravated by the Gulf crisis, are matters of grave concern. The post World War II structure of international relations has undergone a profound transformation and the new evolving pattern will pose fresh challenges for us. The situation with which we are faced demands, more than ever before, that the people of India come together as one to lift the country out of its present crisis and set it on the road to prosperity and progress. We must set aside internal differences, and petty squabbles, all that is narrow, selfish and divisive and rise as one people in the interest of our nation. In these difficult times we must reaffirm our commitment to the basic principles—democracy, secularism and socialism—the very pillars of our nationhood.

The overall law and order situation in the country deteriorated last year. Violence in Jammu and Kashmir and Punjab has continued. There was a sharp rise in the activities of the ULFA in Assam. The communal scene deteriorated during the second half of the year and caste violence also increased. Andhra Pradesh and Bihar remained affected by extremist violence.

The situation in Punjab is being constantly reviewed. The Government shares the grief and sorrow of all those who have been victims of the senseless violence unleashed by terrorists. Government is determined to

put down terrorism and secessionism with a firm hand. Security measures have been tightened with a view to curbing terrorism and restoring peaceful conditions. Intensive combing operations are being undertaken. Steps have been taken to check infiltration and smuggling of arms and ammunition from across the border. Government is of the opinion that the Punjab problem needs a political solution and has therefore taken a number of initiatives. Apart from holding discussions with political parties, Government proposes to hold discussions with even the militants for the purpose of drawing them into the mainstream of peaceful, democratic activities.

In Jammu and Kashmir, secessionists and certain fundamentalist elements, aided and abetted from across the border, have been carrying out terrorist and subversive activities for quite some time. Government feels that if extraneous assistance to the extremists is eliminated a great deal of subversive activities in Jammu and Kashmir will abate. Government hopes that the dialogue with our neighbouring country will bring about a change in the situation and lead to a restoration of normal life in the State.

During the year there was an increase in the secessionist activities in Assam. A situation was created in which elections to the State Assembly could not be held in a free and fair manner and the Government of the State could not be carried on in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution. President's Rule was therefore, imposed and the State Assembly was suspended. To deal with the secessionists, the State of Assam was declared a "disturbed area" and ULFA declared an unlawful association. Army and Central para military forces have been deployed with visible success. Elections will be held as soon as conditions become conducive to their being conducted in a free and fair manner.

Government wish to reiterate its firm resolve to find an acceptable solution to the problems in Punjab, Kashmir and Assam within the framework of the Constitution of India.

With the worsening situation in the north-eastern province of Sri Lanka, there has been large scale influx of refugees, mainly into the State of Tamil Nadu. Besides the refugees, many militant LTTE cadres have been attempting to use places in Tamil Nadu as a base for their activities. Despite the concern expressed by the Central Government, the situation in Tamil Nadu continued to deteriorate and it was generally perceived that the LTTE could carry on their activities with impunity. In one unfortunate incident the LTTE cadres were able to not only kill 15 persons of arival Tamil Group but also make good their escape. Policing in sensitive coastal areas left much to be desired and offers of assistance from the Centre were not availed of by the State Government. Reports of several unlawful activities on the part of the LTTE and the failure of the State Government to discharge its primary duty of maintaining Public order had left the Government with

no other alternative but to impose the President's Rule in the State of Tamil Nadu. Government, however, is keen to restore a popular government in the State as early as possible.

Communal harmony in the country has been vitiated mainly due to the Ram Janambhoomi-Babri Masjid controversy. The Government has taken a fresh initiative to resolve the issue through discussions with religious leaders and others so that a mutually acceptable solution can be evolved. It is the firm resolve of the Government to ensure absolute equality of treatment to the people belonging to all religions without discrimination and to promote communal harmony in the whole country.

In my address to you in March last year. I had mentioned about Government's intention to set up an Inter-State Council to serve as a forum for better coordination between States and for securing consensus on issues of national importance. I am glad that the Council has been set up and it has held its first meeting in October, 1990.

The economic situation in the country causes grave concern. The budgetary deficits, the oil crisis, the deteriorating balance of payments and the spiral of inflation have caused untold hardships to the people, more particularly the vulnerable sections of the society. Government has launched a multi-pronged strategy for combating these ills which includes, *inter alia*, drastic curtailment of public expenditure and money supply, improved management of supply and demand of essential commodities in the short run and increased production in the long run. Fiscal imbalances continuously indulged in the past have left a legacy of inflation behind. These cannot be corrected overnight or by a single stroke of action. Hard options and stern correctives need to be applied to retrieve the situation. Government had announced a package of measures in December 1990 to mobilise additional revenues and curb expenditure during 1991. There is an urgent need for a national effort to tackle the daunting situation. It is proposed to set up a National Reconstruction Fund to supplement budgetary resources for development work and reconstruction of damaged public property.

The balance of payments has come under further strain and there is likelihood of an additional burden of over Rs. 6,000 crores being imposed on account of Gulf crisis. It is a matter of satisfaction that our advanced planning to deal with any contingency arising out of the Gulf crisis has stood us in good stead. We have taken timely action to ensure that our stocks of petroleum products remain at a satisfactory level. Measures being taken to relieve the strain on the balance of payments in the short term include export promotion, import restraints and securing larger foreign capital inflows.

The foreign trade situation this year is not a happy one. Exports grew at only 12.9 per cent in dollar terms in the period April-November, 1990

over the corresponding period last year, while imports grew by 20.4 per cent. However, there were some positive trends and exports of a few products registered impressive growth. The export performance of engineering goods, cotton fabrics and ready-made garments, leather and leather manufactures and marine products has been encouraging. The Government will accord high priority to export efforts. Larger industrial houses in particular will be required to improve their contribution to exports. Continuous attention will be paid to upgradation of technology and improvement of quality to ensure competitiveness of Indian industry. Efforts will be made to restructure the industrial sector whenever necessary to improve overall efficiency. The export strategy for 1991-92 prepared by the Government incorporates these considerations.

It is against this background of a difficult economic situation that we are engaged in formulating the Eighth Five Year Plan. The situation, though grim, need not cause despondency. Our economy and polity have resilience to cope with the current difficulties. Our greatest asset is our manpower which we can utilise to advantage. Our performance in the agricultural sector also imparts strength to our economy. Most parts of the country experienced a good south-west monsoon. The prospects of *rabi* crops also appear bright. The foodgrain production in the current year may be around 175.5 million tonnes. Our reserves of foodstock are at a satisfactory level.

The Plan document will be finalised by March 1991. Its main thrust will be on removal of mass poverty, expansion of opportunities of productive employment and meeting the basic needs of our people. Given the resource constraints, we are required to evolve a much tighter scheme of priorities. Essential infrastructure, particularly energy, completion of ongoing projects, irrigation, food security at the household level, safe drinking water, primary health care, primary education and the welfare and development of dalits and tribals, women and children would receive priority in the Eighth Plan. The other key features of the Eighth Plan will be protection of the environment and prevention of degradation of land and water resources; maximum use of science and technology to improve agricultural productivity and rural economy; more systematic attention towards agricultural research; strengthening the agricultural credit system; special focus on maximising returns from investments already made through better productivity and efficient management; and appropriate decentralisation of development administration. Government accord very high priority to agricultural development. The Agricultural Policy Resolution is expected to be placed before Parliament in this session itself.

Sound water management is vital for increasing agricultural productivity. Efforts will be made to augment water resources with special attention to minor irrigation and to better utilise the available supplies through scientific methods like sprinkle irrigation, etc.

During the year 1990-91, a number of steps have been taken to diversify and give a new direction to the Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP). These include the extension of group approach for larger coverage of women under the IRDP to all districts and earmarking of 3 per cent target for the physically handicapped persons. The target of coverage of Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe families and of women has been increased. Under the Programme of Training of Rural Youth for Self Employment (TRYSEM) it has been decided to double the numbers of trainees during 1991-92. The Jawahar Rozgar Yojana has been continued.

The Government will take necessary measures to accelerate the pace of industrial development. To provide further impetus to industrial growth, particularly in backward areas, Government has decided to implement the new Growth Centres Scheme throughout the country during the Eighth Plan. Government will also lay emphasis on rural industrialisation, particularly through development of Khaddi and Village Industries. Every endeavour will be made to promote the development of the small scale sector which has been playing an important role in employment generation and in the country's export efforts. A statement on Industrial Policy will be placed before Parliament in this session.

Government is aware of the tremendous growth potential of the electronics industry, particularly in the area of exports, and will take measures to ensure that this potential is realised. It will be the endeavour of the Government to develop the textile sector and food processing industries.

The Government will pay close attention to the infrastructure sector. Coal resources will be developed and power generation stepped up. In the area of mineral development the productive process will be modernised. Self-sufficiency in steel will be the aim through modernisation and expansion of capacity. Government attaches utmost importance to stepping up indigenous production of crude oil. Even while encouraging oil conservation measures, Government is conscious of the need to protect industrial and agricultural production. Special priority will be accorded to the requirements of the agricultural sector. Efforts to promote the use of non-conventional and renewable energy sources will continue. In the area of communication, Government will take necessary steps to provide for the rapid expansion of telecommunication services.

The public sector continues to play a pivotal role in the economic development of the nation. There is, however, considerable scope for improving the performance of the public sector enterprises. The current strategy of improving efficiency through the system of Memorandum of Understanding will be further extended to cover more undertakings.

Our scientists have played a crucial role in the country's development efforts. The successful launching of INSAT-1D in June, 1990 has been a very significant achievement. The development of INSAT-2 satellite and the design development of the second generation IRS series of satellites is progressing satisfactorily. In biotechnology, one of the most important emerging fields of science and technology, rapid advances are being made in upstream areas like immunology, protein engineering and human genetics. It will be the aim of our science policy to use scientific development for tangible benefits to the people.

The pattern of development which we should aim at must be a sustainable one. Development which destroys the environment destroys the very basis of life and is self-defeating. Major initiatives are on the anvil to protect the environment. A ten-year National Forestry Action Plan has been prepared with emphasis on people's participation. A conservation strategy is being formulated to form an integrated frame work for development planning. The policy on prevention and abatement of pollution will promote technological inputs and preventive measures for waste minimisation. Environment friendly products will be identified to encourage manufacture and use of products less harmful to the environment. The concept of civil liability will be codified to help provide relief to those who suffer from environmental damage.

An important task before the Government is to provide effective relief to the victims of the gas tragedy at Bhopal. No effort will be spared to secure fair compensation for the unfortunate victims and their families.

Our Armed Forces have done us proud, their valour, professional skill and devotion to duty have stood India in good stead. The nation acknowledges with gratitude the sacrifices which they have made for the motherland. The morale of our Armed Forces is high and they are ready to meet any external threat successfully. The Government continues to attach high priority to welfare schemes, both for serving and retired personnel. We can also look back with a sense of pride to the notable landmarks achieved by our scientists and technologists towards self reliance in meeting the critical requirements of our Armed Forces. Spectacular progress has been made in the Integrated Guided Missile Development Programme. Having successfully flight tested Surface-to-Surface Missile 'Prithvi' and Re-entry technology Demonstrator Project 'Agni' last year, we have been successful, this year, in flight testing the Medium Range Surface-to-Air Missile 'Akash' and the third Generation Anti-tank Missile 'Nag'.

Our efforts at preserving the unity and integrity of the country, and our efforts at economic development, can be successful in the long run only with the whole-hearted involvement of the people. Our democratic polity provides the frame work for people's participation in the nation building

process. Government is committed to strengthening democratic institutions and in creating conditions which will make democracy more vibrant and real.

Our labour force, both in the industrial and agricultural sectors, is perhaps the most important segment of our population. Upon their sweat and toil rest the fortunes of this country. Amidst all the social turmoil, industrial relations in the country have been marked by stability. This is reflective of the maturity that our industrial system has acquired over the years. All efforts will be made to ensure that the rights of workers are protected and that they get their due share. Special attention will be paid to the enforcement of labour laws for special categories of unorganised labour.

The task of strengthening democracy can never be complete without the full involvement of the nation's youth. We must provide our youth every opportunity for their development and progress. We must create for them conditions in which they can use their skills for their own advancement, the advancement of society, and the advancement of the country. Government will pay special attention to the generation of productive employment opportunities for youth in both urban and rural areas. It will be the endeavour of Government to involve youth more closely in efforts at fostering national integration and strengthening the unity of the country. A meeting of the National Youth Council was held recently. Its deliberations will be taken into account in formulating a national policy for youth.

It is matter of concern that women continue to be discriminated against and are subject to many indignities. Government will take decisive action to protect women and secure for them their rights. The socio-economic rights of women and the rights of children in terms of access to nutrition, health, education and security would receive urgent consideration of the Government. Steps have also been taken to improve the condition of female child, in the context of the celebration of 1990 as the SAARC Year of the Girl Child.

The nation cherishes the memory of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar. His portrait was unveiled in the Central Hall of Parliament on 12th April, 1990. On 14th April, 1990, the nation's highest honour, the Bharat Ratna, was conferred on Dr. Ambedkar. Government is fully alive to the urges and aspirations of the weaker sections and backward classes and is committed to protect and promote their interest and help provide them with productive employment. Efforts will be made to make the Scheduled Castes Special Component Plan and the Tribal Sub Plan more effective with a view to promoting economic well being, educational advancement and removal of social disabilities of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. Disadvantaged and vulnerable groups among the Scheduled Tribes, such as primary tribes and groups, shifting cultivators and bonded labourers would continue to receive special attention

of the Government. The development of predominantly tribal areas is a matter of special concern to the Government. It will be the endeavour of the Government to ensure that the pace of development of these areas is accelerated and that regional imbalances are rectified.

The Public Distribution System has played a useful role, particularly in times of scarcity. Its effectiveness requires to be enhanced further. Government are convinced that the Public Distribution System must become a major component of our strategy for growth and social justice. The Government's thrust will be to target the Public Distribution System in a meaningful way to serve the needs of the poor, especially in rural areas. Government is vigilant in protecting the interests of the consumer and all steps will be taken to check blackmarketing and hoarding.

It will be the endeavour of the Government to expand the coverage of health care and improve its quality. Greater emphasis will be laid on the promotion of indigenous systems of medicine and the out-reach of primary health care services to the poor sections of society. Improvement in health services for children and mothers will be an important component of programmes in the health sector. Greater emphasis will be given to reducing the growth rate of population so that the benefits of our development efforts are not diluted by ever increasing numbers.

The bedrock of democracy is education and literacy. Mass illiteracy and low standards of education are major impediments to the successful implementation of programmes geared towards uplift of the weaker sections and the creation of a more just social order. The removal of illiteracy will be a major thrust area. Government will launch a new programme to eradicate illiteracy and will seek the cooperation of universities, schools and voluntary agencies in this endeavour. The Government will accord the highest priority to primary education and vocationalisation of secondary education.

Government accords great importance to creating facilities to help people secure adequate housing. A National Housing Policy is being formulated. It is proposed to step up allotment of house sites to rural landless families by conferring homestead rights on them. Construction assistance will also be stepped up under the Minimum Needs Programme. The programme of construction of night shelters in urban areas will be expanded.

The international situation has witnessed rapid changes; the cold war has waned and is replaced by greater understanding and cooperation between nations which were arrayed in opposite camps. This poses new challenges and offers opportunities for our foreign policy. Our approach continues to be firmly rooted to the principles of non-alignment and to peace, disarmament and a more just and equitable world order. As a member of

the UN Security Council since January 1991, we will continue to strive for the achievement of these objectives and uphold the purposes and principles of the UN Charter.

The Government attaches the highest priority to improving relations with our neighbours and strengthening the process of regional co-operation, consistent with global trends. The South Asian region is one of the world's poorest. Peace and stability in our region are indispensable for development and for achieving a fair standard of life for our people.

A renewed impetus has been given to the process of regional cooperation at the Fifth SAARC Summit in Male held after a gap of almost two years. At our initiative, the Summit agreed to consider some fresh approaches and extend cooperation to some new areas. We are confident, that given the political will, SAARC can move towards co-operation in core economic areas of direct benefit to our peoples.

We look forward to working closely with the democratically elected Government of Bangladesh for resolving outstanding issues through dialogue and further strengthening our bilateral cooperation.

Our close relations with Bhutan and Maldives have been maintained and strengthened through high level dialogue.

We have welcomed the adoption of multi-party democracy in Nepal. Our traditionally close bilateral relationship with Nepal has been restored. The significance we attach to our relations with that country is underlined by the fact that our Prime Minister's first bilateral visit was to Nepal. We look forward to expanding our co-operation with Nepal in several areas including harnessing the waters of our common rivers and protection and management of the environment.

Notwithstanding Pakistan's support to terrorist and secessionist activities in Punjab and Jammu and Kashmir, we have continued our endeavour to reduce tension with Pakistan and have agreed to resume discussions over a wide range of bilateral issues. We have impressed on the Government of Pakistan the need to abide fully by the Simla Agreement. We hope that the Government of Pakistan will be guided by the longer term interests of the two countries and both our peoples.

Hostilities in the North-East Province of Sri Lanka have led to a heavy influx of Sri Lankan refugees into India. We have conveyed our concern and stressed the need for a peaceful political settlement which meets the legitimate aspirations of the Sri Lankan Tamils within the framework of Sri Lanka's unity and integrity.

Our traditional friendship with Afghanistan was further strengthened with the visit of President Najibullah to New Delhi in August, 1990. We

hope that bloodshed and violence in Afghanistan will cease. The need of the hour is a political solution, arrived at by the Afghans themselves, that would ensure Afghanistan's status as a sovereign, independent and non-aligned country.

We have continued the process of seeking a better understanding with China. Our bilateral cooperation has grown and we have also begun to consult each other more closely on international issues. Negotiations in the Joint Working Group are continuing with a view to resolving the boundary question in a fair, reasonable and mutually acceptable manner. We believe that closer cooperation between India and China will be in the interest of peace and stability in Asia and the world.

We have a special relationship with the Soviet Union and our bilateral cooperation extends over a wide range. We wish the Soviet Government and people well in their efforts to bring about political, economic and social transformation. The Soviet Union has stood by India in times of need, and we will reciprocate their warmth and friendship with understanding and cooperation at all times.

There has been a steady improvement in our relations with the United States of America. There is now a better understanding of each other's concerns and interests. The United States is our largest trading partner and an important source of high technology. We look forward to developing our cooperation further in areas of mutual interest.

Japan has emerged as one of our major economic partners. As an Asian country, we admire the progress that she has made and look forward to further expansion of bilateral cooperation. A closer partnership between India and Japan would be a positive factor for peace and progress.

We have welcomed the unification of Germany which is an event of great historic significance. We look forward to the forthcoming visit of the President of Germany to India and to the expansion of our close and cordial relations with the unified Germany. Our friendly relations and cooperation with other European nations have been maintained and strengthened.

We are deeply concerned at the outbreak of hostilities in the Gulf in spite of all efforts, including our own, to avert this tragic turn of events. The conflict is fraught with grave consequences for international peace and security and for the world economy. The economies of the developing nations in particular will be seriously affected. We hope that hostilities will cease. We are continuing our efforts, in consultation with the Chairman and Members of the Non-Aligned Movement for an immediate ceasefire and simultaneous announcement by Iraq of the withdrawal of its forces from Kuwait, in accordance with the United Nations Security Council Resolutions. At our initiative a meeting of a group of Non-aligned Foreign Ministers was

held in Belgrade. We have also been in touch with the Members of the Security Council and other nations to evolve a consensus for cessation of hostilities and a peaceful resolution of the problem.

We extend full support for the just struggle of the Palestinian people for their inalienable right to homeland of their own. There can be no lasting peace and stability in West Asia without a just resolution of the Palestinian question. This problem has been allowed to prolong far too long and must be addressed with full seriousness and urgency. We will continue to press for the urgent convening of an international conference, with the participation of all concerned, to find a peaceful and durable solution.

We support the efforts to find a peaceful solution to the tragic conflict in Cambodia and are ready to assist in this process. Such a settlement must ensure the sovereignty, territorial integrity, independence and non-aligned status of Cambodia.

In Southern Africa, there are stirrings of profound change. Namibia, the last African colony, attained independence on March 21, 1990. In South Africa, several initiatives have been taken which could pave the way for negotiations to end apartheid. The visit of Dr. Nelson Mandela, to India in October 1990 was an historic event with the entire nation welcoming him as a symbol of the struggle against apartheid.

We are strongly opposed to the efforts to institutionalise discrimination on the basis of race in Fiji, as elsewhere.

Hon'ble Members, you will be called upon to consider a number of legislative measures and financial business during this session.

I now bid you to your arduous tasks. In this hour of crisis the people of India look to your sagacity and wisdom. We have in the past displayed a sense of purpose, tremendous resilience and a capacity to rally together in the face of challenge. I am sure that these qualities will help us build a strong united and prosperous India.

I wish you success in your endeavours.

Jai Hind.

ADDRESS TO PARLIAMENT—11 JULY 1991

Lok Sabha	—	Tenth Lok Sabha
Session	—	First Session after the 10th General Election
President of India	—	Shri R. Venkataraman
Vice-President of India	—	Dr. Shankar Dayal Sharma
Prime Minister of India	—	Shri P. V. Narasimha Rao
Speaker, Lok Sabha	—	Shri Shivraj V. Patil

HONOURABLE MEMBERS,

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to this joint session of Parliament. I felicitate the Members of the new Lok Sabha.

May 21, 1991 was a nightmare. The heinous assassination of Rajiv Gandhi plunged the country into gloom. His assassination was an inhuman act of the worst kind. He had provided leadership at a moment of grave crisis in the history of our nation. In his death the country has lost a promising leader. Rajiv Gandhi's vision of the future, the optimism which he exuded, his great patriotism, his commitment to the poor, his striving for world peace will continue to inspire the people of India as well as peace loving people the world over.

The previous government constituted a Commission of Inquiry consisting of Mr. Justice J.S. Verma, a sitting Judge of the Supreme Court of India, to inquire into the assassination of Shri Rajiv Gandhi. Government is of the opinion that the terms of reference of the Commission should be enlarged and made comprehensive.

The people of India have faced this crisis with fortitude and maturity. Forces which tried to subvert democracy and destabilise the country stand frustrated. The recently concluded General Election has once again demonstrated the strength and vitality of the democratic process in India.

The assassination of Rajiv Gandhi has brought into sharp focus the need to arrest the growing cult of violence in the country. The law and order situation in the country has been a cause of great concern for sometime now. Violence has continued in Punjab and Jammu and Kashmir. The situation in Assam, Nagaland and Manipur has continued to cause concern. Extremist

activity in some States has also put the law and order machinery under severe pressure.

Violence and terrorism in Punjab continued unabated. It is, however, heartening that the people of Punjab have maintained communal harmony in spite of the nefarious tactics of the terrorists who constitute a small fraction of the population. Assisted by the Army in the border areas, security forces have been relentlessly fighting to contain the senseless killings, extortions and kidnappings by the terrorists. To check infiltration from across the border, the work on border fencing and flood lighting in Punjab was expedited and has been completed as planned. Elections to the legislative Assembly and the Parliamentary Constituencies in Punjab were to be held on 22nd June, 1991. However, the large scale killing of candidates and the atmosphere of the fear and terror created by militants rendered it impossible to ensure a free and fair poll, Polling has, therefore, been postponed to 25th September, 1991. Government will continue to deal firmly with terrorism and secessionism. Government is committed to restore normalcy and to start the democratic process in Punjab at the earliest. However, militants and secessionists will not be allowed to misuse the elections for their ends. Government stands by the Rajiv-Longowal Accord. Negotiations are always possible with those who eschew violence and accept the frame work of our Constitution. Government is prepared to take whatever new initiatives are required and will continue to strive for a comprehensive settlement of all outstanding issues in order to have a permanent and peaceful solution in Punjab.

The law and order and security situation in Jammu and Kashmir deteriorated fast during the past year and a half. Secessionists and certain fundamentalist elements, aided and abetted from across the border, are carrying out terrorist and subversive activities. The security forces are taking necessary and effective measures to combat secessionism and terrorism. Lately, encouraging signals have been received in the form of surrender of many militants. The relationship between Government and the people needs to be strengthened. People's committees will be constituted at different levels to ensure their participation. At the same time, stern action will be taken against secessionist forces. Special attention will be paid to providing employment for the unemployed youth of Jammu and Kashmir.

Elections were held in Assam and people have given a fitting reply to the forces of secession. The people of Assam deserve to be congratulated on the peaceful manner in which elections were conducted. Government will ensure that secessionist elements in Assam are brought back into the mainstream. Genuine grievances of the people will be redressed. Steps will be taken for the rapid economic development of Assam.

It is a matter of serious concern that the forces of communalism have been able to vitiate the atmosphere in the country leading to the outbreak of serious riots in the last two years. Government are determined to combat such forces and uphold the value of secularism. Government will not allow the rights and interests of religious, linguistic and ethnic minorities to be compromised. A composite Rapid Action Force will be formed and appropriately equipped and trained to deal with riots and will be made available to the State Governments at very short notice. More Special Courts will be set up as necessary to try offences relating to communal riots. Procedures will be strengthened to enable speedy and adequate compensation to be paid to victims of communal riots. Places of worship must be treated with due respect. We cannot allow communal elements to defile their sanctity by using such places as instruments to generate controversy and discord. Government will make every effort to find a negotiated settlement to the Ram Janma Bhoomi—Babri Masjid issue with due regard to the sentiments of both communities involved. In case of all other places of worship, a Bill will be introduced to maintain the *status quo* as on 15th August, 1947, in order to foreclose any new controversy. The special cell established in 1988 together intelligence in communally sensitive districts will be strengthened with a view to preventing riots. The next-of-kin of those whose lives are lost in communal riots will be rehabilitated by providing suitable employment to them.

We are proud of our armed forces. They have risen to the occasion whenever called upon to defend the territorial integrity of our country, assist the civil authorities in the maintenance of law and order and in organising relief and rescue measures. Government will continue to pursue various welfare schemes for the defence services, both for serving and retired personnel. Government will give priority to the upgradation of and self-reliance in defence technologies.

Government recognises that the country is in the midst of an economic crisis of unprecedented magnitude. It has been living beyond its means and adopting soft options. We have been overtaken by events. We must act now. No sacrifice is too great to safeguard our economic independence and the country must prepare itself to take hard and unpleasant economic decisions.

Government is committed to the macro-economic stabilisation and structural reforms which will unleash the nation's latent energy to bring about accelerated development. The Reserve Bank of India has brought about an adjustment in the exchange rate in order to strengthen competitiveness of our exports, to reduce expenditure on inessential imports, to reduce the incentive for capital flight and stabilise the capital account. We intend to take concerted measures in the areas of trade policy and industrial policy reform to further enhance the competitiveness of our

exports. We are committed to ensure that the poor and the underprivileged do not have to bear a disproportionate burden of the adjustment process.

Of particular concern is the rise in prices of essential commodities which hurts the weaker sections the most. Government attaches the highest priority to reducing inflation and will adopt necessary measures towards this end. The interest of the weaker sections of society will be kept uppermost in mind, while framing strategies for this purpose. Measures to restrain growth in money supply; economies in Government expenditure; encouragement to small savings; better supply and demand management of sensitive commodities; and provision of incentives for higher production in the medium term will receive priority.

Fiscal imbalances continue to be a major concern for the Government. Despite attempts at controlling expenditure and raising additional revenues, the revised estimate of budget deficit for 1990-91 is Rs. 10,772 crores against the budget estimate of Rs. 7,206 crores. Government is committed to observing strict fiscal discipline. The generation of black money will be checked. Government expenditure will be controlled. While making necessary adjustments, Government would ensure that the burden does not fall on the poor.

The balance of payments position, already under severe strain, was further exacerbated by the Gulf crisis, the direct adverse impact of which is estimated at \$ 2.7 billion (over Rs. 4,900 crores). Of this, the additional cost of oil imports alone accounted for \$ 2 billion while the rest was, among others, owing to the loss of exports, evacuation of Indian nationals and reduced inflow of capital. The balance of payments situation has become more critical as the flow of funds from international capital markets did not materialise as anticipated though several countries did offer help. Significant bilateral assistance has come particularly from Japan as also from Germany, U.K., the Netherlands and Denmark. The management of balance of payments is one of the most crucial tasks before us and Government will not hesitate to take the hard decisions necessary in this behalf.

Exports have a vital role in solving the balance of payments problem. During 1990-91, our exports were affected adversely, resulting in a slowdown in the rate of growth. Government has recently announced major structural reforms in trade policy. It is hoped that export trade will get out of the circle of low growth, high cost and stifling controls and once again get on to a high trajectory of growth. Government's ultimate goal is to eliminate all licensing control on the import of capital goods and raw materials except for a small negative list.

The Uruguay Round of multilateral negotiations is underway in Geneva. While attaching importance to strengthening the multilateral trading system,

Government will endeavour to see that the outcome of the negotiations would be a favourable trading environment for developing countries.

Efforts will be made to step up industrial growth: In 1990-91, the average industrial growth was 8.4 per cent compared to 8.5 per cent during the Seventh Plan period. Government is determined to work towards making India internationally competitive. For this purpose, fullest use will be made of modern science and technology. The opportunities provided by increasing internationalisation of the industry and trade will be fully utilised. The development of the small scale sector and khadi and village industries will receive the Government's close attention. Government will work for extensive deregulation and reduction of bureaucratic intervention. To this end, a comprehensive review of policies and procedures has been initiated. In order to raise the competitiveness and quality of Indian industry to global levels, technology imports will be liberalised and facilitated in areas where Indian technology does not measure up to international standards. Changes in procedures are being worked out so that the investment climate is made more conducive for participation by foreign companies and non-resident Indians, efficiency will be promoted in services required by industrial and other users from financial institutions and banks.

Reforms in the functioning of the public sector are being formulated to improve its performance. The management of the public sector will be strengthened through selection of the best talent available. Public Sector managers will be allowed greater autonomy without diluting accountability. A policy is being evolved for disinvestment, including workers' participation in equity and for vacating areas of activity where public sector involvement is not essential and where private and joint sectors have developed capabilities.

To provide a boost to the electronics industry and to promote software exports, a number of measures are being initiated. These would include setting up of technology parks and attracting international leaders in semi-conductors technology to set up facilities in India. High priority will be accorded to expanding the production of crude oil and refining capacity. Government will take special measures to tackle sickness in the textile industry and improve the price competitiveness of Indian textile exports. Immediate attention will be given to problems faced by the food processing industry, which has a critical relevance for the better utilisation and greater value addition of agricultural produce.

The development of infrastructure will receive Government's close attention. Power generation will be stepped up. Steps will be taken to make the steel industry more competitive. Modernisation of rail transport and augmentation of capacity will receive attention. Telecom services will receive very high priority. It will be the endeavour of the Government to upgrade telecom and postal services and to ensure that the telephone reaches every village before the end of the decade.

Science and technology must be brought to the centre stage in economic planning. It is to the credit of our scientists that we have been able to establish internationally acclaimed competence in several areas. During the current year, two major space events have been scheduled—the launch of the Indian Remote Sensing Satellite and the launch of the Indian National Satellite. These represent our commitment to provide services in areas like communications, telecasting, broadcasting and meteorology and relevant data in the areas of groundwater availability, forestry, agriculture, and mineral resources. Significant progress has also been made in the development of various Satellite Launch Vehicles. Our efforts at using atomic energy for our development needs have yielded encouraging results. Members will be happy to learn that in the next few months Narora-2 power reactor and Kakrapar-1 power station will go critical. Government will take all possible steps to accelerate the pace of progress in science and technology.

The total production of foodgrains in 1990-91 is expected to be 177.2 million tonnes. This will be the third successive year of increased foodgrains production and this has happened for the first time since independence. This is due to the untiring efforts of our farmers and more effective adoption of scientific farm management practices. We will ensure that our farmers get a fair and remunerative price for their produce. Conditions will be created for further increase in agricultural yields. Agricultural research will receive the Government's close attention. Extension services will be strengthened and modern technology will be made available to our farmers in a usable manner. Technology for increasing productivity in rain-fed agriculture would be further developed and efforts would be made to ensure that a package of supportive measures to increase the income levels of small and marginal farmers in these areas reaches them. The development of water resources will receive high priority. Government will make every effort to maximise indigenous production of fertilizers and ensure its timely availability to the farmers. At least 90 per cent self sufficiency in nitrogenous fertilizers will be ensured by commissioning the gas based plants at Babrala, Shahjahanpur, Gadepan and Kakinada and doubling the capacities of the plants at Vijaipur, Aonla and Jagdishpur during the Eighth Five Year Plan. Animal husbandry will be further developed with emphasis on genetic improvement, animal health and cost effective feed. Particular attention will be paid to remote areas.

Given the difficult economic situation facing the country, the formulation of the Eighth Five Year Plan assumes added importance. The Planning Commission began formulating the Plan in 1988. However, due to frequent changes in Government, the Plan document could not be finalised. Government will take necessary steps for the early finalisation of the Eighth Plan.

India has had a deep commitment to environmental conservation drawn from its ethos. India shares the emerging global concerns in the context of the environmental changes induced by economic and technological activities. We shall take the required initiatives to ensure that our commitment to sustainable development crystallises. Wasteland and water resource development have enormous potential for employment and productivity. A new policy on abatement of pollution is under preparation which aims at promoting environmentally sound and clean technologies to minimise waste and control pollution. A National Forestry Action Programme is being prepared with the involvement of all State Governments. The role of citizen groups will be encouraged.

The youth of India represent a large, creative and vibrant resource segment of our society. Investment in their development is an investment in the future of the country. Government will formulate policies for actively involving youth in efforts to nurture the spirit of national integration and pride in our country. Linkage between education, development of youth, sports and physical education will be strengthened. The rapid expansion of opportunities for productive employment will be a major objective of our planning and economic policy.

Women and children, particularly those belonging to poor households, are the two most vulnerable groups of our population that need special attention. The Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS), the largest child development programme in the world, has completed fifteen years of successful implementation. Government is committed to expand this programme during the Eighth Plan to cover all the backward and drought and flood-prone areas as well as areas where there are large concentrations of Scheduled Castes and Tribes. Government is committed to the implementation of Indira Mahila Yojana. This integrated programme for the development of women and children was inspired by Shri Rajiv Gandhi and announced in November 1989. The programme aims at developing a new sense of awareness among women, particularly in rural areas, and empower them, so that they become active participants in the process of social transformation and regeneration. The development of the child will be an integral part of this programme. We will take measures to enforce all the legislation for women already on the statute book. As a first step, we will appoint a Commissioner for Women's Rights with powers for taking action required for the effective enforcement of their rights.

Government is committed to the socio-economic and educational development of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. The composition of the National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes which has been given constitutional status will be finalised shortly. The National Commission will be given all the support it requires to discharge its duties in regard to the implementation of the safeguards and other measures

designed for the protection of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, and their socio-economic development through the planning process. The National Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Finance and Development Corporation will be strengthened. Government is committed to special measures in favour of socially and educationally backward classes. In implementing these, preference will be given to the poorer sections among them. Where poorer candidates are not available, the benefit will go to other members of the backward classes. The Government will also ensure that the benefits of reservation are provided to other economically backward sections who are not covered by the existing schemes. A Backward Classes Development Corporation will be set up.

Steps will be initiated for the effective implementation of the 15-Point Programme for the welfare of minorities which seeks to ensure that the minorities are protected and that they are not discriminated against in the matter of employment in public services and benefits from development schemes. All possible assistance will be extended for the educational development of the minorities. The Minorities Commission will be accorded statutory status.

Improving the quality of life of the rural poor will receive the Government's closest attention. Efforts will be made to ease the pressure on land by providing alternative avenues of employment. To this end appropriate economic linkages will be established and non-farm employment stepped up. Small, medium and large-scale agro-based and food processing industries will also be established. The Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP) continues to be a major instrument for creation of self-employment opportunities and will be strengthened. The Jawahar Rozgar Yojana will be continued to generate more employment in rural areas. A special crash programme, to be named after Rajiv Gandhi, will be drawn up to provide drinking water to rural areas within five years. Improvements will be made in the primary health care infrastructure in rural areas.

The strength of our economy rests, in a very large measure, upon the toil of our working class, including those in the unorganised sector. It will be the endeavour of the Government to protect and promote the interests of the working class. Efforts will be made to foster healthy industrial relations by carrying out reforms in the machinery for settlement of labour disputes.

Health is an essential element in the development process and a crucial input for improving the quality of life. While there has been steady expansion in health care facilities, a great deal still requires to be done. All possible measures will be taken to reduce mortality and morbidity rates which are still high particularly among children. With a view to further strengthening the health care system, a National Institute of Biologicals is being established to ensure safety of vaccines, kits and reagents. To draw upon the strengths

of various systems of medicine, Government are taking measures to promote and develop indigenous systems. Assistance is also being provided to further encourage the study of homeopathy.

Today is the World Population Day. This is an occasion to focus attention on a global problem, which is of particular relevance to India. We are at a critical stage of development. A rapidly expanding population is exerting relentless pressure on our scarce resources. Greater emphasis will be placed on limiting population through propagation of the small family norm. A multipronged approach will be adopted to this end. Integrated health, nutrition, education and motivational services for the people in general and women in particular will be improved and strengthened. Maternal and child health measures will receive special care.

India's greatest resource is its people. The full potential of our human resource has yet to be effectively utilised. High priority will, therefore, be accorded to education. The National Policy on Education formulated in 1986 on the basis of a national consensus contains the framework for our advancement towards a secular, modern, self-reliant and just social order. The uncertainty created in the last one and a half years about the Policy has caused much harm. We shall now revive the spirit required to implement the Policy with renewed vigour. We must move with confidence and determination, towards the goal of universal literacy and provision of good quality primary education for all children, especially those belonging to the disadvantaged sections. Government believes that equal opportunity in education is crucial to social harmony and progress. This emphasis of the New Education Policy will remain Government's main plank. Particular attention will be paid to the education of women and girls. We shall simultaneously improve the quality of education and bridge the chasm that now exists between the world of work and the world of learning.

The highest priority of the Government will be to provide for adequate availability of essential commodities at reasonable prices. As an important part of this effort, the Public Distribution System will be streamlined and more sharply targeted to reach the poorest of the poor, especially those in the rural areas. It will be an integral part of our strategy to fight rural poverty and give the rural poor a better quality of life. This effort would include measures like ensuring timely and adequate deliveries of foodgrains used in wage employment and supplementary nutrition programmes. The Essential Commodities Act will be strictly enforced to fight anti-social activities like hoarding; profiteering and blackmarketing of essential commodities. The provisions of the Consumer Protection Act will be used more effectively to provide simple, inexpensive and quick redressal of consumer grievances against sub-standard goods, services and unfair trade practices. An effective machinery will be set up to monitor the entire gamut of these efforts.

Government attach great importance to making administration more efficient and responsive to the needs of the people. Particular attention will be paid to those areas of administration where it interfaces closely and directly with the people. The grievances redressal machinery will also come in for close scrutiny with a view to enhancing its effectiveness. Government will complete the drive for filling the backlog of vacancies meant for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in various Ministries and Departments of the Government of India in a time-bound manner.

In foreign policy, we accord the highest priority to strengthening our relations with our neighbours in South Asia on a bilateral basis as well as through the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation.

We welcome the establishment of a democratically elected government in Bangladesh and look forward to working with them in resolving outstanding issues through dialogue and further strengthening our cooperation. We are deeply grieved over the unprecedented devastation caused by the cyclone which recently struck Bangladesh and are contributing to relief operations in a spirit of friendship and good neighbourliness.

Our relations with Maldives continue to progress on the basis of mutual trust and cooperation. Maldives too, has been the victim of severe cyclones. India has been participating actively in relief efforts.

Our close relations and cooperation with Bhutan will be further consolidated and strengthened.

The emergence of multi-party democracy in Nepal will further strengthen our uniquely close ties. Over the past year, high level exchanges of visits have reinforced our political understanding and imparted a shared determination to intensify cooperation in areas of mutual benefit.

Government will continue the endeavour to reduce tensions with Pakistan. Agreements have been reached on several confidence building measures, including on providing advance notification of military exercises and prevention of air-space violation by military aircraft. We believe that all differences with Pakistan should be resolved bilaterally and peacefully on the basis of the Simla Agreement. However, Pakistan's support to terrorism in Punjab and Jammu and Kashmir is a matter of serious concern and stands in the way of a genuine and sustained improvement in our relationship.

We are concerned at the continuing violence in Sri Lanka which has caused unending human suffering and led to nearly two lakh Sri Lankan nationals taking refuge on our soil. It is important that efforts for a lasting and durable solution to the ethnic issue are intensified and conditions created for the return of these refugees at the earliest. The India-Sri Lanka Agreement continues to provide a viable framework for this objective.

We have continued to strengthen our traditional ties of friendship and cooperation with our close neighbour, Afghanistan. We are concerned that resumed military activity would cause a set-back to the peace process. We hope that peace and normalcy will be restored soon through a political settlement. India will continue to work for a strong, stable, independent and non-aligned Afghanistan.

Since the visit of Shri Rajiv Gandhi to China in 1988, there has been a marked improvement in India-China relations and we will seek to strengthen this process. The two countries have reached agreement on re-opening their Consulates in Bombay and Shanghai respectively and also to resume border trade. The scale of scientific and technical exchanges as well as cultural exchanges has been steadily expanded. The outstanding question of the boundary between the two countries should be settled in a fair and reasonable manner. Better understanding and cooperation between India and China will have a positive impact on peace and stability in our region and the world.

The Soviet Union is a major partner with whom we have friendly relations and wide-ranging, mutually beneficial cooperation. We wish the people of the Soviet Union success in their efforts to bring about a transformation in their country. We are confident that our bilateral relations with that great country will continue to develop in an atmosphere of traditional warmth and understanding.

We look forward to the further development of our relations with the United States of America. We believe that building a mutually beneficial and mature relationship is a goal shared by both countries. Indo-US cooperation in the commercial, scientific, technical and cultural fields has been steadily intensified.

We will continue to monitor closely the postwar developments in the Gulf region, a region with which we have deep-rooted historic links. We hope that the new security arrangements that are being put in place would be based upon the initiative of the countries of the region and worked out under the overall aegis of the UN.

There can be no durable or stable peace in West Asia without a comprehensive settlement of the Palestinian problem. India has consistently supported the just struggle of the Palestinian people and has recognised Palestine as an independent State. We remain committed to supporting a settlement based on the Palestinian right to self-determination, the vacation of all Arab territories occupied since 1967 and the security of all the States in the region.

We have traditionally had good relations with all the countries of Europe. The European Community is our major trading partner and a key source of investment and technology. We also recognise its growing potential as a

political and economic entity. We will remain in close touch with the Community.

Our friendly relations with Germany have been strengthened with the visit of the President of Germany to India. Later this year in September, the Festival of India in Germany will be inaugurated in celebration of the cultural and intellectual interchange that has been a hallmark of Indo-German relations in the past decades.

The countries of Eastern Europe have witnessed momentous changes in recent years. India welcomes the success of the democratic movements in these countries and looks forward to strengthening our traditional bonds of friendly relations with them.

We desire the strengthening of our relations with Japan, which is already one of our major economic partners. We are engaged in a constructive dialogue with Japan on the entire range of matters of mutual concern. We appreciate the support they have extended to us.

Government will continue to maintain close and friendly contacts with all the countries of South-East Asia. We will continue to participate in the process of finding a political solution to the Cambodian conflict, consistent with the sovereignty, territorial integrity, independence and the non-aligned status of Cambodia.

We remain totally opposed to the continuing efforts to institutionalise racial discrimination in Fiji.

We welcome the measures taken by the South African Government to remove the statutory pillars of apartheid. We fully support the demand of the African National Congress to implement further measures, which will lead to the irreversible elimination of apartheid in South Africa.

In the short period of our current membership of the United Nations Security Council, since January this year, we have endeavoured to not only project our own national policies and aspirations but also serve the cause of maintaining international peace and security, in consonance with our faith in multilateralism.

Our foreign policy will take into account the far-reaching changes taking place in the international situation while adhering firmly to the principles of non-alignment. We will continue to work for peace and disarmament and for global cooperation to reduce poverty and improve living standards in the developing nations.

Honourable Members, the main task before you will be the adoption of the Budget for 1991-92 and several measures of grave national importance. I am sure that your deliberations will be marked by maturity and wisdom and guided by patriotic and selfless devotion to the cause of the nation.

The crisis with which we are confronted today makes this session of parliament a particularly important one. You must give the lead and set the tone which will instil confidence in our people and enthuse them in the task of nation building. You have before you the historic task of building a strong and prosperous India, a humane India, an India where there is social harmony and communal amity, an India from which poverty has been eradicated, an India based on equality and social justice.

I wish you all success.

Jai Hind.

ADDRESS TO PARLIAMENT—24 FEBRUARY 1992

Lok Sabha	—	Tenth Lok Sabha
Session	—	First Session of the Year
President of India	—	Shri R. Venkataraman
Vice-President of India	—	Dr. Shankar Dayal Sharma
Prime Minister of India	—	Shri P. V. Narasimha Rao
Speaker, Lok Sabha	—	Shri Shivraj V. Patil

MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT,

I welcome you to this first session of Parliament in 1992 and wish you the very best for the successful completion of the budgetary and legislative business ahead. I extend a special welcome to the new members from Punjab.

The Government had given an assurance that elections would be held in Punjab in February, 1992. Despite many serious problems, this assurance has been fulfilled. Members are aware that the State of Punjab has been facing terrorist violence for past one decade and many innocent lives have been lost. The brave people of Punjab deserve to be congratulated for the courage they have displayed in re-affirming their faith in the democratic process and in the abiding values of secularism and nationhood. The Government is committed to finding a just and amicable solution to all the outstanding issues in Punjab. The Rajiv Longowal accord was a step in this direction. The presence of elected representatives will strengthen a meaningful dialogue and the participation in the process of all sections in the State.

The involvement of forces across the border in aiding, arming and providing logistic support to the terrorists in Kashmir is now well known. Pakistan has continued its massive propaganda and disinformation campaign to defame India and to divert world attention from its overt and covert support to terrorism. Terrorist action has taken a heavy toll of innocent lives. For over two years the normal life of the people in the State has been dislocated. A section of the population has been forced to flee State and take shelter outside. No doubt all efforts are being made to take care of the needs of those who have migrated, but the solution to the problem lies in their return to their own homes where they can be resettled safely.

Government has launched a massive operation against the terrorists with the help of the Army. All our efforts have been made to stop border infiltration. The recent efforts by terrorists to make massive intrusions across the Line of Control created a serious threat to peace in that area. Action, though belated, on the ground by Pakistan and diplomatic moves by the Government succeeded in meeting this grave threat. Some groups of terrorists have surrendered along with their arms. Discussions have been held in different fora to activate a meaningful interaction with the people. The Government is at the same time, continuing its efforts at increasing the pace of economic development in the State and expanding employment opportunities. An advisory Council has also been set up at the State level. Government would be willing to consider any dialogue within the framework of the Constitution to restore normalcy.

In the eastern part of the country, the Army had to be deployed in Assam from September, 1991 to restore peace and normalcy. The security forces have apprehended a number of ULFA activists and seized their weapons. Some activists have also surrendered voluntarily. ULFA has released all hostages and has unilaterally declared the suspension of its agitation. ULFA has shown willingness to hold negotiations with the Government to find an amicable solution to the problems of Assam within the framework of the Constitution. The army operations in Assam have been suspended, pending a dialogue with the ULFA.

A close watch is being kept on the situation arising out of the Ram Janma Bhoomi-Babri Masjid dispute. Government has enacted legislation to maintain the *status quo* of the other places of worship as they existed on 15th August, 1947. Action has been completed to set up a Foundation for Communal Harmony to take care of children of families affected by communal violence. One of the commitments of the Government was to establish a composite Rapid Action Force to quell communal riots. All necessary decisions in this regard have been taken. The Force has been raised.

It would be recalled that in the last session, Parliament has met a long standing demand of the people by enacting legislation to give the Union Territory of Delhi a Legislative Assembly and a Council of Ministers. Government has initiated steps for delimiting constituencies with a view to holding early elections.

In my last address, I had spoken of the need to take hard decisions to overcome the grim economic situation confronting the country. The Government has moved swiftly to deal with the crisis. The balance of payments problem has been successfully handled. Our reserves of foreign exchange today stand at over Rs. 10,000 crores. We have redeemed the gold we had pledged, and arrested the outflow of capital. International

confidence is being restored. At the same time, the Government has initiated steps to restructure the economy for greater productivity and growth. Changes have been made in industrial, fiscal and trade policies. This process of change will continue and will have to be extended to other important sectors of the economy.

The new industrial policy aims at consolidating the gains of the past decade, and imparting a fresh impetus to Indian industry for enhancing its efficiency and productivity. The policy has already shown significant results. In the period after the policy changes were announced the number of investment proposals have doubled compared to the same period last year. Approvals for foreign investment and technical collaboration also show a similar trend. Along with changes in the industrial policy, a policy package for support to small scale industry has been announced, the small scale and tiny sector will continue to play an important role in providing employment and contributing to industrial output. With the changes that have been brought about in the industrial policy, the State Governments have a major role to play in promoting industrial development. The Central Government will continue to interact with them to ensure that the benefits of the liberalised policy reach all corners of the country.

We place great emphasis on exports. Despite an unavoidable import compression of about 20 per cent, exports to General Currency Area countries have shown a modest growth of 6 per cent in dollar terms. External obstacles on exports to Rupee Payment Area have, however, affected overall export growth. Efforts are being made to restore trade with the Republic of the former Soviet Union, and framework agreements are being entered into with all of them.

The Government is fully conscious of the need to protect the interest of all those workers who may be affected by restructuring as contemplated by the new policies. A programme of retraining and re-deployment will be taken up, for which necessary funds will be provided. The strength of India lies in its working class. A Standing Tripartite Committee has been constituted to examine the impact of the New Industrial Policy on Labour and make recommendations from time to time on labour related problems. The National Commission on Rural Labour submitted its report last July and made a number of recommendations for improving the position of rural workers through creation of employment opportunities, provision of social security, strengthening existing laws and enactment of new legislation. Government is studying these recommendations.

The rise in prices is a matter of grave concern. Inflation is being caused, to a large extent, by the fiscal deficit. Once the fiscal deficit is reduced and brought under control inflation can be expected to come down to reasonable levels. Other possible administrative steps like dehoarding

measures and increase in release of foodgrains have been taken. The inflation rate has come down from over 16 per cent in August, 1991 to about 12 per cent at present. The Government will continue to monitor prices and take steps to reduce these further.

The economic policy changes initiated recently will form the basis for the Eighth Plan which envisages a growth rate of 5.6 per cent. This growth target is to be achieved by a proposed total outlay of Rs. 400,000 crore. The foremost objective of the Plan will be to generate increased employment. Other priorities of the Plan are eradication of illiteracy, universalisation of elementary education and providing drinking water and primary health facilities. The emphasis will be on people's involvement and in reaching out to the poorest and the most needy section of our people. The Eighth Plan will also focus on strengthening infrastructure. The Policy approach for the Eighth Plan has already been endorsed by the States at the recent meeting of the National Development Council and Government is confident that the economy will soon be on a sustainable and stable course of development.

Growth rates have been encouraging in several critical infrastructure areas like electricity, coal, steel and cement. Government is committed to further strengthening infrastructure. Every effort will be made to step up power supply and make it more stable. The development of atomic energy and non-conventional energy sources will receive high priority. The importance of effective communication system for the country's development cannot be over stated. These will be strengthened. Every effort will be made to increase the capacity and transport capability of the railway network. A new shipping policy is being initiated. A major restructuring of Indian Airlines and Air India is envisaged which will include modernisation of the fleet and support facilities. The network of telecommunication services, particularly in the rural areas will be substantially extended.

The progress made by the country in the field of science and technology is a matter of pride. To cite only a few, the indigenous fabrication of the second generation INSAT-2 series of satellites is proceeding according to schedule. INSAT-2A is expected to be launched next month. With the planned launching of Satellite Launch Vehicles, in the next one year, India will join the ranks of those few countries which have their own launch capability. The limitless potential of biotechnology which is of direct relevance to areas as diverse as agriculture, pisciculture and health will be exploited to the full. The exciting possibilities of electronics will be followed up so that it brings tangible benefits to our people. The development of the new contraceptive pill is yet another example of the benefits to be reaped through scientific advance. Even while reaching out to frontier areas, scientific and technological research must, in the final analysis, be closely linked to improving the quality of life of our masses.

While doing everything possible to accelerate the pace of progress, there must be environmental accountability all round on the part of Government, industry and people. A scheme of financial incentives and disincentives would supplement the normal regulatory measures to achieve this purpose. It is proposed to take up during the Eighth Five Year Plan, a scheme of associating tribals and rural poor in afforestation of degraded forests on a usufruct-sharing basis. The Wastelands Development Programme launched in 1985 will be strengthened and it is proposed to take up the integrated development of micro-watersheds in 50 districts in the country. With the experience gained in the cleaning of the river Ganga, the Government proposes to take up the cleaning of the major tributaries of this river and the grossly polluted stretches of other major rivers under the National River Action Plan. India looks forward to the forthcoming United Nations Conference on Environment and Development and will work towards ensuring that the Conference safeguards the interests of the developing countries.

One of the world's worst industrial tragedies took place in Bhopal on 2nd December, 1984. The aftermath of this event has scarred the lives of thousands of people. The Government of India had taken upon itself the responsibility to secure compensation for those affected and provide them relief. The legal processes have been completed by the directive of the Supreme Court on 3rd October, 1991. Government will ensure maximum relief to the victims.

The tourism sector has emerged as one of the largest foreign exchange earners providing employment to many. Government has launched a major initiative to accelerate growth of tourism in cooperation with the State Governments, travel trade and hotel industry. This has already started yielding results and the tourist arrivals have picked up, recording the highest level of international tourist arrivals in December 1991. The Government's tourism Action Plan includes tourist facilitation at international airports, liberalised charter policy, creation of special tourism areas for integrated development and intensive marketing of select destinations along with a major thrust to the promotion of domestic and low budget tourism. Our people must be provided with adequate facilities so that they get to see and know their own country better. With this in view Government will focus on youth tourism.

The foundation of our future security and progress lies to a great extent in agricultural growth. The dramatic progress we have made in agriculture, including in food crops, horticulture, fisheries, animal breeds and poultry, has a lot to do with progress in our research laboratories, but more than all else, it is the story of the life of the Indian farmer, his grit and determination. 1990-91 was the third agricultural year in succession when a new record in foodgrains production was achieved. During 1991-92

the South-West monsoon was erratic in its temporal and spatial behaviour, and some fall in production is likely. While our researchers are now producing technologies to offset the vagaries of weather, more intensive efforts have to be organised in the long term for improvement of land and productivity in rain-fed areas since 70 per cent of India's agriculture is based on rain-fed farming. The Government has already taken up massive programme for improving the productive potential of rain-fed land through improved crop practices, effective pest control, prevention of soil erosion and better *in situ* moisture conservation. During the Eighth Plan, horticulture, animal husbandry, live-stock development and agro-processing will be given high priority. Cooperative and research efforts will be intensified in the sheep, poultry and piggery sectors. Processing and marketing facilities in these and other areas will be strengthened, in order to create the right conditions for an increase in rural incomes. Research emphasis will be on increasing productivity of oilseeds, pulses and cereals, and diversification of agriculture for income and job generation, specially in the rural areas.

Recently, issues associated with the sharing and allocation of waters between States have been generating passions and tensions. It will have to be ensured that water, one of nature's precious gifts, is shared in an equitable manner in the larger national interest. Water is a flowing entity, variable in quantity from year to year and season to season. It should be managed in a harmonious manner in a spirit of understanding and cooperation between the areas served by it. Rivers should be a binding force for the people of different regions rather than a matter of discord. Every effort should be made to resolve through dialogue all disputes relating to the use of waters of any inter-State river. Should this not be possible, Government will ensure expeditious settlement of the disputes through the adjudication machinery set up by law for the purpose.

Effective measures are being taken to generate greater employment opportunities for the most disadvantaged sections through the Integrated Rural Development Programme and the Jawahar Rozgar Yojana. Special efforts will be made to expand employment opportunities for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and women. No effort would be spared to provide safe drinking water to our people, on which depends the state of their health. All identified no source problem villages will be provided with a drinking water source by the end of 1992-93. In recognition of Shri Rajiv Gandhi's commitment to provide safe drinking water to the remotest of remote villages, Government have re-named the Technology Mission on Drinking Water for Rural Areas as the Rajiv Gandhi National Drinking Water Mission. Rural housing will receive special attention by improving the quality of implementation of the Indira Aawas Yojana. Government is committed to the strengthening of the Panchayati Raj Institutions so that effective political power rests with the people themselves. To this end, a Constitution Amendment Bill has been introduced in the Lok Sabha in September, 1991.

Poverty is no less acute in the urban areas. Employment generation and poverty alleviation schemes in the urban sector will be continued. A new National Housing Policy is on the anvil. The main objective of the new policy will be to create an enabling environment for housing activity and to assist people, in particular the vulnerable sections, to secure for themselves affordable shelters through access to developed land, building materials, finances and technology. Government is committed to the eradication of the dehumanising practice of manual scavenging through low cost sanitation schemes through a time bound programme. Schemes for conversion of dry latrines into low cost sanitation units have been already approved for over 740 towns in the country. Rehabilitation of those engaged in the practice of scavenging is also being undertaken. Government has decided to bring a legislation under article 252 of the Constitution making the practice of engaging manual scavengers an offence. A Constitution Amendment Bill has been introduced in the Lok Sabha with a view to strengthening urban local bodies so that they are able to provide better facilities and services to the people.

The Government is acutely conscious of the problems of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. In respect of repeated incidents of atrocities against Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, a special conference of Chief Ministers was held in October 1991 in order to focus on the need for the State Governments to pay special attention to deal with this problem. The State Governments have also been advised to identify tension-prone areas and to take special administrative measures to deal with them. In the context of job opportunities for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Government has been taking measures to increase their representation in Government departments, public sector undertakings and banks. With this objective in view the third special recruitment drive is under way at present. In accordance with the commitment given in my Address last year, a National Backward Classes Finance and Development Corporation has been set up with an authorised paid up capital of Rs. 200 crores to promote the economic development of the socially and educationally backward classes.

In my last Address I had mentioned that steps would be initiated for the effective implementation of the 15-Point Programme for the welfare of minorities which seeks to ensure that minorities are protected and that they are not discriminated against in the matter of employment in public services and benefits from development schemes. To realise this objective the 15-Point Programme is now being recast to make it more effective.

The Government has decided to confer statutory status on the Rehabilitation Council of India. The Council sets the standards for manpower training for rehabilitation of the disabled. Government has also decided to introduce legislation for setting up a National Trust for the welfare of persons suffering from mental retardation and cerebral palsy.

Government will give very high priority to the needs of children and women, the most vulnerable of groups in our society. Government will expand the ICDS programme during the Eighth Plan so as to cover the entire country. The girl child, will receive particular attention with focus on her nutrition, health and educational needs. Government is aware that mere legislative, administrative and judicial protection of women is not enough. The ultimate answer to the question of women's equality lies in their empowerment through organising them to defend their social and economic rights and in the creation of better income and self-employment opportunities. Government therefore would implement the Indira Mahila Yojana. Towards this end, Government has constituted the National Commission for Women.

Government attaches the highest priority to ensuring that no uncertainty whatsoever exists in the people getting their basic daily necessities. To this end, Government will make all out efforts to strengthen the Public Distribution System. The corner stone of the Government's policy here would be vigilance and supervision over distribution at the village level involving local initiatives and entrustment of these responsibilities to women in particular in order to fight leakages and malpractices. While efforts to improve the functioning of the Public Distribution System all over the country would receive attention, priority would be given to implement the revamped Public Distribution System in about 1700 blocks spread over the remotest and most backward areas of the country, such as those covered by the Integrated Tribal Development Projects, the Drought Prone Areas Programme, the Desert Development Programme, the Designated Hill Areas and Urban Slums. To ensure doorstep delivery of essential commodities to fair price shops, infrastructure and credit facilities would be improved and strengthened. Commodity coverage in the Public Distribution System would be broadened. Measures in this direction have already been initiated in close cooperation with the State Governments. The Essential Commodities Act, 1955 is being strictly enforced against hoarders and blackmarketers to enhance and sustain availability of essential commodities and this drive will continue. The Government looks upon the Public Distribution System as the centre of a new social development focus to be imparted to its various anti-poverty programmes. Appropriate linkages will be forged with other programmes like the Jawahar Rozgar Yojana and the ICDS. All out efforts are being made to protect and promote the rights and interests of the consumers. At present 28 State Commissions and 360 district forums are functioning in the country under the Consumer Protection Act, 1986. The Chief Ministers have been requested to set up the remaining State Commissions and district forums and to ensure that they function effectively. Eighty-two per cent of the 33,851 complaints filed before the district forums have been decided in favour of the consumers. Government has recently received the Report of the High Power Working Group constituted

to suggest amendments to the Consumer Protection Act, 1986. The Report is presently under examination. The recommendations of the Working Group on the amendments required to make the Consumer Protection Act, 1986 more effective would be discussed in the Central Consumer Protection Council shortly.

Government is implementing 14 National Health Programmes including the Malaria Eradication Programme, Leprosy Eradication Programme, Control of Blindness and AIDS Control Programme. Kala Azar is being reported year after year and in recent times it has assumed epidemic proportions in Bihar. This needs to be tackled on a war footing. There is also the emerging problem of AIDS. Government has already prepared a programme to deal with this menace, taking into account, among others, the crucial factor of blood safety. There has been a dramatic reduction in the prevalence rates of leprosy and improvement in the discharge of patients. A comprehensive programme is proposed to be taken up to permanently upgrade ophthalmic facilities at the District and Community Health Centre levels. There has generally been a declining trend in the incidence of vaccine preventable diseases. Poliomyelitis cases have significantly declined. Declining trends in the case of whooping cough and diphtheria are also significant.

The rate at which our population is growing will put tremendous pressure on our resources. The Government has taken steps in recent months to evolve an integrated and holistic approach to achieve a marked decline in the birth rate. Towards this end an Action Plan has been drawn up which seeks to improve the quality and outreach of services. It is now proved that birth rates have remained high in areas with low female literacy, low age of girls at marriage and high infant and maternal mortality. It is in these areas that special efforts will be concentrated under the Action Plan. Particular attention will be given to 90 districts in the country which have a crude birth rate of over 39 per thousand. The Action Plan was scrutinized and endorsed by the National Development Council and at a meeting of State Health and Family Welfare Ministers. The National Development Council has also set up a Sub-Committee of Chief Ministers on Population Control to act as the focal point for all the measures under this Action Plan. The problem of population is not a concern confined merely to the Central and State Governments. Elected representatives, voluntary organisations, other leaders of public opinion—indeed each one of us, cutting across all sections of society, will have to participate in these efforts. A national consensus on this is the need of the hour and Parliament has to take the lead in this matter.

A National Policy on Education was adopted by Parliament in 1986 and its implementation commenced soon thereafter. Several developments in the sphere of education, and the Report of the NPE Review Committee, made it necessary to examine the need for modifications in the Education

Policy. The process of examination is soon to conclude and I am confident that the uncertainty in respect of the Policy will now be set at rest reiterating the main thrusts of the 1986 Policy. The National Literacy Mission which was launched by the late Shri Rajiv Gandhi in May 1988, has made significant strides. I share with you a sense of pride in the fact that all the districts of Kerala and Pondicherry*, as well as several in other States, have succeeded in eradicating illiteracy. Total Literacy Campaigns are at present being implemented in nearly 70 districts in the country. The campaigns in these districts will cover nearly 30 million illiterates in various age groups and would cost Rs. 210 crore. The campaigns are being implemented with the active cooperation and support of voluntary agencies. We, however, still have a long way to go and need to commit ourselves to the great and challenging task of freeing all parts of the country of illiteracy, particularly in the 15-35 age-group, by the end of the Eighth Plan. We have simultaneously to work towards universalisation of primary education comprising universal access, universal participation and universal achievement of minimum levels of learning. The formal system of primary education has been strengthened by a Centrally Sponsored Scheme of Operation Blackboard which is designed to provide necessary infrastructure. Nearly 3.8 lakh schools out of a total of 5.7 lakhs in the country have already been covered. More than 70,000 additional teachers have been appointed. Assistance from the Central Government to the tune of Rs. 620 crores has already been provided. In addition, to provide learning opportunities to those children who are not in a position to avail of formal school facilities, 2.45 lakh centres of Non-Formal Education are being conducted by State Governments. Another 27 thousand are being conducted by 410 voluntary agencies. Central assistance to the tune of Rs. 208 crores has been provided towards these efforts. We also need to effectively delink degrees from jobs and to give to the entire educational system a work and vocational orientation. A decision has already been taken to set up a Central Institute of Vocational Education under the National Council of Educational Research and Training. The Institute will actively promote the vocationalisation of education. The need to persist with attention to improvement of technical education is obvious. It is essential to create conditions for much greater rigour in teaching and research and to enlarge the number of institutions pursuing standards of excellence.

Events on the world scene have continued to unfold at an amazing pace since I last addressed Parliament in July last year. The intervening period has been an extremely active one in India's foreign policy.

The Government's foreign policy priorities are to maintain the unity and territorial integrity of India, to ensure our geopolitical security by creating a durable environment of stability and peace in our region and to build up a framework conducive for the economic well-being of our people by encouraging a healthy external economic environment. Within this overall

* Now known as Puducherry.

framework of priorities, we are of course not only conscious of our geographical location, but also are aware that our destiny lies in Asia, more specifically in South Asia. The very fact that the First Asian Relations Conference was convened by India as early as 1947 bears witness to the fact that this has been the central pillar of independent India's foreign policy from the very beginning. India's policies are geared to be a part of resurgent Asia as it is our hope that the 21st century would be an Asian century.

Strengthening relations with our neighbours on a bilateral basis as well as through the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation is of the highest priority. The recent SAARC Summit held in Colombo last December should hopefully impart economic content to growing cooperation amongst the South Asian countries within the SAARC framework.

The recent visit of the Prime Minister of Nepal has ushered in a qualitatively new era of relations between the two countries resulting in opening very important areas of cooperation which will fortify the unique closeness of our ties, strengthened by the emergence of multi-party democracy in Nepal.

The recent visit of the Chinese Premier has been an important milestone in the further development of our relations. We have enhanced our mutual understanding through exchange of views on bilateral, regional and international issues at the highest level.

We are keen that the traditional friendly relations with Bangladesh are further expanded in the changed context with the advent of democracy in Bangladesh becoming an additional bond between the two countries.

We are committed to the strengthening and consideration of bilateral relations with Sri Lanka in keeping with the traditional and historical ties between the two countries. The voluntary return of Sri Lankan refugees back to their homeland, based on assurances received from Sri Lanka Government, commenced on 20 January, 1992 and is continuing.

Our close relations with Maldives are being further consolidated with a number of exchange of visits at high level between the two countries during 1991.

Periodic high level exchanges have helped maintain and strengthen close understanding and cooperation in our excellent relations with Bhutan.

Pakistan's negative approach towards India and its support to terrorism in Punjab and Jammu and Kashmir continue to be the main impediments to normalisation of relations. The dangers inherent in its actions in violation of the Simla Agreement and universally accepted norms of inter-State conduct have been repeatedly pointed out to Pakistan. We have nevertheless

continued with our efforts to carry the confidence building processes and bilateral dialogue forward. Unfortunately, in the recent past, the Government of Pakistan and the Pakistan National Assembly have chosen to associate themselves with statements and actions that have vitiated the atmosphere. We hope that the Government of Pakistan will join us in serious endeavours to establish tension-free and good neighbourly relations between the two countries.

On 26th December 1991, we announced our decision to accord formal recognition to the Russian Federation and to all the other Republics of the erstwhile Soviet Union. Russia has assumed the role of a successor State and has taken over the seat of the erstwhile Soviet Union in the United Nations Security Council. We have sought to maintain our traditionally close relations not only with Russia but with the other republics as well. In addition to our Embassy in Moscow we plan to open Embassies in Ukraine, Kazakhstan and Belarus and upgrade our Consulate General in Tashkent in Uzbekistan. A high level delegation recently visited Russia and Ukraine to establish a new framework of political relations with these independent republics and to review arrangements for maintaining our long standing trade and economic links with them. Several leaders from the Central Asian republics have visited and are expected to visit India during the next few months. During these visits, we shall seek to conclude appropriate agreements to promote our political, economic, commercial and cultural ties with these countries with whom we share historic bonds of friendship.

The values of democracy, individual liberty and respect for human rights which we share with the United States of America provide a strong basis for close cooperation between the two largest democracies of the world. Our expanding consultations in both bilateral and multilateral forms encompass a wide range of issues including peace, security and threats emanating from terrorism and drug-trafficking. The United States is our largest trading partner and a major source of technology. It has been supportive of our efforts to overcome our temporary economic difficulties and launch a far-reaching programme of economic reform. We look forward to a long-term and mutually rewarding economic partnership with the United States. The Prime Minister had a very useful meeting with President George Bush in New York during the recent UN Security Council meeting. There was strong mutual interest expressed in further consolidating and expanding our bilateral and multidimensional ties.

We attach special importance to our relations with countries of West Asia and North Africa. We have over the years extended consistent and unequivocal support to the Arab cause particularly to the Palestinian struggle for their just and inalienable rights. India has welcomed the reactivation of the West Asian peace process and the ongoing dialogue between Arab States and Israel to find a just and equitable settlement to the Arab-Israeli dispute.

Given the changed political realities in the region, India has decided to establish diplomatic relations with Israel. We look forward to establishing a comprehensive and multifaceted relationship with Israel.

India enjoys an enormous fund of mutual goodwill with African countries because of our consistent and effective support to the anti-colonial struggle in South Africa. We are proud that the liberation struggle in South Africa against apartheid has led to tangible reforms since 1990.

We have played a catalytic role in efforts to resolve the Cambodian conflict. India was among the countries specially mentioned in the Paris International Conference on Cambodia for facilitating the peace process.

We have demonstrated our support against attempts to institutionalise racial discrimination in Fiji by taking up the matter at the UN General Assembly from 1987 onwards and by opposing the re-entry of Fiji into the Commonwealth.

Japan's position as an economic superpower in the present world draws us closer to enlarge our bilateral cooperation on a wide range of matters of mutual concern which we believe is an important factor for peace and progress.

We have enjoyed age old cultural and bilateral ties with the countries of South-East Asia. This is a region which has made rapid progress in a very short time. The economic initiatives taken by the Government will create fresh opportunities for strengthening our economic interaction with this region. The Government attaches high priority to strengthening our relations with ASEAN and its member countries. We look forward to initiating our sectoral dialogue with ASEAN soon.

Europe's emergence following the Maastricht Summit meeting last December as a stronger political and economic entity in the modern world is of great significance. The European Community is our major trading partner and an important source of investment and we are keen to expand and strengthen further our cooperation. Our Prime Minister's first visit abroad was to Germany where he discussed with German leaders a wide range of subjects of mutual concern and cooperation between the two countries. We have also had a useful dialogue with other major European countries like the United Kingdom, France and Portugal.

With the sweeping changes brought about by recent events at the end of the Cold War and issues connected therewith, the new configuration is bound to assume a new North-South complexion, in the framework of a non-confrontationist context and methodology. The developing countries of the world will need to gear themselves for this new odyssey of development, aimed at the attainment of equitable prosperity all over the world. World peace and comprehensive disarmament would make an important

contribution to this ultimate vision of a happy and fulfilled humankind. India will work towards the realisation of this vision.

At the multilateral level, our participation has similarly been within our overall framework of priorities. The Non-aligned Movement is readjusting in a dynamic manner to the breathtaking pace of global developments. We have re-affirmed faith in its continued relevance. The independence of national decision making that is enshrined in its philosophy is today more relevant than ever before. In other multilateral fora such as the G-15 and the Commonwealth Summit, the Prime Minister not only articulated our views on important issues but also re-emphasised the need to restore the centrality and critically of development issues on the multilateral agenda. The Uruguay Round of negotiation has reached a crucial stage. We shall continue to defend our vital interests and seek improvements as we work towards the establishment of a fair and balanced multilateral trading system.

Environmental issues are fast moving to the forefront of international concern and attention. We are actively participating in multilateral cooperative efforts and supporting the forging of a global partnership which seeks to integrate the developmental needs of the developing countries in solutions to environmental problems.

We believe that given the global reach of nuclear weapons we need to follow a global approach with regard to nuclear disarmament issues. Partial or piecemeal measures such as Limited Nuclear Weapons Free Zone, therefore, seem to be of little utility and could even detract us from our ultimate goal.

The Summit level meeting of the UN Security Council on 31 January 1992 served to highlight the new and effective role that the UN has assumed in the wake of the momentous changes in the international situation. Our Prime Minister set forth at the meeting our position on some vital issues such as a new international consensus on a global non-proliferation regime, harmonisation of the defence of national integrity with respect for human rights and a just and fair world economic order. The meeting provided an opportunity for world leaders to exchange ideas on the future of the United Nations and to pledge their support to the new Secretary-General.

India is on the threshold of taking rapid and purposeful strides into the future. Conditions are being created so that there is an acceleration in the pace of development, our people can enjoy a better quality of life and India can hold her own in a rapidly changing world. The present is full of challenges as well as opportunities. Let us convert the challenges into opportunities. Let us not shy away from treading new paths. Let us be bold and innovative in our approach. The hardships of the present are only the harbingers of a brighter future. But even as we move into the future, let us be disciplined and resolute in our approach. Let us shun acrimony for

dialogue, violence for amity lest we be deflected into the by-lanes of history.

Honourable Members will be called upon to consider in this session important legislative business and other matters of great national importance. Your deliberations will, I am sure, be informed by reflection and wisdom. I now commend you to your tasks and wish you all success.

Jai Hind.

Dr. SHANKAR DAYAL SHARMA



ADDRESS TO PARLIAMENT—22 FEBRUARY 1993

Lok Sabha	—	Tenth Lok Sabha
Session	—	First Session of the Year
President of India	—	Dr. Shankar Dayal Sharma
Vice-President of India	—	Shri K. R. Narayanan
Prime Minister of India	—	Shri P. V. Narasimha Rao
Speaker, Lok Sabha	—	Shri Shivraj V. Patil

HON'BLE MEMBERS,

I welcome you to this session of Parliament.

The most important task before us today is to restore confidence and communal amity which have been shaken by the tragic events of the 6th of December last year and what followed thereafter. The basic promise of secularism and the rule of law has been threatened. Political parties, intellectuals, opinion leaders and others must all strive to counter the communal propaganda that has been let loose so that the country can proceed with the task of building the nation and reasserting our fundamental values. We have to further strengthen the harmony that has always characterised our society.

The central issue of the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid dispute has been referred to the Supreme Court under article 143 of the Constitution. Government has also acquired about 68 acres of land in the complex, and is in the process of setting up two separate Trusts for managing the construction of Ram Temple and Mosque. Government's endeavour will be to ensure that the construction is taken up in consultation and cooperation with the two communities concerned and with the active participation of eminent and responsible leaders of the two communities. Government seeks the support and cooperation of all section of the people in this important endeavour.

In Jammu and Kashmir, there has been no let-up in the involvement of forces from across the border in training, arming and providing logistic support to the terrorists. Our security forces, despite having to work under extremely difficult conditions, have been trying to meet this challenge. Government is acutely conscious of the hardships and privations of the

people of Jammu and Kashmir arising from the intimidatory acts of terrorists, frequent calls or bandhs and disruption of economic and commercial activity in the State. There have also been some cases of excesses by security forces operating in the State. Prompt action has been taken in such cases to punish those found guilty. As a first step to redress the grievances of the people and reactivate the political process, a State level multi-party advisory council has been set up to act as a bridge between the administration and the people. Efforts are also being made to set up district level committees to carry the process forward. A Parliamentary delegation visited the valley in October 1992. Discussions have been held by the Union Home Minister with leaders of political parties to create conditions which would enable democratic processes to be restored.

After the democratically elected government assumed office in Punjab, there has been a dramatic improvement in the life of the people of the State. These brave people deserve all credit for sending a clear message against the forces of separatism and disruption. Elections to municipalities were held after a gap of about 13 years and to panchayats, after a gap of about 9 years. These have evoked massive and enthusiastic response. A renewed thrust is being given to the socio-economic development of the State. The Centre remains committed to finding a just and amicable solution to all the outstanding issues in Punjab and will provide all assistance to the State Government in its pursuit of anti-terrorist measures.

The overall situation in the North-Eastern region has been under control. Steps have been taken to accelerate the pace of infrastructure development in the region, particularly in respect of rail, road and telecommunications. State Governments and the North-Eastern Council have initiated new programmes for development of agriculture, horticulture and fisheries. The Central Government is setting up an agricultural university and an institute of technology. In all these programmes of development, people's participation is being emphasised. Elections have been held recently in Nagaland and Meghalaya.

The implementation of Eighth Plan, launched on April 1 last year, is well under way. The total investment has been substantially stepped upto Rs. 7,98,000 crores at 1991-92 prices. Out of this the public sector outlay will be Rs. 4,34,100 crores. We are moving towards indicative planning which is in tune with the changes that have been initiated in our economic policy.

The year 1991-93 witnessed a further consolidation of the economic stabilisation programme and the process of structural reforms. The growth in GDP which was 1.2 per cent in 1991-92 is expected to be around 4 per cent in 1992-93. This growth is significant when viewed against the set-backs of the past year, the comparative slow-down in the industrial sector and problems in the financial sector.

During 1992-93 industrial production recorded an increase of 3.8 per cent for the period, April to October 1992, as compared to a decline of about 1.0 per cent during the same period in the previous year. Similarly, exports recorded growth of around 3.4 per cent in dollar terms during April-December 1992 compared to a decline of 3.7 per cent in corresponding period of the previous year. The recent agreement with Russia on the repayment of debt will help revive our exports to traditional markets in Russia. We have comfortable foreign exchange reserves of US \$5 billion. One of the prime objectives of Government, namely control of inflation has been achieved, as the annual rate of inflation which peaked at 16.7 per cent in August 1991 was brought down to 7.0 per cent in the last week of January 1993.

Major changes have been made recently to liberalise foreign exchange controls. The new economic policy has also led to major liberalisation in our procedures for foreign direct investment. The total equity investment approved from August 1991 to the end of January 1993 is over \$ 2.3 billion, which will account for projects of a value of about Rs. 35,000 crores. A number of other proposals are also in the pipeline, with a foreign equity component of about \$ 250 million, generating projects with a total value of Rs. 7,500 crores. Most of these investments are in priority sectors: 24 per cent in energy, 26 per cent in petroleum, about 8 per cent in chemicals, about 12 per cent in food processing industry and 8 per cent in electrical industry. The remaining 22 per cent includes transportation, textiles, telecommunications and industrial machinery. Non-priority consumer items account for a little less than 4 per cent.

The National Renewal Fund was set up and operationalised so that industrial workers are not hurt in the process of restructuring. The first major programme being taken up is the turnaround of the National Textile Corporation in which the National Renewal Fund will provide funds for working capital, retraining and rehabilitation measures and voluntary retirement schemes. The scheme has been making steady progress so far and about 22000 workers have been covered.

Government has held consultations with labour representatives on general issues concerning the reform process as well as sector-specific matters. A meeting of the State Labour Ministers and the Indian Labour Conference has also gone into the manner of revamping our industrial relations laws. Government attaches high priority to these changes as they are expected to lead to increase in production and productivity, high wage earnings and harmonious industrial relations.

The small scale sector is of very great importance in our industrial economy because of its potential for high levels of employment generation and the dispersal of industrial activity across the country. In 1992-93 the employment in the sector was estimated at 129 lakh persons and total

production was expected to be at Rs. 1,66,400 crores, representing a rate of growth of 4 per cent over the previous year. In view of the slowdown in the industrial sector, this was creditable. With revival in industry as a whole, the performance of the small scale sector is expected to improve very significantly in 1993-94. An important initiative to ensure prompt payment by other industries of the dues of the small scale units has been taken. Payments are now required to be made within thirty days of acceptance of goods or rendering of service.

In the world that is emerging, the economic strength of a nation will depend on its ability to compete in the international market place, on the basis of quality, reliability and price. It should be our endeavour to achieve a sustained growth rate of exports of 15.20 per cent per annum in dollar terms within the next few years. It would be a basic plank of Government policy to encourage exports in every possible way and to remove all impediments or constraints that affect their growth.

Agriculture is the mainstay of the Indian economy and its people. As it is still essentially dependent upon rainfall, there was a drop in foodgrains production in 1991-92 by about 9 million tonnes and was estimated at 167 million tonnes. This brought the Public Distribution System and consumer prices, under pressure. However, the timely decision to import a limited quantity of wheat has had a positive impact on its price behaviour. The increase in prices between May and December 1992 was restricted to 3.6 per cent compared to a rise of 35 per cent during the corresponding period in the previous year. I am happy to say that in the current year, the monsoon has been good excepting in parts of Bihar and in parts of a few other States. The total *Kharif* foodgrains production is estimated at 100 million tonnes against last year's 91.42 million tonnes. Procurement of *Kharif* rice has been proceeding satisfactorily and has already crossed 9 million tonnes. The prospect of *Rabi* food production is good and it is expected to be around 76 to 77 million tonnes. *Kharif* oilseeds production has been higher by about 16 lakh tonnes. Our sugar production was 133 lakh tonnes in the sugar year ending October 1992, thus making India the world's largest sugar producer. All this has had a salutary effect on prices as well as availability. The country's achievements in the agricultural sector bear eloquent testimony to the hard work and enterprise of our farmers.

Our plans for agriculture go beyond mere self-sufficiency. We see it as an area with great potential, capable of yielding much higher incomes to farmers and rural labour. To stimulate growth in this sector the minimum support prices for paddy were increased by Rs. 40 per quintal in August 1992 and for wheat for the marketing season starting 1 April 1993, by Rs. 55. It has also been decided to pay a bonus of Rs. 25 per quintal for wheat. The statutory minimum price of sugarcane was raised by Rs. 3 per quintal

to Rs. 26 for the sugar during the year 1991-92. This has been further raised to Rs. 31 per quintal for the sugar during the year 1992-93. The decontrol of phosphatic and potassic fertilizers has no doubt led to increase in their prices in the short-term. To cushion the impact of this increase, Government provided Rs. 340 crores to the State Governments and Union Territories as a one-time support. The price of urea was decreased by 10 per cent. Government has also announced a Rs. 500 crore package to develop agricultural infrastructure meant for the small and marginal farmers. These measures and the increased attention that dry farming would get in the coming year will serve the interests of the farmers in a big way.

One of the important programmes being implemented by the Government to protect the interests of the vulnerable sections of the society is the Revamped Public Distribution System. Government has decided to set apart and distribute an additional 20 lakh tonnes of foodgrains every year in the 1,700 blocks in the tribal, drought-prone, desert and designated hill areas of the country, identified under the scheme. Since the inception of the Revamped Public Distribution Scheme, 10121 new fair price shops have been opened in these blocks and 26 lakh additional ration cards have been issued.

During the current year, work relating to the setting up of district level consumer redressal agencies was carried forward and the entire country was covered by District Forums except the State of Meghalaya. Presently 447 District Forums are functioning in the country.

The thrust of the Eighth Plan in the field of rural development is to integrate the Jawahar Rozgar Yojana and the Integrated Rural Development Programme with other ongoing programmes for strengthening rural economic infrastructure so as to create durable and productive economic assets which in turn generate further employment. The outlay for rural development for the Eighth Five Year Plan has been increased to Rs. 30,000 crores as compared to an allocation of Rs. 6,179 crores and an actual expenditure of Rs. 10,956 crores in the Seventh Plan.

The Constitution (72nd Amendment) Bill, 1991, which has been passed by both the Houses of Parliament in the last session when enacted, will effectively strengthen Panchayati Raj Institutions by ensuring regular elections and sufficient devolution of powers and financial resources. Provision for reservation of seats in the Panchayats for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes has been made in proportion to their population in the village. Out of the seats for which direct election will be held, one-third are reserved for women. Furthermore, out of the seats reserved for the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes, one-third will be earmarked for Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe Women. The law has provision for enabling reservations to be made for the office of Chairperson also. The State legislatures, if they so desire, can make reservations in favour of backward classes.

To strengthen municipal Government and to ensure that municipalities perform as effective units of local self-government, Parliament has passed the Constitution (73rd Amendment) Bill, 1991. Provisions for reservation for members of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, Women and Backward Classes have been made as in the case of Panchayats.

During the year 1992-93, Government gave priority to disease control programmes. These include control of AIDS, eradication of leprosy by the year 2000 AD, malaria control in tribal areas and short-term chemotherapy for tuberculosis in backward areas. An intensive programme is proposed to be taken up in seven States for dealing with cataract-induced blindness.

According to the 1991 Census, the average annual exponential growth rate of population which had reached a level of 2.22 per cent in the 1971-81 decade has come down to 2.14 per cent. The birth rate has come down to 29.3 per 1,000 population in 1991 from a level of 30.2 in 1990. However, the present natural growth rate of 1.95 per cent is still very high and stabilisation of population will, therefore, be an overriding national priority.

A massive programme has been launched for the liberation and rehabilitation of 4 lakh safai karmacharis during the next five years. A statutory National Commission for safai karmacharis is being constituted to be in charge of this programme.

The authorised share capital of the National Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Finance & Development Corporation has been raised from Rs. 75 crores to Rs. 125 crores. The Corporation will continue to assist in the flow of funds for income generating schemes for the benefit of Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe entrepreneurs. So far, the Corporation has sanctioned 312 schemes of a value of Rs. 277.63 crores towards which it has disbursed Rs. 54.05 crores. The Corporation is also organising training programmes in skill upgradation for employment and self-employment. To raise the levels of literacy and education amongst the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, it is proposed to start residential schools in 48 districts.

As a tribute to the memory of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar during his Centenary Celebration Year, the Dr. Ambedkar Foundation was set up to administer schemes like the Dr. Ambedkar National Award, Dr. Ambedkar National Library, Dr. Ambedkar Chairs in Universities, and Dr. Ambedkar Overseas Fellowships. In addition, the Government has also taken up the translation and publication of the complete works and speeches of Dr. Ambedkar. A full-length feature film on Dr. Ambedkar will also be produced.

The National Backward Classes Finance and Development Corporation (NBCFDC), with an authorised share capital of Rs. 200 crores, will provide an additional channel of finance and assist in upgrading the technical and entrepreneurial skills of the socially and educationally backward classes.

The National Commission for Minorities Act, 1992, has been passed by Parliament providing statutory status to the Commission and clothing it with the powers of a Civil Court. The main functions of the Commission would be to evaluate the progress of development of the minorities, monitor and make recommendations on the working of Constitutional safeguards, to look into specific complaints, undertake studies and research, suggest appropriate measures and make periodical reports to Government.

Government has initiated action to implement the judgement of the Supreme Court on issues relating to the reservation of jobs in Government for Backward Classes. Government will specify the basis, apply the relevant and requisite socio-economic criteria, to exclude socially advanced persons and sections, the creamy layer, from other backward classes. An ordinance has been promulgated to constitute a permanent body for entertaining, examining and recommending upon requests for inclusion and complaints of over inclusion and under inclusion in the lists of others backward classes of citizens. The advice tendered by such a body shall ordinarily be binding upon the Government.

Government proposes to set up the Rashtirya Mahila Kosh to meet the short-term and medium-term developmental credit needs of poor women in the informal sector, through intermediary agencies like non-Government organisations. Funds have been allocated to this programme as part of the Social Safety Net efforts.

A review of the 1986 National Policy on Education has been undertaken and necessary modifications in the Policy were effected in May 1992. Universalisation of elementary education, achievement of total literacy, equal access to educational opportunities, women's education and development, vocationalisation of secondary education, consolidation of higher education, modernisation of technical education, and improvement of the quality, content and process of education at all levels continue to be the priority areas of national endeavour in the field of education. In elementary education, we have shifted the focus from mere enrolment to retention and achievement. The revised policy resolves to ensure that free and compulsory education of satisfactory quality is provided to all children upto 14 years of age within a decade. The National Literacy Mission based on the Total Literacy Campaign strategy has achieved commendable results and 75 per cent of the districts in the country will be covered under this Mission by 1996-97. The emphasis during the coming years will be on infusing sound management principles in the education system and on decentralising education management.

There has been encouraging progress in the sphere of science and technology. The successful launch of ASLV in May, 1992 is a significant development in indigenous launch technology. The launch of INSAT-2A in

July, 1992 and its successful commissioning is an indication of our ability to build sophisticated multipurpose satellites. The planned launches of INSAT-2B and the PSLV in June this year will provide a further fillip to our Space programme. Another noteworthy development of 1992 was the completion of the 11th Scientific Expedition to Antarctica and the launch of the 12th expedition. Ongoing efforts to harness the benefits of biotechnological tools, with relevance to agriculture and health, would be sustained.

The highlight of this year's achievements in the field of Atomic Energy has been the 220 MW Kakrapar Atomic Power Station Unit-I achieving criticality on September 3, 1992 and its synchronisation to the grid on November 24, 1992.

Our Armed Forces remain prepared to safeguard our territorial integrity. Improvements in manpower planning and management practices and investments towards self-reliance in defence technologies are yielding results.

The Armed Forces assisted the civil authorities in maintaining law and order and organising relief and rescue measures on a number of occasions during the year, carrying out their tasks with commendable dedication.

In the field of defence production, determined efforts have been made towards indigenisation and self reliance, particularly in spare parts. In keeping with the changes in industrial policies, steps are being taken to foster mutually reinforcing linkages between production units in the defence and civil sectors.

Government remains committed to enhance the welfare of serving and retired Armed Forces personnel.

Our foreign policy objectives were pursued both bilaterally and in international forums. Emphasis was placed on building up relations with our neighbours. Important visitors from these countries included the President of Sri Lanka, the Prime Minister of Bangladesh, the Prime Minister of Nepal and the King of Bhutan. Our ties with these countries have been strengthened as a result of these visits. During the visit of the Bangladesh Prime Minister, our commitment to lease the Tin Bigha corridor to Bangladesh was fulfilled. A Memorandum of Understanding between the two countries on detailed investigations for the important Sankosh multipurpose project was signed during the visit of the King of Bhutan.

Despite Pakistan's continuing support for terrorism and sub-version in Jammu and Kashmir and Punjab, efforts were made by us to resolve various bilateral issues. With this objective in mind, the Prime Minister had two meetings with the Prime Minister of Pakistan in the course of the last year. Our efforts have unfortunately not made much headway. We urge Pakistan to eschew its path of deliberate and provocative confrontation and its temptation to gain unilateral advantage in its relationship with us. There can be no alternative to the process of bilateral dialogue.

Government has been consistently pursuing a policy of achieving good neighbourly relations with China overcoming the difficulties of the past. We are also working for a fair, reasonable and mutually acceptable settlement of the boundary question. Among the several high-level visits exchanged between the two countries last year was that of our former President, Shri R. Venkataraman. The Chinese Foreign Minister is expected to visit India this year. The Prime Minister will also be visiting China.

We look forward to working together with President Clinton and his administration in the United States in building a strong relationship between our two countries based on mutual understanding, trust and shared values and interests. The changed international environment following the end of the Cold War has given an impetus to the strengthening of Indo-US ties, which now reflect a greater degree of understanding at the political level along with growing cooperation in various other areas.

The visit of President Yeltsin provided the opportunity for a detailed exchange of views on all bilateral and global issues of concern. Our stand on Kashmir was explained. President Yeltsin categorically affirmed his country's full support for India's position. During this visit the debt repayment issue was resolved and several other agreements were signed which have laid a durable foundation for future friendship and close interaction between the two countries.

We had the pleasure of welcoming in our midst three distinguished Heads of Government from Western Europe. The British Prime Minister, Mr. John Major, was here as Chief Guest at our Republic Day celebrations. His visit underscored India-UK friendship and cooperation and reconfirmed British understanding of our actions to uphold democracy and secularism. He extended full cooperation in combating terrorism. A further significant outcome of the visit was the stimulus it gave to India-British economic and commercial cooperation. Earlier this month, we welcomed the President of the Government of Spain, Mr Felip Gonzalez. Most recently, Dr. Helmut Kohl, Chancellor of Germany visited India to receive the Jawaharlal Nehru Award for International Understanding. These significant visits reflect appreciation overseas of our resilience in addressing the various issues that face the country as well as the strength of our democratic and secular system. They have also resulted in greater appreciation of our foreign policy as well as in support for our economic reforms programme.

The Prime Minister's visit to Japan in 1992 coincided with the 40th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between India and Japan and the signing of a peace treaty between the two countries. Japanese interest in our economic liberalisation is underscored by the increase in direct Japanese investment in India. We are committed to strengthening our ties with Japan at all levels.

The strengthening of our relations with the newly independent countries of Central Asia with whom we have had age-old cultural ties, is a major thrust of our policy. The visits to India last year of the Presidents of Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan were followed up with high level visits from India to Central Asia. The Prime Minister of Tajikistan visited India a few days back. Agreements were signed during these visits which gave our relations with the individual Central Asian States a new and long term perspective.

We welcome the START-II Treaty between the United States and Russia for reduction in strategic nuclear arsenals as a step in the right direction. In the field of multilateral disarmament, a noteworthy event has been the successful conclusion of the Chemical Weapons Convention, which eliminates an entire class of weapons of mass destruction. This is a universal and non-discriminatory treaty which should be regraded as a model for future multilateral disarmament negotiations. It provides a strong underpinning to the Indian Action Plan for Global Disarmament that the then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi had presented to the United Nations in 1988. A global, and not regional or sub-regional, approach is needed for a worthwhile result in the area.

A reinvigorated United Nations with a more sharply focused agenda is the need of the hour. The effectiveness of the United Nations will depend on its ability to democratise and reorder its structures to accommodate and reflect the concerns of its members.

Our participation at the multilateral level in UN, NAM, the Commonwealth and the G-15 has been within the overall framework of our priorities and concerns. The Prime Minister's address at the inaugural session of the Non-Aligned summit in Jakarta last September set the tone of its deliberations, reaffirming the continuing relevance of the Non-Aligned Movement and prioritising its future agenda so as to concentrate upon issues of specific concern to it.

At the UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro in June, 1992, the Prime Minister's address emphasised the integral link between environment and development, thus marking a milestone in international cooperation in tackling environmental and development issues. India's proposal for transfer of technology, and additional resources for developing countries to enable them to join their developed country partners in the global effort at preserving the environment, was widely welcome and endorsed by the Conference.

Honourable Members, the crisis the country is faced with today places a grave responsibility on your shoulders. You saw remarkable levels of cooperation as also strong areas of dissent last year. These are the essential manifestation of a living democracy. I am sure you will set the tone for the

entire country to deal with its problems this year with exemplary conduct and leadership. The nation expects nothing less from its representatives here. You have to guide the nation with courage, wisdom and discipline.

I commend you to your tasks in this session and wish you all success.

Jai Hind.

ADDRESS TO PARLIAMENT—21 FEBRUARY 1994

Lok Sabha	—	Tenth Lok Sabha
Session	—	First Session of the Year
President of India	—	Dr. Shankar Dayal Sharma
Vice-President of India	—	Shri K. R. Narayanan
Prime Minister of India	—	Shri P. V. Narasimha Rao
Speaker, Lok Sabha	—	Shri Shivraj V. Patil

HON'BLE MEMBERS,

I welcome you to this session of Parliament.

As I address you in the new year, I sense that the country is today in a frame of mind different from the one it was in this time last year. We faced many difficulties at the beginning of the year 1993 but our people displayed tremendous resilience as the year progressed and 1993 ended certainly on a note of optimism. There was steady progress on all fronts as evidenced from the improved law and order situation, a record foodgrains production, unprecedented levels of procurement, very high levels of foodgrains stocks, containment of the rate of inflation at a single digit level, comfortable foreign exchange reserves, considerable reduction in trade gap, buoyancy in exports, improved performance in certain essential areas of the infrastructure sector, and increased inflow of foreign investment both direct and portfolio. All these have symbolised and justified this emerging optimism. Clearly, we have regained our elan internally and our confidence globally. We have reason and justification to feel encouraged at the all round performance. But we still have a long way to go before we achieve the objectives we have set for ourselves in social and economic development. It is on this note of cautious optimism that Government approaches its tasks in 1994.

There has been overall improvement in the law and order situation. The situation in regard to insurgency in the North-East has shown improvement. The gains of last year in Punjab were consolidated. The elections to the Assemblies in five States and the National Capital Territory of Delhi were peaceful. Government is determined to consolidate the gains of this improvement and address the areas of concern that still remain.

Around this time last year the Ayodhya issue had cast its long shadow on the national scene. There was a great deal of concern over the possible fall-out of the demolition and the riots that followed. Thanks to the inherent wisdom and sagacity of the Indian people, the grim predictions that were being made have been proved wrong. The atmosphere has improved considerably and we can hope for a lasting solution to the dispute. Proceedings are continuing in the Supreme Court on the reference made to it under the Constitution. Government will take appropriate measures in the light of the opinion of the Supreme Court.

The Ayodhya issue is the most convincing demonstration in recent times of the danger inherent in mixing communalism and politics. It is of utmost importance to correct this aberration and keep both religion and politics in their legitimate domains. Our secular State demands nothing less. The issue needs to be debated fully and effective measures evolved. The Government will welcome suggestions in this regard.

In Jammu and Kashmir we pursue our policy of firm action against terrorism. The police and the security forces have gained considerable success during the year in their counter-terrorist operations. Steps have been taken to further improve their operational efficiency. Every effort is made to see that the maximum restraint is exercised in the use of force. The grave crisis that arose in the Hazratbal Shrine was handled by the administration and the security forces in a commendable manner, with the cooperation of the people. The resolution of this crisis demonstrated the efficacy of Government's approach of restraint. Whenever there has been any incident suggesting excessive use of force, an inquiry has been promptly instituted and action taken. Action against the terrorists is continuing in order to restore law and order. At the same time appropriate measures are being taken to tone up the administration. Development and economic activities have been intensified to generate employment opportunities. We are deeply concerned about the difficulties of the common people and the grievance redressal mechanism has been strengthened. We are also pursuing steps to bring about effective involvement of the people in dealing with matters which concern them. Jammu and Kashmir is an inalienable part of India and we shall foil any attempt to destabilise it either from across the border or from any other quarter.

In the North-East the setting up of the interim Bodoland Autonomous Council in pursuance of the Bodo Accord marks a positive step forward towards meeting the aspirations of the tribal population. Prompt action was taken by the Government of Assam in the districts of Kokrajhar and Bongaigaon when there was an outbreak of violence against the non-tribals. In Manipur, Government took action under article 356 of the Constitution following violence between Nagas and Kukis and general disruption of law

and order. This demonstrated the Government's will to curb disruptive elements effectively.

The National Commission on Human Rights has been set up with a former Chief Justice of India as its chairman. Members of the Commission include a former Judge of the Supreme Court and one former Chief Justice of a High Court. The setting up of the Commission is indicative of our continuing determination to deal with questions of human rights with promptitude and transparency. The Commission has started its work in right earnest.

In order to strengthen the accountability of the executive to Parliament, 17 Department related Standing Committees of Parliament were constituted in April, 1993 to make detailed examination of Bills, Demands for Grants, Annual Reports of the ministries and national basic long-term policy documents presented to the Houses. This will greatly facilitate the working of Parliament.

The country had its share of natural calamities. However, the unprecedented scale of damage in the Maharashtra earthquake stands out among these. In all these instances Government responded with commendable alertness and provided prompt relief. Governments of several other countries, the World Bank and other institutions promptly offered assistance and we are grateful to all of them. A massive reconstruction programme in the earthquake affected areas of Maharashtra is being taken up at an outlay of Rs. 1000 crores. Non-Governmental Organisations are being appropriately associated with the reconstruction programme.

The economic reforms introduced in 1991 gained momentum last year and have been pursued consistently. Still much more needs to be done. Government is aware that the reform is an irreversible and continuous process and needs to be implemented with determination and foresight, keeping the responses and circumstances in the country constantly in view. As a result of this approach, the progress of implementation has been steady and firm and based on a general consensus. We shall hasten with care.

Based on the performance and prospects of the public and private sectors, the area of reservation of the public sector has been trimmed and some more industries have been delicensed. The new Exim Policy announced on the 31st of March, 1993, attempted the streamlining of procedures and the liberalisation of exports in agriculture and services, where the country has a comparative advantage. The Budget for 1993-94 provided fiscal incentives for investments in thrust areas.

In drawing up the reform package, stress has been laid by the Government on reforms in the financial sector. The financial institutions

have necessarily to be restructured and strengthened to enable them to take on the new responsibility imposed by the expanded activity in the private sector. An important policy change was the unification of the exchange rate and the floating of the rupee in March, 1993. The fact that the rupee has remained steady since it was floated is testimony to the good judgement of the Government in the matter.

The basic economic indicators show that although the year started in a difficult environment, the performance of the economy during 1993-94 has been satisfactory. In 1992-93, the Gross Domestic Product is estimated to have grown by 4 per cent. In 1993-94, the Government expects the rate of growth to be maintained at about the same level. The inflation rate touched a low of below 6 per cent for a short period during this year, the highest level being 8.4 per cent.

Global investors have shown growing confidence in the Indian market. Direct Foreign Investment approved since the inception of the new Industrial Policy till the end of 1993 is now approximately Rs. 13,000 crores in terms of equity. The total investment in these projects is estimated to be of the order of Rs. 65,000 crores. The significant point of this investment is that the bulk of this, is proposed in sectors like power, oil refining, food processing, metallurgical industry, electrical equipment, chemicals, electronics and other priority areas. Only about 7 per cent of the proposed investment will be for products which could be categorised as consumer goods. The investment inflow will be spread over a period of 3-4 years which is the gestation period of the mega projects.

Government continues to lay a great deal of emphasis on export promotion. The results of changes in the trade policy coupled with the floating of the exchange rate and the general liberalisation of the economy have yielded results and exports have shown good growth recording an increase of around 20 per cent in dollar terms during April-December, 1993 compared to a little over 3 per cent in the corresponding period in 1992.

Government attaches the highest priority to development of agriculture. The timely provision of adequate and reasonably priced inputs and the creation of a structure that provides for the timely announcement of prices which in turn promotes higher production so as to meet fully the domestic needs of the country as well as exports, are the major objectives of the Government. In keeping with the overall strategy, the Plan outlay for the Department of Agriculture and Cooperation has been raised by 26.6 per cent from Rs. 1050 crores in 1992-93 to Rs. 1330 crores in 1993-94. The production of foodgrains during 1992-93 was 180 million tonnes which was more than the production in 1991-92 by 7.1 per cent. The *Kharif* foodgrains production in 1993-94 is expected to be 99 million tonnes. The prospects for *Rabi* are excellent.

Government is encouraging diversification of the agriculture sector through emphasis on horticulture, aquaculture, oilseeds, pulses and other commodities which have an export potential. This would be done without detriment to the interests of our own consumers. Steps are being taken to revitalise the rural cooperative credit system as also marketing, processing and other services essential to the farmers, particularly in the far-flung areas. Extension services would be broad-based keeping in view the new priorities in agriculture through greater involvement of the voluntary organisations.

As a measure of reducing poverty levels, our agricultural strategy would aim at increasing agricultural production in the rain-fed areas through an integrated strategy of soil and water conservation and increased use of agricultural inputs such as organics and bio-fertilisers and improved technology. During the Eighth Plan Rs. 1100 crores have been allocated for the restructured National Watershed Development Project for rain-fed areas. About 30 lakh hectares of land would be treated for sustainable production of food, fodder, fuel and fibre through dry land farming technology. Household production systems would diversify as a consequence and ultimately the income levels and employment opportunities for the watershed community would improve. The project would also enhance availability of groundwater resulting in drought proofing of the project areas. Nearly 2500 micro watersheds have been identified in rain-fed areas for development, and work on these has started.

The manufacturing capacity of nitrogenous fertilisers has been increased and more is being planned. The availability of raw materials required for fertiliser production within the country being limited, efforts are being made to set up joint ventures abroad, particularly in the Gulf and West Asia. Government will continue to take all measures required to bring about a balanced application of soil nutrients so that production levels are sustained.

As part of the Agriculture Policy, States have been advised to remove all intra and inter-state restrictions on the movement of foodgrains.

Government's commitment to safeguard the interests of the consumer remains as strong as ever. The Central issue price for the Revamped Public Distribution System areas continues to be kept at a price lower by Rs. 500 per metric tonne compared to the prices in the general Public Distribution System, to enhance affordability by the poor. At the inception of the scheme in 1992, 10,580 new fair price shops were estimated as required to be opened in the Revamped Public Distribution System areas to strengthen the delivery system. Against this, 11,681 new fair price shops have been opened in these areas, going beyond the target. New storage space of 1,81,296 tonnes has also been created or hired since the inception of the

scheme. A mid-term review of the Revamped Public Distribution System has revealed that nearly 1.5 million tonnes more of foodgrains went to the rural areas than before the inception of the scheme, thus adding a new rural dimension to the public distribution system. With a record food stock holding of 22 million tonnes in the central pool reached on 1st January 1994, resulting from stepped up procurement efforts, Government is comfortably placed to augment the coverage further in these areas, should it become necessary.

It is Government's determination that no vulnerable section of the population—be it women, children, minorities, Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes or Backward Classes—should remain outside the mainstream of development. In all areas of development of the poor, resource allocations were enhanced during 1993-94 compared to the previous year. The revised outlay for the Ministry of Rural Development went up by 56 per cent while the plan outlay of the Welfare Ministry was raised from Rs. 820 crores to Rs. 980 crores. The Jawahar Rozgar Yojana has been strengthened in 120 most backward districts. The subsidies under the Integrated Rural Development Programme were enhanced by Rs. 1000 per household. The improved Tool Kits to Rural Artisans programme started in 1992-93 was extended in 1993-94 to 100 more districts, thus covering in all 162 districts in the country benefiting 2,30,000 rural artisans. Comprehensive programmes for the welfare and development of the weavers were evolved. They include housing, work sheds, handloom development centres, quality dyeing units, training in improved practices and provision of working capital. These programmes with a total outlay of Rs. 1372 crores were started during the year. The scheme for Handloom Development Centres and Quality Dyeing Units launched towards the end of 1993 seeks to merge and expand existing units and establish new ones. Against the 1993 target of 120 Centres and 20 Units, 213 Centres and 94 Units have been approved. Twenty-Five Centres and 25 Units have already started operating.

Government has formulated three new and innovative schemes to benefit the poor, particularly rural women and urban youth.

The Employment Assurance Scheme introduced in 1,752 of the most backward and remote blocks of the country, where seventeen crores of the country's poor people live, will provide assured wage employment for 100 days during the lean agricultural season to the rural labour. This scheme thus expands rural employment to fuller levels.

The Mahila Samridhi Yojana will empower rural women by enabling them to gain and exercise control over their own earnings and household resources. Already, more than 4 lakh women have opened accounts under this scheme in rural post offices. This scheme, along with the Rashtriya Mahila Kosh, would greatly enhance opportunities for self-employment among rural women.

To provide sustained employment to the educated urban youth in micro enterprises, a Rozgar Yojana has been launched. About 1,95,000 applications have been received so far from youth in different States. So far, 41,275 applications have been processed and recommended to banks and about 2,000 of them have also been sanctioned. During the current year, the scheme will cover 40,000 beneficiaries and from 1994-95 onwards it is intended to cover 2.20 lakh beneficiaries every year, thus, covering in all 7 lakh beneficiaries during the rest of the Eighth Plan Period. The Reserve Bank of India has been instructed to support the programme fully. The scheme provides for 22.5 per cent reservation for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and 27 per cent for the Other Backward Classes with preference for women.

A significant role has been envisaged for Non-Governmental Organisations in all these programmes to generate awareness and for their effective implementation.

To monitor the progress of implementation of the programmes of the weaker sections and to provide the direction and thrust required, the Prime Minister has set up a Special Cell in the Prime Minister's Office. This Special Cell will receive feedback from the implementing Departments and also information based on field visits and independent evaluations so as to remove all possible bottlenecks in the programmes. A Special Committee of Secretaries responsible for the implementation of these three programmes has also been set up to supervise the coordinated implementation of these programmes in the field.

Communication facilities will be further extended in rural areas. In 1993-94, 46,800 Panchayats will be connected by telephone. It is proposed to provide public telephone to 72,000 villages during 1994-95.

In the schemes for the welfare of Scheduled Castes, the allocation under Special Central Assistance for the Special Component Plan was augmented in 1993 and its scope expanded to include schemes for infrastructure development in areas with fifty per cent or more Scheduled Caste population.

An important landmark of the year was the passing of the National Commission for Safai Karmacharis Act which would help the rapid implementation of the liberation and rehabilitation of the safai karmacharis. The National Commission is being constituted.

Government is fully alive to the situation arising from atrocities against the Scheduled Castes in certain parts of the country. Protection to the Scheduled Castes under the law as well as the effective implementation of programmes of socio-economic development meant for them would be ensured. During 1992-93, nearly 21 lakh Scheduled Caste families and

8 lakh Scheduled Tribe families were assisted to cross the poverty line under the 20 Point Programme. During 1993-94, the number of assisted families is likely to reach 27 lakh Scheduled Caste families and 9 lakh Scheduled Tribe families.

A scheme of Educational Complexes in areas where tribal female literacy is very low was initiated during the year. Thirteen such Complexes have so far been sanctioned. The turnover of Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India rose from Rs. 22 crores in 1991-92 to Rs. 86 crores in 1992-93. This is expected to be much higher in the current year.

The National Backward Classes Finance and Development Corporation made significant advances during the current year. During 1993 it sanctioned Rs. 80 crores as loans. In the coming year it proposes to double its operations.

The long awaited reservation of vacancies for Other Backward Classes in the services under the Government of India became a reality on 8th September, 1993 when the present Government issued orders for 27 per cent reservation for Other Backward Classes. With this, one of the most important aspirations of the Other Backward Classes of the country has been met.

The work relating to the publication of the works of Baba Saheb Ambedkar in regional languages was taken forward and two volumes each were brought out in Hindi, Tamil and Gujarati, with the work in the other languages proceeding well. Eight Chairs have been sanctioned in different Universities for undertaking research in the philosophy of Baba Saheb.

A new Wakf Bill 1993 has been introduced in Parliament in August, 1993 replacing the existing Wakf Act, 1954 and the Wakf (Amendment) Act, 1984. This Bill, *inter-alia*, provides for a more democratic composition of the Wakf Board with provision of Wakf Tribunals to decide issues relating to Wakf matters and for better protection and management of Wakf properties. A National Minorities Finance and Development Corporation will become operational this year with an authorised share capital of Rs. 500 crores for promoting the economic development of the minorities. The modalities are being worked out.

In my last address to you I had referred to the review of the 1986 National Policy on Education undertaken in 1992 and the modifications effected. Government continues to give very high priority to literacy and primary education based on the innovative strategies of Total Literacy Campaigns backed by Post Literacy Campaigns and a new district-specific and community oriented approach to primary education. All the 18 districts of Kerala and Pondicherry* have achieved total literacy. In the 32 districts which have already successfully concluded the Total Literacy Campaigns, Post Literacy Campaigns, have been launched to ensure that neo-literates

* Now known as Puducherry.

do not lapse into illiteracy. At present 238 Total Literacy Campaigns are going on in 258 districts.

The new District Primary Education Programme lays emphasis on participatory planning and management and focuses on the education of girls. It seeks to enhance school effectiveness through inputs in teachers' training and decentralised management. India played host recently to the Education for All summit of the nine high population countries of the world when our commitment as well as that of the international community to achieving Education for All by the turn of the century was reaffirmed. On this occasion the Prime Minister announced Government's decision to raise the outlay on education to 6 per cent of the GDP by the turn of the century. This will be kept in view while formulating the Ninth Five year Plan. Further, through disaggregated target setting and decentralised management Government aims to achieve its objective of Education for All.

On account of sustained efforts of the Government of India and the State Governments in the implementation of the National Family Planning Programme, the annual rate of growth of population is showing a declining trend. The annual average exponential rate of growth in 1981-91 was 2.14 per cent. The annual rate of increase has come down to 1.9 per cent in 1992. The Crude Birth Rate which was 41.7 per thousand in 1951-61 has come down to 29 per thousand in 1992. The Crude Death Rate which was 22.8 in 1951-61 has come down to 10 in 1992. The Total Fertility Rate which was 5.97 in 1951-61 has come down to 3.6 in 1991. The Infant Mortality Rate for the country as a whole has come down from 146 per thousand live births in 1961 to 79 in 1992. While these are significant achievements, yet the increase in numbers is staggering. Government attaches the highest importance to the reduction in the rate of growth of population. There is a national consensus to promote Family Welfare. Multi-dimensional and multi-sectoral efforts involving State Governments, opinion leaders, Non-Governmental Organisations and all sections of the society are essential. All political parties must unanimously exhort the people to adopt the small family norm and transform the family planning programme into a mass movement. The National Development Council (NDC) has endorsed the recommendations of the Committee on population set up by it earlier. The NDC also decided that wider consultations should take place on the future course of action needed for the implementation of the recommendations of the NDC Committee with Chief Ministers and opinion makers. This will be done shortly.

We are aware of the linkages between the development process and the protection of the environment. The need for the conservation and wise use of natural resources is reflected in our major river cleaning and pollution abatement programmes, as in our forest and wildlife policies. While participating in the continuing international debate on bio-diversity, climate

change and desertification, we have kept in focus the basic issue raised in the Rio Summit of 1992 of access to resources and technology. Within the Government, our development efforts will take full note of all our environmental concerns.

The Space programmes have made steady progress. We had a failure in the flight of the Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle, but this has been put to good use. The data collected has been analysed and it has proven the effectiveness of complex systems involved. The next flight of the Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle is planned for August-September, 1994. There has also been progress in the development of the Indian Geo-Synchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle, which would enable launch of INSAT class of satellites some years hence. The successful launch and commissioning of INSAT-2B last year, within a year of commissioning INSAT-2A, is a demonstration of our capabilities. INSAT-2B has enabled Doordarshan to augment its services with five satellite channels. This has strengthened the programmes telecast by Doordarshan in regional languages.

India has a strong and large scientific and industrial infrastructure. It also has demonstrated capability in several high technology fields. In this context I am sure Honourable Members will join me in applauding the successful demonstration of high technology in the launch of 'Agni' last Saturday. The pace of technological changes and the need to shift to technologies which are environment-compatible impose upon us various demands. Restrictions being placed on transfer of technology require us to rely even more on our own talents. Government is determined to give every encouragement for this to happen by tapping the great potential that the country possesses. In the context of the emerging economic scenario, the benefits of research will be harnessed for use by industry. A fillip will be given to exports of high technology products. The thrust will be on information technologies and genetic engineering and biotechnology. Advanced materials and devices for use of solar and other non-conventional energy sources will also be priority areas.

Our Armed Forces maintain their constant vigil on our borders to safeguard the territorial integrity of our country. The nation is proud of them and of the defence scientists and engineers who have contributed commendably to our defence preparedness. Progress in the indigenous development of arms and ammunition and the diversification of the defence production units is proceeding apace.

In addition to their normal duties, the armed forces have been assisting the civil authorities in maintaining law and order, whenever required and in counter-insurgency operations. They have also been helping in rescue and relief operations in times of natural disasters. Their performance in these areas has been exemplary. Government remains committed to providing

better facilities and conditions to serving and retired armed forces personnel. Those posted in field areas have recently been granted higher allowances. It has been decided to extend the benefit of the one-time increase scheme in pensions to an additional two lakh pensioners.

As a result of sustained international marketing, Government has succeeded in instilling confidence in the international community that India is among the safest tourism destinations of the world. This has resulted in an all time record of arrival of tourists in the months of December, 1993 and January, 1994 registering an increase of 23.8 per cent and 28.4 per cent respectively over the corresponding months in 1992 and 1993.

The foreign policy of the Government focussed during the last one year on securing our economic interests in our relations with countries abroad while continuing to promote our political and security interests. The significance of our economic reforms was effectively conveyed abroad.

Our relations with our neighbours continued to be cordial, and our interaction in various fields with Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal and Sri Lanka recorded good progress during the year. In the case of Pakistan, however, its continuing support for terrorism and subversion in J&K and anti-Indian activities world-wide seriously hampered our efforts at normalising relations. The Prime Minister offered Pakistan a dialogue aimed at establishing good-neighbourly relations as enshrined in the Simla Agreement. Bilateral talks have since taken place, but the stridency of Pakistan's anti-Indian statements has grown, adversely affecting efforts at improving bilateral ties. There are no quarrels between us and the people of Pakistan. We feel that for good relations between our countries the Government of Pakistan should give up its negative approach and reciprocate our desire to normalise India-Pakistan relations in accordance with the Simla Agreement.

Our relations with China have improved markedly. The Prime Minister's visit to China in September 1993, and the signing of the Agreement on the Maintenance of Peace and Tranquility along the Line of Actual Control have brought them to a new stage of development. The Expert Group set up under this Agreement held its first meeting recently, reflecting the desire of the both sides to maintain and continue the interaction on this complex issue.

India values SAARC as an instrument of regional cooperation consistent with the objectives of its Charter. The Prime Minister attended the SAARC Summit in Dhaka last year. SAARC has recorded progress in dealing with certain important issues of common interest such as poverty, terrorism, population growth, problems relating to the status of women, children, youth and drugs and psychotropic substances. We continue to play an active role in SAARC with a view to promoting its socio-economic and other objectives in accordance with the SAARC Charter.

Our interaction with the United States has traditionally ranged over a number of areas from Education and Science and Technology to Culture and Sports. We have also cooperated in the UN on issues relating to disarmament such as the comprehensive test ban treaty. The response from the United States to our economic liberalisation policies has been very positive and the U.S. investments in India in the last two years were very substantial. We look forward to working with the United States towards mutual understanding, including on those issues on which such understanding needs enhancement. This will reflect the vibrant democratic and secular ideals of our two countries.

Relations with the Russian Federation, drawing upon the rich traditions of our friendship of the past, continued with mutual understanding and cooperation. Despite certain difficulties the two countries face, cooperation in the political, economic, commercial and other areas was sought to be promoted by both sides. The goodwill and understanding that underpins our relations reinforce our joint efforts at identifying possibilities of further cooperation in various areas in today's changed context.

Special attention was given to strengthening relations with the Central Asian region. The Prime Minister paid very successful visits to Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan in 1993. The Uzbek and Kazakh Presidents also visited India during the past year. A number of accords have been signed between India and these two countries in fields ranging from political cooperation and cooperation in science and technology to trade, civil aviation and culture.

A concerted effort was made to forge a new era of closer cooperation with ASEAN and East Asian countries. New economic linkages were established and trade increased. The commencement of a sectoral dialogue between India and the ASEAN was a notable development. The Prime Minister's visit to Thailand in April, 1993 gave a new impetus to Indo-Thai relations. India-Singapore relations were qualitatively upgraded and Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong of Singapore visited India as Chief Guest at our Republic Day celebrations in January this year. Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad of Malaysia and President Soeharto of Indonesia also visited India in December, 1993. Our ties with Vietnam were reinforced with the visit of the Vice-President to Vietnam in September, 1993. The Government continued to make sustained efforts to further enhance economic and other linkages with Japan. The Prime Minister's visit to the Republic of Korea in September, 1993, with a view to lending further momentum to bilateral economic ties with that country, received a positive response.

Our relations with the Gulf countries, traditionally cordial, are now marked by increasing economic interaction. The Prime Minister's visits to Oman and Iran in September, 1993 laid the foundations of an expanding relationship for mutual economic benefit.

We welcome the signing of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements between Israel and the PLO in September, 1993 as a notable step towards peace and stability in West Asia and the restoration of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people.

The importance attached by India and the European Union to further developing mutually beneficial relations in diverse fields was symbolised by a Cooperation Agreement on Partnership and Development concluded on December 20, 1993 and the Indo-EU Joint Statement on Political Dialogue. High level dignitaries who visited India from Europe during the past year included the President of Ireland, the King of Sweden and the Prime Minister of the Netherlands. The Prime Minister recently paid a very successful visit to Davos in Switzerland and to Germany. At Davos the Prime Minister addressed a worldwide audience of industrialists, political leaders and academicians. As a result, the appreciation of India's policies and potential has grown. The visit to Germany has given a further impetus to bilateral ties and has strengthened economic cooperation.

The state visits which I undertook to Ukraine, Turkey and Hungary in July, 1993 were a manifestation of our desire to consolidate our cooperative ties with these countries.

During the year we had wide interaction with countries in sub-Saharan Africa including visits at the level of President and Prime Minister from Burkina Faso, Mauritius, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe. We have noted the positive developments in South Africa and look forward to the early establishment of majority rule there.

India continues to play an active role in shaping the global agenda on issues pertaining to political and security matters, economic and social development, human rights, environment and population. In the various meetings of the United Nations, the Non-Aligned Movement or other international bodies on these issues, we have taken a lead in articulating the specific concerns of the developing countries with a view to promoting a global consensus.

1993 was a year of consolidating the gains of the economic reforms and the political initiatives of the Government. We entered 1994 with the optimism of accelerating our pace of economic growth, strengthened by a reassuring verdict of the people in favour of reforms and against the forces of communalism.

I am confident your debates and deliberations in the course of this session and beyond will take the nation forward in fulfilling the aspirations of the people. I commend you to your tasks and wish you all success.

Jai Hind.

ADDRESS TO PARLIAMENT—13 FEBRUARY 1995

Lok Sabha	—	Tenth Lok Sabha
Session	—	First Session of the Year
President of India	—	Dr. Shankar Dayal Sharma
Vice-President of India	—	Shri K. R. Narayanan
Prime Minister of India	—	Shri P. V. Narasimha Rao
Speaker, Lok Sabha	—	Shri Shivraj V. Patil

HON'BLE MEMBERS,

I welcome you to this session of Parliament.

As I stand to address you this year I note that the optimism and self-assurance evident last year has been vindicated. The projections made have been fulfilled in substantial measure and it can be said with confidence now that the country has made the turnaround initiated by the new economic and other policies of the Government. The people have responded handsomely by reasserting their faith in social stability. Political parties have also contributed to strengthening democracy and fundamental values such as the rule of law. Our country has improved its standing in the global community and now stands poised to become one of the rapidly growing economies of the world.

The law and order situation continued to be under control in 1994-95. There was no major communal riot in the country and incidents of violence were fewer. Polls in Goa, Sikkim, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Maharashtra have been peaceful. Government is determined to be watchful, particularly in respect of the secessionist and communal forces that pose a threat to the unity and integrity of the country.

On the Ayodhya issue, one of the noteworthy developments is that the Supreme Court delivered its judgement on the reference made to it. It has upheld the validity of the Acquisition Act, but not the provisions relating to abatement of the pending suits. The disputed area is vested in the Central Government which is now to act as a statutory receiver for maintaining the *status quo* until the disposal of the revived suits. Compliance with the decision of the Court is essential. The judgement recognises the possibility of a resolution of the dispute through negotiations. It is of

utmost importance that the improved atmosphere leads to a lasting solution to this dispute and we collectively ensure that communalism does not vitiate politics.

A separate Department of J&K Affairs has been set up under the Prime Minister. Vigorous efforts have been made to step up the pace of the development and economic activity in the State. Government has ensured availability of adequate funds to the State and will regularly assess its needs sympathetically, in terms of the resources required for its developmental needs. The objective of revival of the democratic process is also being pursued. The delimitation of constituencies is being done and the work of revision of the voters list has been taken up by the Election Commission. Operations against militants are being intensified. The attempts by militants to disrupt the Amarnath Yatra were successfully foiled by the administration. In spite of the trying conditions, the security forces are showing restraint and are sensitive to the feelings of the local people. Delegations of diplomats and Parliamentarians visited the State and interacted freely with various sections of the people. This continuing transparency has generated overall confidence.

In the North-East, Government is pursuing its policy of dealing firmly with insurgent activities. At the same time, efforts are being made to encourage these disruptive elements to abjure violence and join the national mainstream. The Government of Mizoram signed an Accord with Hmar People's Convention resulting in surrender of militants. There has been a similar surrender by ULFA militants in Assam.

An agreement was signed in September, 1994 providing for a Jharkhand Area Autonomous Council. A new Bill incorporating the provisions of the agreement has been passed by the Bihar Assembly.

Government is seized of the issues that have arisen in the hill areas agitation in Uttar Pradesh and is confident that given patience and sympathetic handling by all concerned, acceptable solutions will be found.

The National Human Rights Commission carried on its work with dedication. Government stands committed to its policy of promotion and preservation of human rights.

The economic reforms have brought about an upswing in the economy. During 1994-95, the gross domestic product, at constant prices, is expected to increase by 5.3 per cent, as against 4.3 per cent last year. Industrial revival started with an 8 per cent increase in production in the first half of 1994-95. Foreign Exchange reserves rose from \$ 15.1 billion as on 31st March, 1994 to over \$ 19 billion as in the last week of January, 1995. Government was in a position to repay about \$ 1.1 billion to the IMF ahead of schedule. As a consequence of the strong revival of the industrial sector,

imports increased by 23.9 per cent. Exports have also grown by 16.9 per cent in dollar terms. The rupee continued to remain stable and was made convertible on Current Account.

Government is concerned about the increase in prices, especially of articles of mass consumption. The price situation is being watched closely and measures are being taken to prevent shortages. In the case of some commodities, like sugar and edible oil, prices had risen mainly due to insufficient domestic production. The comfortable foreign exchange position has enabled imports to augment supplies and control the rise in the prices. In the case of wheat and rice, open market sales out of public stocks of foodgrains held by the Food Corporation of India have also been undertaken. The Public Distribution System and Revamped Public Distribution System are also being used to provide assistance in making essential commodities available. Further efforts will be continued in this direction. Remunerative minimum support prices would continue to be assured to the farmers to safeguard the country's food security. As far as essential commodities are concerned, Government will pursue the twin objectives of ensuring adequate availability and fair prices, with extra concessions for the poor.

The wide ranging industrial de-regulation has evoked commendable response from entrepreneurs. More than 17,000 investment intentions have been filed since July, 1991 totalling investment of over Rs. 3,50,000 crores with potential for direct employment for 3.4 million persons. Nearly 20 per cent investment intentions have so far been implemented and another 20 per cent are at various stages of implementation. These are estimated to generate direct employment to the extent of 1.4 million persons. Disbursements by our major financial institutions from April to December, 1994 have shown a 39 per cent increase over the same period in the previous year. The growth of domestic initiative has generated interest amongst foreign investors and collaborators. The confidence exhibited by foreign investors in the skills and resources of Indian partners is evident from the large foreign direct investment in joint ventures to the extent of 80 per cent. Cumulative foreign direct investment approvals since 1991 have exceeded Rs. 20,000 crores, the bulk of it in long gestation infrastructure projects. Government continued with its policy of reforms and de-regulation in other sectors. The new Drug Policy and the Telecom Policy are steps in this direction.

The small scale sector is an important component of our industrial base, its production level being Rs. 2,41,648 crores and generating an employment of 139 lakh persons. It recorded a growth of 7.1 per cent last year. Exports from this sector are around Rs. 24,000 crores, accounting for nearly 35 per cent of total exports. To meet the credit needs of this sector, the Reserve Bank of India had issued guidelines including the adoption of a single window scheme in 85 districts where small scale units are

concentrated, and setting up of specialised bank branches. Government will enhance support to this sector further through liberal assistance for technology upgradation.

A high power committee under the Chairmanship of the Prime Minister has adopted an action plan for revitalising and improving khadi and village industries and generating additional employment for 2 million persons. A special employment programme would be undertaken in 50 selected districts and intensive development of 125 blocks in the country would be promoted.

Employment for the educated youth is a prime concern of the Government. The Prime Minister's Rozgar Yojana which is being implemented from 2nd October, 1993, was designed to provide self-employment for youth in the urban areas. It has been now extended to cover the rural areas also from this year. During the current year, 2.3 lakh educated youths will benefit from this programme, as against 31,797 last year. Banks have sanctioned loans to 69,483 entrepreneurs till 31st December, 1994. Government will provide loan to 7 lakh youths to generate 10 lakh employment opportunities before the end of the Eighth Plan period.

The production of nitrogenous fertilizers is expected to reach an all time record of 78.2 lakh tonnes in 1994-95, in terms of nutrients. Production of phosphatic fertilizers is expected to increase from 18.5 lakh tonnes in 1993-94 to 23 lakh tonnes in 1994-95, in terms of nutrients. Government has continued with its efforts to increase the domestic production of fertilizers with five new plants likely to commence production shortly.

Government has continued to give high priority to the development of the agriculture sector. The production of foodgrains is expected to increase from 182 million tonnes last year to 185 million tonnes in the current year. Disbursement of agricultural credit was Rs. 15,100 crores during 1993-94 and is expected to reach a level of Rs. 16,700 crores during 1994-95. The area covered under irrigation is expected to go up by 2.77 million hectares in 1994-95 bringing the total area under irrigation to 87.82 million hectares. The consumption of fertilizer nutrients during 1994-95 is estimated at 136 lakh tonnes showing an increase of about 10 per cent over the consumption of 1993-94.

Government has been promoting diversification schemes in rural areas to provide higher incomes from occupations like horticulture and fishing. Accordingly, horticulture has been given an outlay of Rs. 1,000 crores in the current Five Year Plan as against an outlay of only Rs. 24 crores in the last Five Year Plan. Fish production, which recorded an all time high of about 46.8 lakh tonnes in 1993-94, is likely to reach a level of 47.5 lakh tonnes during 1994-95. There has been a three-fold increase in export of agricultural products during the last five years.

Rural development is the central concern of all the developmental efforts of the Government. Sharply targeted rural development programmes underpin its employment strategy in poverty eradication. The central plan allocations for rural development schemes have been progressively enhanced during the last three years and the current year's allocation of Rs. 7,010 crores is the highest ever in our planning history. This large outlay goes to provide additional wage employment as well as self-employment through mobilisation of institutional finances on a large scale. Rupees 5,055 crores go to provide employment through the Jawahar Rozgar Yojana and the Employment Assurance Scheme. For the Employment Assurance Scheme, an amount of Rs. 1,200 crores has been earmarked during the current year. This programme has been expanded from 1,778 most backward blocks of the country to 2,279 blocks in the current year. In addition to the Jawahar Rozgar Yojana, an intensive JRY Programme focusses on 120 chronically backward districts. All these schemes together are expected to generate 1,470 million mandays of employment in the current year.

The asset-cum-loan based Integrated Rural Development Programme which provides self-employment would cover about 2 million rural poor households from this year. The district and block level credit plans are being coordinated more effectively and the average investment per household is being increased to Rs. 12,000. Rupees 2,000 crores of institutional credit would be mobilised through a subsidy of Rs. 1098 crores. These programmes will increasingly cater for the rural literate youth. Simultaneously, the Programme for the Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas is being extended to all the districts and will now provide Rs. 25,000 against Rs. 15,000 hitherto, to women's groups to help them pursue economic activities and enhance group action in matters like literacy and family welfare, leading to women's empowerment.

As stipulated, by April, 1994, all States amended their existing Panchayati Raj laws or have legislated new laws. Now it is necessary to hold elections and constitute Panchayats at all levels. Some States have already made a beginning. In order to fulfil the high expectations of the people, the Panchayats must be empowered with financial and administrative delegation. I call upon all the States to complete the Panchayat electoral process without delay.

Government recognises the need for an integrated programme to deal with the problems of urban poverty. This programme would include scientific disposal of urban wastes of all kinds. Voluntary organisations would be fully involved in its design and implementation. Government is seeking to formulate a scheme for 345 Class II towns of the country that have populations ranging from 50,000 to 1 lakh.

The response from the States to the Special Component Plan for the Scheduled Castes has been encouraging. The Central allocation to States to supplement their efforts this year is Rs. 273.85 crores. An important step

taken last year was the constitution of the National Commission for Safai Karmacharis, to oversee the programmes aimed at the liberation and rehabilitation of the Safai Karmacharis. The Commission would address itself to rehabilitation programmes such as training, better mobilisation of institutional finances and the need for enhanced unit costs.

Efforts to strengthen and expand economic support programmes to the poor by the provision of margin money and loans through the National Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Finance and Development Corporation, have been stepped up as has been its authorised share capital from Rs. 125 crores to Rs. 300 crores.

The first step in providing for reservation of 27 per cent for the OBCs under the Government of India was taken in September, 1993 and is under implementation. In order to ensure that the full benefits of this measure are available to the OBCs, Government relaxed the standards required for OBC candidates to be on par with the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe candidates and as a result, 1,873 additional OBC candidates qualified for the Civil Services Preliminary Examinations, 1994. Government has also decided to extend the 3 years' age relaxation principle and to allow 3 additional attempts.

The National Minorities Development and Finance Corporation became operational in September, 1994 with an authorised share capital of Rs. 500 crores to promote the economic development activities of the backward sections amongst the minorities and to assist the upgradation of their technical and entrepreneurial skills. An amount of Rs. 25 crores has been provided during the current year to the Maulana Azad Education Foundation. The Foundation will set up residential schools for girls in low literacy slum and rural areas.

Certain new measures are under consideration of the Government for the protection of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes and the disabled. These are inclusion of the SCs and STs (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989 and the Protection of Civil Rights Act, 1955 in the IX Schedule of the Constitution, setting up of a Commission under Article 339(1) of the Constitution to review the development strategies like the Tribal Sub-Plan and other measures presently in operation for the welfare and development of the Scheduled Tribes so as to improve upon these strategies, legislation to provide equal opportunities to the handicapped in areas like education, vocational training and employment placements, and a Trust for the Welfare and protection of the mentally retarded.

In matters relating to women and children, Government's approach has been to provide an enabling policy environment in which their concerns, particularly those of the girl child, are the central focus of planning. Priority is given to the empowerment of women, support services and

nutrition programmes. The noteworthy achievements in this process have been the adoption of the National Nutrition Policy, the setting up of the National Nutrition Council and the National Creche Fund and implementation of the Mahila Samridhi Yojana. The Mahila Samridhi Yojana has had an impressive response. By December, 1994, 72 lakh accounts had been opened with a total deposit of Rs. 65.90 crores. The National Creche Fund will assist in starting 1800 additional creches by the end of the Eighth Plan to provide day-care services to 45,000 children of working women and ailing mothers.

As part of the effort at covering the entire country with the Integrated Child Development Services programme, it is proposed to cover 1000 new blocks through Community Nutrition Centres in one lakh villages, as a first step, during 1995-96.

To achieve the goal of Education for All by 2000 AD, Government will progressively raise the allocation to education so as to reach the target of 6 per cent of GDP. Total Literacy Campaigns are now operational in 312 districts in the country covering about 50 million learners in the 9-45 years age group. With the emergence of Total Literacy Campaigns, it is now being perceived that universal adult literacy is an achievable task.

The Government is determined to eradicate Child Labour progressively in all employments and, in hazardous industries, by the year 2000 AD. A National Authority for Elimination of Child Labour has been set up to coordinate actions of the core sectors of development administration such as education, rural development, women and child development, health and labour to devise integrated programmes that would bring about conditions conducive to withdrawal of children from employment and place them firmly in schools.

We are today in the forefront in the practical application of the space technology in vital areas. The Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle D2 and the Augmented Satellite Launch Vehicle-ASLV D4 demonstrated our capacity to place satellites into polar and near earth orbits. Our INSAT class of satellites are providing services in telecommunication, TV broadcasting, meteorology and disaster warning. The next satellite in this series, INSAT 2C, and the remote sensing series satellite, IRS IC, are planned for launch in 1995. It is heartening to note that India has been selected for the setting up of a UN Centre for Space Science and Technology Education to cater to the needs of the Asia Pacific region.

To meet the aspirations of the people to view programmes in their own language, Doordarshan has reconfigured its satellite service. Out of 14 channels, 11 satellite channels are now exclusively for programmes in regional languages.

The country continued to make strides in its efforts to harness the power of the atom for peaceful purposes. With the completion of the sixth Indian designed and constructed nuclear power reactor—the second unit of

the Kakrapar Atomic Power Station, which achieved criticality on January 8 this year—the country once again proved its self-reliance in this advanced technology. There were also spin-offs from the use of nuclear technology, such as the production of nuclear grade graphite, fabrication of medical lasers and development of parallel supercomputers.

Our Armed Forces maintained their vigilance in defending our international borders and maritime interests. They also made valuable contributions in counter-insurgency operations in Jammu and Kashmir and in the North-East.

Abroad, the Army won plaudits for its contributions to the UN peace-keeping effort in Somalia, ably supported by the Indian Air Force and Navy, especially in the de-induction of forces.

In the conduct of international relations, we can view the past year with satisfaction. Existing friendships were reinforced and new understanding created around the world of our objectives and policies.

Our continuing support for the United Nations, which observes its 50th anniversary this year, is based on the premise that it is the most effective instruments for the realisation of humanity's common goals. India's initiatives at the United Nations included the need for the democratisation of the world body and the enlargement of the UN Security Council's membership to reflect contemporary realities. We proposed a Fourth Special Session on Disarmament to address post-Cold War issues of global security.

In our own region, we will be hosting the next SAARC Summit in April this year and look forward to working with our SAARC colleagues to further strengthen regional cooperation.

During the past year, closer bilateral relations with our neighbours continued to secure our attention. We welcome the new Governments which assumed office in Sri Lanka and Nepal through multi-party democratic elections. We look forward to closer understanding and increasing co-operation with them, as with all our other neighbours.

Pakistan has however continued on its distressing path of confrontation with India and unacceptable interference in our internal affairs. We have taken repeated initiatives with Pakistan to settle all unresolved issues between our two countries according to the Simla Agreement. Our offer of such a dialogue still stands. Meanwhile, we regret the unilateral steps taken by Pakistan to close their office in Bombay* and the Indian Consultate General in Karachi, thereby creating greater barriers to people-to-people contacts, and commercial, cultural and other relations.

The Government has worked to consolidate understanding and co-operation with old and new friends abroad. My State visits to Bulgaria and Romania renewed the close ties that existed for decades between India and countries of Eastern Europe.

* Now known as Mumbai.

Our Vice-President visited Australia, South Africa and China and the visits reinforced our ties with these countries.

The Prime Minister's visits to the United Kingdom, USA, Russia, Vietnam and Singapore contributed significantly to the all round enhancement of our ties with them.

The visit to the USA, which resulted in greater mutual understanding on matters of concern to the two countries, opened a new chapter in bilateral relationship. It laid the groundwork for resurgent India-US interaction not only in the political, economic and commercial fields but in other areas as well.

The Prime Minister's visits to the United Kingdom, Vietnam and Singapore testified to our desire to reinforce ties with our European and Asian partners.

India-Russia ties gained in substance and momentum during the last year. The Moscow Declaration on the Protection of the Interests of Pluralistic States signed by President Yeltsin and our Prime Minister was a notable contribution to the conduct of Inter-State relations.

We recently welcomed President Nelson Mandela of South Africa as the Chief Guest for our Republic Day celebrations this year. His visit marks a new chapter in the building up of India-South Africa co-operation in various fields.

Our efforts to effectively project abroad the success of our economic management, on which depends the well-being of our people, and the beneficial changes that have taken place as a result of economic liberalisation, have received excellent response in countries abroad.

The momentum gathered by the country through these policies has to be sustained to ensure that the benefits that have started accruing are not frittered away. A combined effort is necessary to strengthen the confidence of investors in our economy and of the people, particularly the underprivileged, in the economic reforms. The tone and tenor of your debuts reflect and greatly influence both. I am confident you will set the pace with due regard to these objectives. I commend you to your tasks and wish you success.

Jai Hind.

ADDRESS TO PARLIAMENT—26 FEBRUARY 1996

Lok Sabha	—	Tenth Lok Sabha
Session	—	First Session of the Year
President of India	—	Dr. Shankar Dayal Sharma
Vice-President of India	—	Shri K. R. Narayanan
Prime Minister of India	—	Shri P. V. Narasimha Rao
Speaker, Lok Sabha	—	Shri Shivraj V. Patil

HONOURABLE MEMBERS,

I welcome you to this Session of Parliament.

The 10th Lok Sabha has accomplished substantially its tasks and the country has been guided through momentous changes in every sphere. I take this opportunity to congratulate all of you for your dedicated service to the nation.

The Nation celebrated the 125th Birth Anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi which was marked by a large number of significant activities in different parts of the country and abroad. An important landmark was the institution of the Gandhi Peace Prize for Social, Political and Economic Transformation through Non-violence and other Gandhian methods. The first Gandhi Peace Prize was conferred upon Dr. Julius K. Nyerere. The Anniversary concluded with a solemn function on 31st January, 1996 at the Bapu Kutir in the Valmiki Mandir Complex in New Delhi where Gandhiji used to stay.

The law and order situation in the country has been under control. Government would continue to exercise extreme vigilance in the coming months to ensure that relations between different communities and groups continue to be harmonious.

Terrorism and insurgency have been curbed. Separatist tendencies have been contained to a very large extent. In this context the performance of the security forces has been creditable. However, the incident of arms drop in Purulia in West Bengal has highlighted the need for constant vigilance. In this connection, investigations into the incident, and its national and international ramifications, are being pursued vigorously. Steps are being taken to ensure effective policing of the air corridors of the country.

In Jammu and Kashmir, due to the concerted drive by security forces against militants and foreign mercenaries, coupled with the acceleration of development activities, there is a perceptible change in the overall situation. The revival of political activities has been made possible. Parliament passed a balanced budget in 1995-96 and for the first time in many years the Plan outlay is expected to be spent fully on development schemes without any diversion for meeting the Non-Plan resources gap. Though Government had to seek further extension of President's Rule upto 17th July, 1996, it remains committed to the restoration of representative Government in the State at the earliest.

In the North-East several initiatives have been taken to tackle the economic backwardness of the region. The North-East Council has emerged as an effective institution for implementing developmental activities. The Sixth Schedule to the Constitution was amended for giving more powers to the Autonomous District Councils of Karbi Anglong and North Cachar Hills in Assam.

The economic scenario has been continuously improving. The Gross Domestic Product has shown a substantially faster rate of growth in the years subsequent to 1991-92. In 1994-95, this had increased to 6.3 per cent. Gross Domestic Savings at current prices improved in 1994-95 and was 24.4 per cent of GDP. Industrial production increased by 12 per cent in the first 6 months of the current year over the corresponding period last year, showing a strong revival.

Along with this, exports have gone up further by 24.17 per cent in the first 8 months of the current financial year. Imports have also grown as a consequence of the overall growth of the economy, and the industrial sector in particular. Foreign exchange reserves are at a comfortable level of about \$ 16 billion.

The annual rate of inflation which had almost reached 17 per cent in August, 1991 has been controlled and in the current year, the inflation rate has been brought down to around 5 per cent which is the lowest in the last 7 years. As a result of the strong support to the agricultural sector, foodgrain production and stocks have reached very comfortable levels. The availability of various items of mass consumption has been maintained. The Public Distribution System has been strengthened and by introducing the Revamped Public Distribution System, additional concessions have been given for those living in the poorest areas of the country.

The small scale industries sector accounts for about 40 per cent of the output in manufacturing and 34 per cent of the country's total exports. It has recorded a growth of 10 per cent during 1994-95 and accounted for employment of 146 lakh persons by the end of 1994-95. Export of goods by this sector are estimated to have increased from Rs. 13,883 crore in 1991-92 to Rs. 26,400 crore in 1994-95.

In the khadi and village industries sector, sale have reached a level of over Rs. 4069 crore in 1994-95. This sector accounted for employment to 53.46 lakh persons in 1994-95. A Rs. 1000 crore consortium credit has been given to KVIC this year for the first time. Out of this, KVIC had sanctioned projects costing about Rs. 235 crore by the end of January 1996 to generate additional employment for about one lakh persons.

Our agricultural strategy has been to increase production through the best use of soil and water in an intergrated fashion. During the Eighth Plan, Rs. 1100 have been allocated for the restructured National Watershed Development Project for Rainfed Areas. The coverage of Drought Prone Areas Programme has also been increased to 946 blocks of 149 districts in 13 States. Coverage of the Desert Development Programme has been further extended to 227 blocks of 36 districts in 7 States. These programmes are being implemented with the active participation of the watershed community.

Foodgrain production in 1994-95 achieved a new record of 192 million tonnes. The production of sugar also reached a record level of nearly 145.85 lakh tonnes in 1994-95. Government has built up a buffer stock of 5 lakh tonnes of sugar this year, as a precaution against possible fluctuations in availability and prices.

Disbursement of agricultural credit through institutional agencies is expected to reach a level of Rs. 26,450 crore in 1995-96 as against Rs. 21,113 crore in 1994-95. The consumption of chemical fertilizers during 1994-95 was 135.64 lakh tonnes. It is expected to further increase to 156.64 lakh tonnes in 1995-96.

Government has been acutely sensitive to the needs of the poor. The programmes of direct alleviation of poverty have been expanded, as reflected in substantial increases in allocations for rural development, employment generation, housing, rural water supply, etc.

Under the Indira Awas Yojana, about 20 lakh houses were constructed between 1985-86 and 1994-95. However, in 1995-96 this programme has been further stepped up by undertaking a massive programme of construction of 10 lakh houses with a budget provision of Rs. 1000 crore and is progressing in full swing. Besides, steps have been taken to augment housing facilities for other sections as also government servants.

The Prime Minister's Rozgar Yojana which aims at providing self-employment opportunities to educated unemployed youth, had benefited 1,96,154 persons during 1994-95. For 1995-96, loans under the scheme are planned to reach 2.6 lakh persons.

As the Honourable Members know, the Government has launched the National Social Assistance Programme to provide for Old Age Pensions, Maternity Benefit and lumpsum payment on the death of the primary bread

earner in poor families. Complementing this package is a pioneering scheme of Group Life Insurance which includes subsidized premiums for the poor.

An Integrated Urban Poverty Eradication Programme was launched in November 1995 to tackle the problem of urban poor in an integrated manner in all 345 class-II towns with a population ranging between 50,000 to 1 lakh. A provision of Rs. 100 crore has been made in the current financial year for the Programme.

Government has strengthened the role and powers of the Panchayats and Nagarpalikas in all Centrally Sponsored Schemes operating at the district level and below. This initiative has also ensured the emergence of more than one million women as leaders and decision-makers at the grassroot level. Similarly, the States are being asked to empower these bodies with adequate financial and administrative responsibilities.

Substantial enhancement has been made in the allocations for Schemes of Special Central Assistance for Special Component Plan, Post-Matric Scholarships, National Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Finance and Development Corporation and Aid to Voluntary Organizations. The Government has also revised the rates of maintenance and other allowances under the Post-Matric Scholarship Scheme for Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe students.

A National Commission for Safai Karamcharis has been set up to monitor the implementation of the National Scheme for Liberation and Rehabilitation of Safai Karamcharis still engaged in night soil removal. Since the inception of the Scheme, about 94,000 such persons have been trained for other vocations and 2.5 lakhs have been rehabilitated.

The National Backward Classes Finance and Development Corporation has so far disbursed Rs. 131.64 crore for self-employment ventures. To enable the OBC candidates to compete on equal terms with general candidates in various recruitment tests and examinations, the Government has provided financial assistance to 122 coaching centres so far.

The National Minorities Development and Finance Corporation has established linkages with State channelising agencies. Loans are being disbursed for self-employment. The Wakf Act, 1995, for effective and democratic administration of Wakf Boards has been brought into force with effect from 1st January, 1996. The Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act, 1995 has been enacted to provide equal opportunities for persons with disabilities.

It has also been decided to set up a National Finance and Development Corporation for the Disabled with an authorised share capital of Rs. 400 crore. A Bill to set up a National Trust to provide total care to persons with Mental Retardation and Cerebral Palsy has been introduced in the Lok Sabha.

The ongoing immunisation of children against six vaccine-preventable diseases has already yielded encouraging results. In keeping with the global goal of eradication of polio by 2000 AD, a supplemental dose of oral polio vaccine was administered to more than 7.5 crore children in the age group 0-3 years throughout the country on 9th December, 1995 and the exercise was repeated on 20th January, 1996. The Pulse Polio Immunisation will be continued in future years also.

The allocation for the education sector has been steadily increased as part of the Government's commitment to achieve the target of allocation of 6 per cent of GDP by the year 2000 AD. To realise the goal of Universal Elementary Education, 110 Districts would be bought within the ambit of the District Primary Education Programme by the end of the Eighth Plan. A National Elementary Education Mission has been launched to cover all children up to the age of 14 years by the turn of the century. As part of the National Literacy Mission, Total Literacy Campaigns have been further extended to 368 districts and the Post Literacy Campaigns to 159 districts in the country. A major National Programme of Nutritional Support to children in Primary Schools covering about 11 crore children from classes I to V over a three year period was launched on 15 August, 1995.

There has been a remarkable improvement in the industrial relations scenario in the country over the last 5 years. There is a significant decrease in the number of strikes and lock outs and the number of mandays lost. Government is committed to successfully implement the Employees' Pension Scheme introduced in November 1995, which provides for the first time life long social security to about 19 million industrial workers and their families.

To bring our arbitration law in tune with the international thinking on the subject, an Ordinance called. "The Arbitration and Conciliation Ordinance, 1996" has been promulgated. With this and the other steps taken to establish Alternative Dispute Resolution Mechanisms, it is hoped that India will soon emerge as a pioneer in this field in the South-Asian Region.

The achievements of our scientists in the past year have been noteworthy and give us confidence for the future.

Successful launches of INSAT-2C and IRS-1C satellites last December once again demonstrated our capability to design, build and operate state-of-the-art space systems, which will be vital for the development of our telecommunication, television, meteorological and resources survey programmes. We plan to launch INSAT-2D during 1996-97, and INSAT-2E and IRS-1D during 1997-98. We have also made good progress in developing the Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle, GSLV, for launching our INSAT class of satellites.

During the year, the country's tenth nuclear power reactor at Kakrapar commenced operation and was stabilised satisfactorily. The research reactors at Trombay have supplied more than 60,000 kits for diagnosis and treatment to more than 300 medical institutions all over the country.

During 1995-96, the situation in some parts of India's immediate neighbourhood remained uncertain in security terms. Pakistan's continuing attempts to acquire sophisticated weaponry and uranium enrichment technology have been a matter of serious concern for us. Pakistan's attempts heighten tensions in our region and are likely to trigger an arms race. We have every confidence in the capability of our armed forces to defend the nation. Government is determined to ensure their capability in this regard. I am sure honourable Members would, in this context, join me in commending the armed forces for their professionalism and dedication.

As a result of the concentrated efforts of our scientists engaged in defence research, the Light Combat Aircraft was unveiled in November 1995 and test flights would commence by the end of this year. The development of the Main Battle Tank Arjun has been completed with a view to its induction. The DRDO has developed a high performance supercomputer using multiprocessor technology, which has met a long-felt need and which enhances our self-reliance, in this field.

In the foreign affairs sphere, our relations with our neighbours were further strengthened. Our traditionally close ties with Bhutan were reinforced during the year. The visit to India of the former Prime Minister of Nepal, Mr. Manmohan Adhikari, in April 1995 and of the present Prime Minister Mr. Sher Bahadur Deuba earlier this month, contributed to developing closer mutual understanding. The inauguration of the Indira Gandhi Memorial Hospital in the Maldives in April 1995 by the Prime Minister is testimony to our commitment to amity and cooperation with that country. Our relations with Sri Lanka were marked by cordiality and trust. Our trade with Bangladesh increased as did contacts between the peoples of the two countries. The momentum in our relations with China was maintained with a continuing dialogue at the highest levels. Our efforts resulted in promoting good relations with all our neighbours in South Asia, with the sole exception of Pakistan. We urge the Government of Pakistan to eschew its path of confrontation with India and respond constructively to our repeated offer of a bilateral dialogue to resolve all outstanding issues in accordance with the Simla Agreement.

A landmark in SAARC's progress was achieved last year with the operationalisation of the South Asia Preferential Trading Arrangement (SAPTA) from December 7, 1995. The signing of a trilateral Memorandum of Understanding on transit by India, Iran and Turkmenistan, which seeks to establish a viable surface route between India and Central Asia for commercial and other links, was an important event in the development of

our links with Central Asia. ASEAN has agreed to full dialogue partnership status for India. This reflects the growing, mutually beneficial relationship between India and ASEAN.

Our relations with the Russian federation continued to be close. Further areas for cooperation in economic, cultural and other fields were identified. The India-United States relationship registered steady growth, in particular in the economic and commercial areas. Political and economic cooperation with countries in the African continent was promoted through high level visits to and from Mali, Mauritius, Namibia, Zimbabwe, Egypt, Burkina Faso and Ghana.

India took the lead in articulating the political, economic, social and other concerns of the developing countries in international forums like the World Summit for Social Development in Denmark in March, 1995; the UN General Assembly's 50th anniversary Special Commemorative Meeting in October, 1995; and the 11th Non-Aligned Summit in Colombia in the same month. Consistent with its commitment to the objective of complete nuclear disarmament within a specified time-frame, India is participating actively in the negotiations for a Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty. At the same time, we view the indefinite extension of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty as an obstacle to universal nuclear disarmament as it seeks to legitimise the nuclear arsenals of nuclear-weapon states.

As this Session will be a brief one, only essential legislation will be taken up during this Session. Some Ordinances promulgated since the last Session will be placed before Parliament. A statement of the estimated receipts and expenditure of the Government of India for the financial year 1996-97 will be laid before you for the purpose of passing Vote on Account authorising expenditure for a part of that year. Vote on Account in respect of the States under the President's Rule would also need to be passed.

The policies of the Government have put the country on the path of growth enabling the people to realise their potential. The strength of the country lies in the strength of its economy and the unity of its people. During the last four and a half years, your dedication, wisdom and vision have left an imprint that will guide the nation into a brighter tomorrow.

I commend you to your tasks in this Session and wish you success.

Jai Hind.

ADDRESS TO PARLIAMENT—24 MAY 1996

Lok Sabha	—	Eleventh Lok Sabha
Session	—	First Session after the 11th General Election
President of India	—	Dr. Shankar Dayal Sharma
Vice-President of India	—	Shri K. R. Narayanan
Prime Minister of India	—	Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee
Speaker, Lok Sabha	—	Shri P.A. Sangma

HONOURABLE MEMBERS,

It gives me great pleasure to address both Houses of Parliament at this first session after the eleventh general election to the Lok Sabha. I extend my warm felicitations to the Members of the new Lok Sabha.

The general election, just concluded, has demonstrated the democratic credentials of the country. The nation and the world have witnessed the majesty of the democratic process in India. The recent general election was organized with efficiency and despatch. Our people participated in large numbers and exercised their sovereign right in electing their representatives. Once again, India has demonstrated the strong, vibrant and enduring nature of her democratic ethos. Government will fully honour the mandate implicit in the result of the election. The present session of Parliament should enable the House of the People to determine whether it has confidence in the Council of Ministers.

The country stands at the crossroads of history. As the century comes to a close and the millennium turns, our destiny as a strong and a powerful nation beckons us. The Government is conscious of our common responsibility to fulfil these historic tasks. Our endeavour should be to strive for a wholesome consensus on all vital national issues.

Among our primary tasks is that of ensuring to the State its due honour, prestige and strength. The basic institutions devised by the founding fathers with a view to providing good governance have to be strengthened. This may necessitate appropriate reforms in our polity and governance.

Providing clean and efficient administration is the need of the hour and the Government must commit itself to this goal. Probity and accountability have to be the key norms of public administration. Due propriety, promptitude and effectiveness should characterize every measure: administrative, legislative and political.

The deficiencies in our electoral processes are to be attended to. The matter has been pending for long and we can ill-afford any further delay. A large number of suggestions have been made from time to time. On the basis of the wealth of material available and otherwise, necessary reforms will be taken up urgently. The prime objectives would be that the use of money power in the electoral process is eliminated, accountability of political parties is ensured and unfair practices are removed.

An in-depth review of our decision-making processes is another field which requires immediate attention. The primary task is to reduce as much as possible the scope of arbitrary decision making by ensuring that our process are made simpler and more transparent. For a meaningful implementation of such a programme, we will have to provide for expeditious means for speedy disposal of public grievances.

Government is committed to uphold the prestige and independence of the judiciary. A comprehensive examination of the work methods and environment, emoluments and conditions of service of the subordinate judiciary is being undertaken by the First National Judicial Pay Commission. Government will facilitate its work with a view to ensuring speedy submission of its report.

Every effort will be made to reduce the arrears in the Courts through the spread of modern management techniques and expeditious filling of the vacancies of judges.

Government is conscious of the need to improve the welfare of Central Government employees. The Fifth Pay Commission is currently looking into their emoluments, structure and service conditions. Since the final report of the Commission is likely to take some time, Government have requested them for their interim recommendations as early as possible, on the basis of which appropriate relief would be given.

The Government has a deep and abiding commitment to the freedom of the press and media. The electronic media are acquiring increased importance in our daily lives as a result of their pervasive presence and Government are determined to free All India Radio and Doordarshan from governmental control by finally implementing the Prasar Bharati Act, 1990. In 1995, the Supreme Court had even directed the Government to set up an independent authority to regulate the airwaves. The Government would take all necessary steps to establish a truly autonomous Prasar Bharati Corporation which would strengthen national identity, integration, credibility in dissemination of information and provision of quality education and entertainment.

The vastness of our country, its diversity and the underlying unity are our basic strengths. India is one people, one nation with her unique culture. Government will do all that it may to ensure that harmonious relations are

maintained between different communities and groups. Government is committed to provide security and protect the life and property of all people, particularly the weaker sections and minorities. Violence manifesting itself in separatist, extremist, criminal and anti-social activities has no place in any civilized society and would be effectively dealt with by the Government. In doing so the Government cannot forget that political, social and economic measures are equally necessary in resolving these problems.

The North Eastern region of our country continues to suffer from violence, insurgency and ethnic strife. There is need to check the inflow of foreign arms and terrorists from across the border by strengthening the security apparatus and the intelligence network. Illegal immigration which has an unsettling effect will be curbed through comprehensive measures. Effective administration for acceleration of economic development and providing for a prompt grievance redressal system, are also urgent requirements.

Jammu and Kashmir is an inalienable part of India. No attempt to interfere with our internal affairs there will be tolerated. We are keen to restore the democratic functioning of the State for which all efforts are being made to ensure free and fair polls in the State. Side by side, efforts for socio-economic development of the different regions will be intensified.

Government is anxious to improve Centre-State relations. The report of the Sarkaria Commission and other extensive studies provide ample material on the various facets of this problem. Government will ensure that there is increased consultation with the State Governments and that there is no misuse of Article 356. The role and status of the Inter State Council envisaged under Article 263 of the Constitution will be reviewed in depth and action taken to make it an effective mechanism to resolve disputes between States and for better coordination of policies and action in matters of common interest to States.

In order to fulfil the aspirations of the people of Uttaranchal and Jharkhand, the Government will take such steps as are necessary to give them full Statehood. The various problems connected with the grant of full statehood to Delhi will also receive our serious consideration.

Our vision of India's economy is one which enables India to achieve its destiny in the forefront of the nations of the world. We have an abiding faith in the creative genius of every Indian. Our task is to release their energies by shedding out-dated structures of controls and regulations and re-equipping Government for its new role of providing a supportive framework for free market operations for growth, while strengthening programmes for poverty eradication and building of social infrastructure.

The economic reforms of the past five years did achieve some measure of success. Government will invigorate the growth impulses in the economy and control inflation by accelerating the process of economic reforms,

providing much greater support and impetus to infrastructure development and maintaining a sound framework of fiscal and monetary policies.

Today, high interest rates and scarce credit are inhibiting the growth of industry, trade and agriculture. The root cause of the problem is the continued recourse to high levels of borrowings by Government, to meet its ever-expanding expenditures. Government will prune non-development expenditure and accelerate tax reform to reduce the fiscal deficit and thus release resources for more productive activities. Government will identify areas from which it needs to withdraw. In taxation, we will ensure that not only levels and rates of taxation are such that growth is not constrained, but that the burden-sharing is equitably distributed among all affluent sections of the society. Government will also devise a suitably structured value added tax.

To deal with the massive overhang of past public debt and to ensure a higher return to assets in public enterprises, the Government will constitute a Disinvestment Commission to accelerate the process of disinvestment in a systematic and transparent manner. Part of the proceeds will be earmarked for retiring public debt and the balance to finance capital expenditure. While disinvesting, care will be taken so that the workers' interests are not harmed. The National Renewal Fund will be realigned towards retraining and redevelopment of workers that may be necessary in a fast growing economy.

Public savings will increase and private savings will be stimulated to finance the much higher levels of national investment necessary to accelerate economic growth and eradicate poverty. Foreign savings and investment will be welcomed to supplement the national savings effort. A country of India's size and potential can easily double the flow of direct foreign investment, especially in the critical infrastructure areas of power, roads, ports and telecommunications.

The Government will draw up an integrated time bound programme to increase capacities and release bottlenecks posed by insufficient infrastructure in energy, especially power, coal and petroleum, roads, ports, railways, irrigation and telecommunications. The policy framework for inducing private, including foreign investment will be revamped and made transparent.

Government is committed to bring about long pending reform of the corporate laws which will ensure their functioning as instruments of economic growth, rather than merely regulatory mechanisms. The laws must promote entrepreneurship and freedom of industry from all avoidable inhibitions and disincentives. Necessary legislative action in this direction will be speedily undertaken.

The Government fully recognizes the importance of the small scale sector for production and employment in the economy. The difficulties faced by this sector will be carefully reviewed and the obstacles to rapid progress will be eliminated.

The construction industry is one of our largest sectors, providing jobs to millions. A major constraint to growth of this sector has been the Urban Land Ceiling Act. Government will review the rationale of this Act.

All this will be necessary to restore the competitive edge of our producers, large and small, so that they can effectively win the challenges of the international market place. Our export growth has to be stepped up to meet the import needs of a more dynamic economy. For the short and medium-term viability of our balance of payments, Government will ensure policies for rapid and sustained export growth and for attracting adequate inflows of non-debt creating capital. Government will review and simplify the regime of foreign exchange controls in line with the needs of a modernizing economy.

To strengthen our financial and capital markets, Government will provide for greater accountability and competition for public financial institutions, including banks. To promote healthy development and avoid scams and irregularities, the Government will undertake a programme to modernize the infrastructure of capital markets, including swift passage of enabling legislation for depositories.

Three quarters of our citizens live in rural India, and agriculture is the life-blood of rural society. Rapid broad-based development of agriculture is vital for ameliorating rural poverty, ensuring self-sufficiency in food, strengthening the domestic market for industry and services and building mutually beneficial links between agriculture and industry. The Government will allocate more funds for rural infrastructure, ensure remunerative prices to farmers, free agro-based industries such as sugar from licensing controls and strengthen the Public Distribution System in rural areas. Optimal utilisation of scarce water resources is critical for agricultural development. Government will give special priority to completing ongoing irrigation projects.

Water is our most precious resource and its conservation and effective utilisation is of paramount importance. The Government attaches high priority for watershed based development of drought prone areas and waste land reclamation through adequate technical support and peoples' involvement.

In order to ensure cow protection, and to impose a total ban on the slaughter of cows and cow progeny, Government will take up suitable measures.

The Government will pursue policies aimed at the real empowerment of women, so as to ensure that their dignity and rights are not violated and their full potential is realized. The Government will take necessary legislative and other steps to provide for reservation of 33 per cent of the seats for women in all elected bodies, including State Assemblies and Parliament.

The disabled and all those who are placed in a position of undeserved want for reasons beyond their control, are the primary responsibility of the State. Simultaneously trade and industry will be sensitized as to their social obligation in this respect. Our senior citizens also deserve special care. Government will consider their problems and take measures which would make their lives easier in their old age.

The Government is painfully aware of the extensive levels of poverty in the country. The needs of the poorest sections in the country require the most urgent, sympathetic attention. We shall strengthen the programmes which contribute substantially to their social and economic upliftment. These would provide them with gainful employment and income generating assets. In doing so our endeavour would be to ensure that the present disparities in socio-economic conditions are eliminated. Special attention would therefore be given to the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, the Backward Classes, the other deprived sections of the society and to the problems of bonded and child labour. Programmes for poverty alleviation and other welfare measures for weaker sections of our society need to be accurately focussed on those who really need support from the Government. Government will soon begin the process of identifying the five crore poorest of the poor families for immediate relief. The role of the State Government in implementing these programmes is crucial and it would be our effort to give necessary flexibility to them and enlist their active support in the task of promoting greater economic and social justice.

Growth cannot be measured in economic terms alone. The problems of poverty, disease and hunger require a multi-dimensional approach. In fact, no improvement in the quality of life, which is the real index of growth, is possible without social inputs like education, health and other welfare measures. Government would initiate a pioneering ten year plan focussed upon providing nutrition for the children of the poor, their health care and facilities for education so that they are brought at the same level as other children. Adequate resources for this plan would be made available.

The Government attaches high priority to education as an instrument for the material, physical and spiritual development and enrichment of society and the individual. We witness today the old economic order based on comparative advantage of labour and resources giving way to a new order being built on the foundations of human resource, skills and technology. The changing economic scenario and rising social aspirations require

significant modifications in our educational programmes. We have not yet been able to provide free elementary education to our children as enjoined by our Constitution. This requires urgent rectification. Government will encourage vocational and technical education. Government recognizes the need for special efforts for the spread of education amongst women. Programmes in vocational and technical education to enable them to be eligible for suitable employment opportunities would be given emphasis. Higher education would be revamped so as to facilitate India emerging as a major economic power in the international arena. In this sphere, the existing centres of excellence, require urgent attention to be strengthened. Such centres in new areas are also called for.

We believe in increasing state investment in health and nutrition programme as this is essential for raising the quality of life of our people. Our goal will be health for all. Reduction of the infant mortality rate, immunisation of children against killer diseases, improvement of the primary health care systems will be the corner stones of these programmes. In this we will make full use of Ayurveda, Unani, Homoeopathy and other Indian systems of medicine.

The Government will give due priority to population related issues especially family planning in the national agenda. The long-term objective is to stabilize population by the first decade of the next century. The Government will devise a system of incentives and disincentives for encouraging adoption of family planning norms.

It is unfortunate that even safe drinking water is still scarce or unavailable to a large number of our habitations. There are 1.6 lakh habitations with no drinking water facilities and 1.4 lakh habitations where such water is badly contaminated. The Government is committed to providing drinking water facilities to all our people in a time-bound manner. We shall consult the State Governments and extend necessary support to them in achieving this goal. In areas where drinking water is chemically contaminated, available technologies would be harnessed for making it safe and potable. The Government considers community participation in this programme necessary and would take action to encourage this.

The Government recognizes the important role that science and technology has in transforming society. Steps would be taken to harness the latest advances in the service of the people. Special attention will be paid to the needs of the rural areas. Measures will be taken to see that national interests and intellectual property rights are adequately protected. Government will continue to support the country's space programme which has demonstrated its high potential and utility for the overall development of the country.

Our foreign policy is governed by our national interests and reflects India's position as a major player in the world arena, responding to the

possibilities and challenges of the post-Cold War situation and rejecting all forms of hegemonism or dominance. In this process, our political, economic, security and other concerns, will be pursued in a clear and unambiguous manner.

The Government's foremost priority in the area of foreign policy will be the improvement of relations with all our neighbours in South Asia, including Pakistan, bilaterally and in the SAARC forum. We will foster mutually beneficial partnership with all countries. We will strengthen our broad-based ties with Russia. We look forward to the further strengthening and diversification of our relations with the USA. We will utilize the opportunities offered in India-China relations to enhance friendship and cooperation. In keeping with our commitment to Asian solidarity, we look forward to reinforcing our friendly relations with the ASEAN member States.

India's role in the multilateral field has always been constructive. Our policy on issues such as a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty and a Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty will be governed by our traditional commitment to a nuclear weapons-free world. While our commitment to the peaceful uses of nuclear energy is well-known, where necessary in the light of our national interests, our nuclear policy will be re-evaluated.

The situation in some parts of India's immediate neighbourhood continues to be uncertain in security terms. It is regrettable that Pakistan continues to instigate terrorism against India. We call upon Pakistan to respond constructively to our repeated offers to resolve all outstanding issues bilaterally.

There will be no compromise on our country's vital security concerns. The programme of indigenous development of our defence capability in terms of research and acquisitions will continue and be reinforced in the light of our security needs. We will stress a coordinated approach to national security by revitalising the structure and enhancing the status of the National Security Council.

We repose full confidence in the capability of the Indian Armed Forces to defend the nation and will do whatever is necessary to maintain and enhance this capability. I am sure honourable Members join me in commending the armed forces for their professionalism and dedication. Recognizing their invaluable contribution, Government is committed to taking all possible steps to promote their welfare. We cannot forget the large community of our ex-servicemen. They have rendered valuable services to the nation and deserve our special consideration. The Government will establish a Sainik Kalyan Foundation with a suitable endowment to take care of their rehabilitation and welfare.

The country is faced with a number of crucial challenges as we stand on the threshold of the next century. The eleventh Lok Sabha will have the honour of contributing to the task of piloting the country to the next century.

My good wishes are with you in this historic task.

Jai Hind.

ADDRESS TO PARLIAMENT—20 FEBRUARY 1997

Lok Sabha	—	Eleventh Lok Sabha
Session	—	First Session of the Year
President of India	—	Dr. Shankar Dayal Sharma
Vice-President of India	—	Shri K. R. Narayanan
Prime Minister of India	—	Shri H. D. Deve Gowda
Speaker, Lok Sabha	—	Shri P. A. Sangma

HONOURABLE MEMBERS,

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to the first Session of Parliament in 1997. I felicitate the new Members and extend to you all my best wishes for the successful completion of the budgetary and legislative business that lies ahead.

This is my first address to Parliament after the present Government assumed office. The Common Minimum Programme of the United Front contains the basic agenda on crucial areas of national development, equity, social justice and secularism. It is a bridge for our society and people towards greater prosperity and well-being. It contains specific policies and guidelines for strengthening our federal structure, empowerment of disadvantaged sections, especially the Scheduled Castes, the Scheduled Tribes, the Other Backward Classes and the minorities, for providing basic minimum services and for eradicating poverty and ignorance. The Common Minimum Programme also lays emphasis upon evolving policies for rapid economic growth by attracting massive investments in industry and infrastructure.

This programme thus strikes a fine balance between economic growth on the one hand, and concern for equity and distributive justice on the other. The Government is fairly committed to achieving these objectives.

Under our democratic federal polity, coalition Governments can be stable and promote durable socio-economic development. The Constitution has excellent features defining the relations between the Union and the States. The Government will respect the constitutional provisions without any discrimination and endeavour to strengthen the arrangements for a cooperative approach to our national problems. We are sure that all States will extend their cooperation in preserving these institutions and in making their deliberations more useful for the Union and the States.

The Government has imparted a measure of dynamism to the Inter-State Council, the National Development Council, the Planning Commission and also held periodic conferences of Chief Ministers. The Inter-State Council at its meeting on October 15, 1996 accepted a majority of the recommendations of the Sarkaria Commission for implementation by the Government. A Standing Committee, which shall be a permanent Committee of the Inter-State Council, has been set up to review the remaining recommendations of the Sarkaria Commission, especially those relating to devolution of financial powers to the States and changes required in Article 356 of the Constitution. The unanimity shown at the conferences of Chief Ministers on Basic Minimum Services and on problems of the power sector have led to the formulation of time-bound programmes for improving the quality of life in rural areas and to the adoption of the National Common Minimum Action Plan for Power. The approach document for the Ninth Five Year Plan was prepared by the Planning Commission in record time, and was unanimously endorsed by the National Development Council at its meeting on January 16, 1997. This spirit of cooperation augurs well for the timely launch of the Ninth Five Year Plan.

Panchayati Raj institutions and Nagar Palikas provide an ideal framework for planning, formulating and executing programmes for economic development and social justice. The Government is keen to secure adequate devolution of powers and funds to these institutions. The passage of law by Parliament during its last session extending Part IX of the Constitution to the Scheduled Areas is a historic event and amply demonstrates this commitment.

Integrity and impartiality in public life and in the conduct of all public servants are the foundations of democracy. To increase transparency and accountability in administration at all levels, the Government has initiated a national debate on Effective and Responsive Administration. The Government intends to consider various views on this subject and place an action plan before a Conference of Chief Ministers soon. The Government is concerned about corruption in public life and is determined to take effective steps to eradicate this evil. The Lok Pal Bill has been introduced in the Lok Sabha and a beginning has been made to reform the electoral process with the passage of the Representation of the People (Amendment) Act 1996. Efforts are on to introduce a more comprehensive Bill in Parliament on this subject in consultation with all political parties.

The challenges to internal security of the nation cannot be underestimated. These establishing influences emanate both from within the country and from outside. The Government is fully conscious of these forces and have met these challenges with determination. The sustained operation against terrorists coupled with vigorous welfare and development efforts have brought about a qualitative improvement in the situation in

Jammu and Kashmir. The successful conduct of assembly elections and the installation of a popular Government in Jammu and Kashmir have been major steps forward in the process of restoration of normalcy. The Prime Minister had announced a special economic package for the revival of the State's economy during the last Monsoon Session of Parliament. Action has already been taken to implement it.

The activities of militant groups in a few States in the North-East continue to cause concern. These groups are taking advantage of the difficult terrain along the long international borders. The Government has taken major diplomatic initiatives with our neighbours to tackle this problem. It is also taking effective steps to tackle the situation in this region through a multi-pronged strategy, including the economic uplift of the region. A comprehensive package aimed at accelerating the pace of development in the North-Eastern region was announced in October last. A High-Level Commission on Infrastructure Development and Basic Services and a High Level Expert Committee on the creation of employment opportunities for the educated unemployed have been set up.

In Punjab, the successful conduct of elections to local government institutions and the State Assembly demonstrates the abiding faith of the people of the State in democracy and their commitment to peace and harmony.

The Indian economy is firmly set on a high-growth path and our objective of ensuring at least 7 per cent growth during the Ninth Plan period is feasible. During the last three years, the economy has been growing at an average rate of about 7 per cent per annum. While agricultural production has been growing at about 2.6 percent, industrial production has grown at an average rate of over 10 per cent. The foreign currency reserves have grown steadily and are presently at about 19.5 billion US dollars.

The Government is committed to economic reforms aimed at faster economic growth. To create an environment conducive to private investment, laws and policies are being suitably adapted for each sector. Procedures have been simplified to provide for quicker clearance of proposals and to make the process transparent. Action has also been initiated to create the confidence that investors will get fair and equal treatment.

The Foreign Investment Promotion Board has been thoroughly revamped to ensure that decision making is quicker and more transparent. Foreign Investment Promotion Council has been set up to promote smooth inflow of foreign capital. The list of industries eligible for automatic approval has been further enlarged. Specific guidelines for foreign investment have been laid down for each sector. We are committed to achieving our goal of attracting at least \$ 10 billion a year as foreign direct investment.

Similarly, in the financial sector, the banking system is being geared up to conform to international norms. With the introduction of depositories and modernisation of stock exchanges, settlements are expected to be faster to attract institutional investment. We are taking steps to attract long term pension and insurance funds from abroad.

However, to sustain this buoyancy in the economy, substantial augmentation of investment in crucial infrastructure areas such as power, transport and irrigation is essential. The formation of the new Infrastructure Development Finance Company will fill critical gaps in financing viable infrastructure projects. In the all important power sector counter guarantees have been extended to five fast track power projects in the private sector. The adoption of the Common Minimum National Action Plan for Power is an important initiative towards devolution of decision-making authority to the States, the restructuring of State Electricity Boards and the rationalization of tariff. Recently the Government has decided to allow private investment in power transmission.

In the case of ports, a comprehensive policy has been announced for attracting private investment and providing for automatic approval for foreign equity upto 74 percent. Development of highways in India on modern lines will receive impetus through expansion of the capital base of the National Highways Authority of India. An ordinance has also been promulgated amending the National Highways Act, 1955, and the National Highways Authority of India Act, 1988, paving the way for speedy acquisition of land and private investment in road building. The Government has also made a systematic effort to extend the Railway network in areas hitherto neglected, such as the North-East.

The process of opening up the mining sector to allow foreign and Indian private investment has taken a step further with the issue of guidelines for granting large areas for prospecting licences in October, 1996. A fresh ordinance for establishing a statutory telecom regulatory authority has been promulgated. The Government is set to make basic telecom services operational by resolving pending issues.

The oil and gas policy has to subserve the growth of the economy as a significant industrial power in the next decade. With increased growth in the demand for these products and the recent increases in the international prices of petroleum products, the deficit in the Oil Pool Account will reach about Rs. 15,500 crore by the end of the current year. Healthy development of the oil sector in the country demands that the Oil Pool Account is in balance. We have to make massive investment in the oil sector to step up exploration and production. We should generate enough resources not only to cover current costs but also to take care of fresh investments.

Vigorous growth in agriculture has to go hand in hand with fast industrial development. This is essential both for removing poverty and for meeting the increasing demand for agricultural products. Agricultural development in rainfed, drought-prone and degraded land is a matter of high priority. The watershed development approach, combining modern land management and water conservation practices, is the most appropriate instrument to bring quick and sustained growth to the poor living in these areas. The Government is committed to bringing together all the sub-systems constituting watershed-based development under one umbrella to facilitate sharper focus, better integration and more efficient micro-level planning and programme implementation.

Research through Indian Council of Agricultural Research and State Agricultural Universities has to be stepped up to address specific problems of local areas and for taking fruits of the frontier areas of science to the farmer. Soil testing facilities have been extended to a large part of the country. Tissue culture research in our country has provided an impetus to the commercialisation and large-scale application of this technology for horticulture and afforestation of wastelands. Hybrid rice is one of the main avenues for enhancing productivity and production of rice. The Indian Agricultural Research Institute is releasing a Basmati hybrid rice variety which will boost production and export of quality rice. Five hybrid varieties of rice have already been released for commercial cultivation. Thus India has emerged as the second largest hybrid rice growing country in the world. This year also witnessed the opening of the National Gene Bank in New Delhi which is one of the largest in the world. A High-Level Committee has been set up to examine comprehensively the issues involved in the application of advancements in frontier sciences at the farm level.

Irrigation has always been a thrust area for agricultural development. However, targets for increasing the potential of irrigation have suffered a set-back in the Eighth Plan. The government initiated the Accelerated Irrigation Benefit Programme in 1996-97. The Rural Infrastructure Development Fund of NABARD has been strengthened to achieve similar results in rural infrastructure, especially in irrigation and watershed development.

Provision of irrigation facilities for small and marginal farmers, especially those belonging to the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes, has received impetus through a new programme called "Ganga Kalyan". Under this programme, farmers will be supported to take up schemes for ground water and surface water utilisation through liberal subsidy, maintenance support and credit arrangements.

A National Commission has been set up to prepare an integrated water conservation and utilisation plan and recommend steps for the use of surplus waters in an efficient manner to meet the requirements of water deficit

areas. The government is also working towards a National Policy for Irrigation Management and for humane resettlement and rehabilitation of persons displaced by large irrigation projects.

The fundamental objective of our economic development is the removal of poverty. Programmes for generation of employment, creation of assets, improvement of skills and the raising of incomes of very poor people have all been strengthened. Outlays on these programmes for reduction of poverty will be doubled during the 9th Five Year Plan.

The Employment Assurance Scheme and the Mid-Day-Meal Scheme are being extended to the entire country by April, 1997. Similarly, the Schemes for self-employment are being strengthened. These programmes are being reoriented and directed towards artisans and craftspersons, educated unemployed youth and other groups of the poor. At least one million educated unemployed youth will be supported every year to start viable enterprises and businesses through better subsidy, training and credit arrangements.

A major priority of the Government is to initiate and implement a set of concrete measures for providing basic minimum services to improve the quality of life of the poor. Expenditure on these Basic Minimum Services will not only provide much needed social amenities, but will also generate employment and play a major role in reviving the rural economy and society in the most backward regions of India. This is the only way to enable our workers, farmers and artisans to participate in the process of economic transformation. At the Conference of Chief Ministers held in July, 1996 it was decided to implement a time-bound programme for achieving seven basic minimum services. These are:

- (1) Provision of Safe Drinking Water in every habitation;
- (2) Provision of efficient Primary Health-Care for every group of 5000 persons;
- (3) Universal and Compulsory primary education and measures to spread literacy;
- (4) Provision of Public Housing Assistance to shelterless poor persons;
- (5) Connecting villages/habitations with link roads to the nearest market or the main road;
- (6) Nutrition support to children belonging to poor families during pre-school and elementary education stages; and
- (7) Streamlining the Public Distribution System with focus on the poor.

Special Central assistance of Rs. 2216 crore was placed at the disposal of the States for implementing these programmes blending national commitment with local initiatives. A new and targeted Public Distribution

System has been announced to benefit the population below the poverty line, with foodgrains at specially subsidised prices. As many as 32 crore people below poverty line will benefit under the new system, in addition to those participating in rural wage employment schemes such as Employment Assurance Scheme and Jawahar Rozgar Yojana.

The real benefits of these development programmes would accrue only if the growth in population is curbed. The new orientation given to the Family Welfare Programme by doing away with the system of setting targets and replacing it by decentralised participatory planning at the primary health centre level is expected to bring about greater involvement of the service providers leading to improvement in quality of services and acceptance of the small family norm.

The Government is committed to bridging the gap in the levels of development of the Scheduled Castes, the Scheduled Tribes, backward classes and minorities and to bring them on par with the rest of the society. The idea is to eliminate all forms of exploitation and enhance the flow of funds for their social and economic progress through sub-plans, special central assistance and the National Finance and Development Corporations. For better training and rehabilitation of Safai Karamcharis, the National Safai Karamchari Finance and Development Corporation has been established. We are also keen to promote gender equality and removal of discrimination against women. As you know, the Government has already introduced a Bill for reservation of seats for women in the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies to ensure their better participation in policy-making.

The Government is committed to protect the interests of all workers, especially those in the unorganised sector. Towards this end, two Bills were passed this year to promote health, safety and welfare of 90 lakh construction workers. We have launched a concerted drive for effective enforcement of laws on minimum wages, child labour and bonded labour. A Central legislation for agricultural workers to guarantee them minimum wages and fair conditions of work is being introduced in Parliament soon.

The Government is committed to implementing the law relating to provision of equal opportunities, protection of rights and full participation of disabled persons. Rules under this important legislation have already been notified by the Centre and State Governments are being requested to take similar action at the earliest. A National Corporation for creating more job opportunities for the disabled persons has already been established.

The Government recognises that science and technology are important for economic progress. In the everchanging global scenario, our research and development, technology transfer and diffusion are the critical determinants of our competitiveness. There is now a need for a massive renewal of our science and technology infrastructure in both public and

private sectors. The Government has recently approved a revised apex-level structure for coordinating science and technology activities.

Our nuclear science and technology have achieved noteworthy progress in harnessing nuclear energy for electricity generation with the reaching of criticality of the Kamini reactor at Kalpakkam. India is in the forefront in the application of space technology for national development. The success of PSLV has made our country self-reliant in the launching of IRS class of satellites and substantial progress has been made in the development of Geo-Synchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle. The resolution of imagery from Indian satellites with our own cameras is among the best in the world, and our space products are now being sold in the global markets. I must congratulate all scientists working on these projects.

Men and officers of the Army and Para-Military Forces have continued to render valuable assistance to civil authorities, including in the peaceful conduct of Parliamentary and Assembly elections in Jammu and Kashmir, despite sustained efforts from across our border to foment trouble. The contribution of our Armed Forces in difficult relief and rescue missions has been exemplary.

The Armed Forces remain in a state of constant preparedness to safeguard our territorial integrity. Strengthening the defence of the nation is among the foremost priorities of the Government on which there can be no compromise. The Government is conscious of the urgent need for modernising the Armed Forces, and is committed to provide all the inputs which may be needed for fulfilling this objective. Acquisition of technologically superior armament, along with the continued upgradation of our existing equipment, will help to considerably strengthen the defences of the nation.

The Ten Years' National Mission for enhancing self-reliance in Defence Systems is making excellent progress. The production of the versatile Main Battle Tank Arjun will start from this year. The country has attained the capability to design and field any type of missile systems needed by the Services. The modernisation of the Navy is a matter of urgency and a number of steps to upgrade and equip our Navy for its needs are being taken. The Light Combat Aircraft project is also making steady progress towards its flight trial during this year.

The positive results of our constructive and pragmatic foreign policy are becoming increasingly evident as far as relations with our immediate neighbours are concerned. We have consistently sought mutually beneficial relations with them, both on a bilateral basis as well as through the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation. The active role played by India as the current chairman of SAARC in strengthening the Association, and enlarging its activities has been widely acknowledged.

During the visit of the Prime Minister of Bangladesh to India in December, 1996, the two countries signed a historic treaty on the long-term sharing of Ganga waters heralding a new era of friendship in India-Bangladesh relations.

Similarly, India-Nepal relations have gained a new dimension with the conclusion of the Mahakali Treaty, which envisages joint utilisation of water resources and opens up tremendous possibilities for bilateral economic cooperation. With Bhutan, Sri Lanka and Maldives, India continued to maintain warm and friendly relations.

The recent visit by the President of the People's Republic of China marked a new threshold of cooperation between the world's two most populous countries. The Agreement on Confidence Building Measures signed during the visit is of great significance and is expected to strengthen bilateral relations further.

With Pakistan, we are committed to ending confrontation and establishing a harmonious relationship and durable peace, as provided for in the Shimla Agreement. We believe that fostering people-to-people contacts and promoting trade and economic links will contribute to this process. We are ready for a dialogue with the new Government of Pakistan and hope for an early resumption of talks.

India is concerned at the continuing foreign interference and consequent instability in Afghanistan. There can be no resolution of the Afghan problem without cessation of foreign interference. Our traditional role as a friend and a well-wisher of Afghanistan is recognised and our humanitarian assistance for the suffering people of Afghanistan will continue.

Japan was the first Asian country to participate as Partner Country in the Indian Engineering Trade Fair earlier this month. This symbolises the growing economic cooperation between the two countries and we look forward to intensifying our relations with Japan.

Our mutually beneficial interaction with Association of South East Asian Nations has been growing and reached a new level last year. We are confident that this process will continue and that we will play our due role in the affairs of the Asia-Pacific region.

Our relations with the Arab countries continue to be marked by traditional friendship, mutual understanding, and growing cooperation. India has supported the Middle East peace process and welcomed the progress made so far; we look forward to its expeditious conclusion. The recent visit of Israel's President to India has given an impetus of our steadily growing economic and technological cooperation with that country.

Relations with Russia continue to be of high priority and are characterised by continuity, trust and mutual understanding.

We look forward to the continued growth of Indo-US relations during the second-term of the Clinton Administration. As two mature and friendly democracies, both India and the US recognise the importance of developing an expanded base for mutually beneficial relations.

With West Europe we share ties of history and a common commitment to democracy, now being strengthened by close economic linkages. We welcome and reciprocate the intention of the European Union, which is our largest trading partner to work towards an enhanced relationship with India, embracing political, economic and cultural relations.

Our commitment to the Non-Aligned Movement remains strong and India will continue to give the fullest support to its objectives and principles. India will host the next Ministerial Conference of Non-Aligned countries in New Delhi in April this year.

Coming to legislative business, thirty three Bills are pending before you including the Lokpal Bill, 1996, the Criminal Law Amendment Bill, 1995 and the Constitution (81st Amendment) Bill, 1996 providing for reservation of seats for women in the Lok Sabha and the Legislative Assemblies of the States. The Government intends to bring before Parliament in the current Session, the following important Bills:

- (1) The Broadcasting Bill, 1997.
- (2) The Prasar Bharati (Broadcasting Corporation of India) Amendment Bill, 1997.
- (3) The Consumer Protection (Amendment) Bill, 1997.
- (4) The Electricity Laws (Amendment) Bill, 1997.
- (5) The Multi State Cooperative Societies Bill, 1997.
- (6) The Indian Telegraph (Amendment) Bill, 1997.
- (7) The National Highways Authority of India (Amendment) Bill, 1997.

In August this year, we will commence celebrating the Fiftieth Anniversary of our Independence. Our freedom struggle was unique in the history of the world, based as it was on non-violence. Today, India is a beacon for sustaining democratic values, Rule of Law, human rights and secularism. Our policies have produced a balanced achievement of freedom and economic betterment. We were fortunate to have in our midst, towering leaders of this century to guide us through the formidable challenges to our democracy and stability.

The remaining four years of this century represent a crucial period for India's national development, in which it must build further on the past achievements and herald a new future. Today, India is on the threshold of unprecedented opportunity as it prepares itself for entering the 21st century

with hope and confidence. Whether we move forward boldly and realistically or remain stuck in the traditional modes of thinking, is going to ultimately determine our place in the world. At the beginning of the next millennium, all of us should ponder over this and deal with the basic issues, so that our destiny as an emerging giant and as a developed nation early in the next century is fulfilled.

Jai Hind.

SHRI K. R. NARAYANAN



ADDRESS TO PARLIAMENT—25 MARCH 1998

Lok Sabha	—	Twelfth Lok Sabha
Session	—	First Session after the 12th General Election
President of India	—	Shri K. R. Narayanan
Vice-President of India	—	Shri Krishan Kant
Prime Minister of India	—	Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee
Speaker, Lok Sabha	—	Shri G.M.C. Balayogi

HON'BLE MEMBERS,

I have great pleasure in addressing this first session of both Houses of Parliament after the 12th General Election to the Lok Sabha. I extend my warm felicitations to the members of the new Lok Sabha.

I thank the Election Commission of India for conducting the General Election with despatch and efficiency.

The just concluded mid-term election reflected the firm conviction of our people in democratic processes of change. Contrary to forecasts that the turnout would be low, in fact, nearly 62 per cent of the electorate exercised their franchise. The results are indicative of regional aspirations seeking a place in the national perspective. My Government will ensure the fulfilment of these aspirations even while looking after national interests.

Parliamentary arithmetic alone cannot provide the key to good governance. That key lies in the willingness of all to rise above notions of parliamentary majority and minority and work in a spirit of cooperation, conciliation and consensus. My Government, imbued with this spirit, will chart a new course in governance that seeks to unify and not divide: dialogue, debate and discussion will replace the narrow antagonisms of the past.

After the mid-term election, the nation now looks forward to a Government that will get down to business. This is precisely what the Government proposes to do: The most immediate tasks include the passage of the Supplementary Demands for 1997-98 and the Vote on Account for 1998-99. Thereafter, pending matters, including legislative business, will be taken up in right earnest.

Starting now, all our efforts will be directed at building a New India—an India free from the triple-curse of insecurity, hunger and corruption; an India free from illiteracy and disease; an India where more and more people are gainfully employed; an India where every citizen, irrespective of his caste, creed or faith, feels proud to be an Indian.

Secularism is integral to India's traditions. My Government is unequivocally committed to upholding our secular values.

My Government's top priority will be to reach out to the underprivileged and the unempowered. More than a third of our people live below the poverty line. An even larger number does not have access to basic education and health-care facilities. This vast multitude must be facilitated to obtain its meaningful share in national prosperity.

Government proposes to accomplish this through the three-fold strategy of ensuring food security to every household by better targeting of the Public Distribution System, accelerating generation of employment opportunities in every sector of the economy and providing shelter to the largest possible number.

One of the weaknesses of socio-economic policies so far has been the less than adequate attention to the social sector. The Government is pledged to investing larger resources in social infrastructure. The commitment to progressively step up spending on education to 6 per cent of GDP will be fulfilled. Every effort shall be made to provide basic health facilities to all. Simultaneously, potable drinking water shall be made available in every village and habitat, within a specified time-frame.

Our population growth rate is a matter of grave concern. The Government will soon formulate a National Population Policy which will aim at stabilising the population growth through, among other things, incentives and disincentives.

In a civil society, children are born to be happy. Unfortunately, large numbers of children in our society are born only to toil in factories, workshops and fields. My Government believes that children should be in schools and playgrounds and not toiling away their childhood. Apart from implementing the constitutional provision of free and compulsory primary education, Government will introduce a National Charter for Children which, among other things, will ensure that no child goes to sleep hungry. Children have rights, and these will be upheld.

Special efforts will be made to remove gender disparities and injustice that exist, especially in access to education, employment opportunities and political representation. Government will provide free education to women up to graduation so that India can become an example of a developing country overcoming the handicap of poor female literacy. By investing in

education for women, my Government will be investing in the future generations of Indians.

The pending legislation seeking to reserve 33 per cent seats for women in Parliament and State Assemblies will be taken up immediately. A Development Bank, the first of its kind, will be set up for women entrepreneurs.

By synergising legal, executive and societal efforts, the Government will strive for rapid social, economic and political empowerment and uplift of the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Backward Classes and Minorities. My Government will take all appropriate measures to uphold existing percentages of reservation in educational institutions at the State level. In keeping with its belief that governance must seek to unify rather than divide, Government will strive for social harmony and justice in place of social conflict and injustice.

Prosperity and economic well-being cannot be the privilege of a few; it must percolate to the last person in the last row. Hence, my Government will pursue the twin objectives of total eradication of poverty through generation of employment opportunities as well as sustaining a higher GDP growth of 7 to 8 per cent. The Central theme of my Government's national development plan will be "Berozgari Hatao".

Shelter is a basic human necessity. The Government will evolve policies to accelerate the construction of housing units and facilitate the participation of private sector in order to ensure that housing for all becomes a reality.

Urgent measures will be taken to substantially step up investment in the infrastructure sectors, including power, roads and bridges, railways, inland waterways, seaports, shipping, airports, telecommunications and information technology. Government will evolve a sound framework for fiscal and monetary policies.

The Government believes that India can – and shall – be built by Indians. No country that is largely or entirely dependent on resources from abroad can truly prosper. Hence, efforts will be made to increase national saving to 30 per cent of the GDP over the next five years. Foreign Direct Investment will be encouraged in the core sector of the economy and in physical infrastructure development.

About 40 per cent of our GDP comes from the unincorporated sector, which has so far been neglected. The Government proposes to evolve an appropriate policy framework for facilitating the growth of millions of small enterprises that exist in the country. For meeting the financial requirements of this crucial sector of the economy, which has a very high potential for growth and generation of employment opportunities, Government will consider the setting up of a dedicated Development Bank.

The Government will ensure, to make labour an equal partner in national reconstruction. Special care will be taken to look after the interests of agricultural labour who are largely unorganised.

Agriculture has suffered on account of declining investment. Government will halt this decline and earmark up to 60 per cent of Plan funds for this crucial segment of our economy. Subsidies will continue but they will be better targeted. Government is committed to re-establish our farmers as a strong and self-confident community enjoying the fruits of prosperity.

Apart from setting into motion plans for all-round development of rural India, my Government will also cushion farmers from unforeseen natural calamities by introducing effective crop insurance policies. All efforts will be made for rapid rural industrialisation, with special emphasis on agro-based industry.

Since maintenance of ecological balance is crucial for our survival, the Government will initiate institutional measures to ensure that all development programmes are in conformity with the principles of sustainable development. Government firmly believes that science and technology have a vital role to play in the achievement of sustainable development and transforming India into a prosperous, strong and self-confident nation.

On Centre-State relations, my Government will immediately act on the Sarkaria Commission's recommendations as well as seek ways and means for greater devolution of powers up to the panchayat level. The Governor's office has often been the centre of unseemly controversy. Raj Bhavans will not be used for securing political objectives.

The Government will set up a Committee to study the feasibility of treating all the 18 languages included in Schedule VIII of the Constitution as official languages.

The Government will attend to the States' demand for higher allocation of resources. A Backward Areas Commission will be set up to identify those areas which need extra assistance so that they do not lag behind in development.

Government is committed to initiate action to carve out Uttaranchal* in Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand in Bihar and Chhattisgarh in Madhya Pradesh. Delhi will be given full Statehood.

A National Water Policy which will provide for effective and prompt settlement of disputes and their time-bound implementation will be evolved.

Security of the nation and its citizens is paramount. My Government will not compromise on this. The nation's sovereignty and territorial integrity will be protected at all costs. We will not bow to any pressure on this front.

* Now known as Uttarakhand.

My Government joins the country in saluting the bravery of the personnel of our armed forces who are ever prepared to make sacrifices for the defence of the nation.

Every citizen has the right to feel secure and be free from fear. Government will strive to combat the menace of terrorism, subversion and insurgency that has come to haunt the common man. Violence has no place in a democracy. Differences should - and can - be resolved through dialogue and discussion.

My Government re-affirms India's commitment to peace among all nations, to the prosperity of the peoples of the world and to enhance its role in the international arena. We will strive for Asian solidarity and enhanced regional cooperation. Renewed efforts will be made to improve bilateral relationships with neighbouring countries without any third party mediation or interference.

One of the urgent issues before the world community is the re-structuring of the United Nations and its organs in order to make it more democratic and more representative of the contemporary world. Our views on the re-structuring of the United Nations have been projected before the world community and we will pursue our objective with vigour. As a founder member of the non-aligned movement, we, along with our fellow members, share the responsibility for ensuring a fair treatment for the developing countries and we will work together to attain this goal. Economic cooperation among developing countries is another priority of the non-aligned movement which we will seek to promote.

The Government will evolve a National Media Policy which will integrate the advances in various visual, audio and print media in order to bring about a cohesiveness of purpose, keeping in view our societal needs and cultural values.

Fifty years after Independence, the time has come to rejuvenate our institutions so that they are strong enough to meet the challenges of the future. The Government proposes to do so, as well as appoint a Commission to review the Constitution and make recommendations so that anomalous experiences of the past are not repeated in the future.

Earlier, I have referred to the Government's solemn commitment to providing the people of India with good governance. This can be possible only when Government rests on the foundation of morality and ethics. All around us today we find increasing cynicism towards morality in politics and ethics in governance. This has severely eroded faith in the State.

The Government proposes to make all those who hold public office accountable by enacting the Lok Pal Bill. The Official Secrets Act will be reviewed so that we can put in place a right to information law that will

enable transparency and integrity in decision making without compromising national security.

One of the causes of corruption and corrosion of values in our polity, as well as criminalisation of politics, stems from flaws in the electoral process. To ensure free, fair and fearless elections and to prevent the use of money and muscle power, Government will introduce a comprehensive Electoral Reforms Bill for which considerable ground work has already been done.

Consensus-building is an essential part of nation-building. Cooperation for the larger good of society has been the cornerstone of our civilisation. Ours is a multi-party democracy in which constructive dialogue, consultation and cooperation between the ruling and the opposition parties are essential for evolving a broad platform of national consensus.

The Government will, therefore, strive for evolving a consensus mode of governance as far as practicable. Some of the issues on which a national consensus is most urgently called for are electoral reforms; Centre-State relations; population policy; empowerment of women by legislating 33 per cent reservation for them in all elected bodies; resolution of inter-State water disputes; environmental protection and effective institutional guarantees for the welfare of the weaker sections of society while pursuing economic reforms.

Hon'ble Members, you have the rare privilege of contributing constructively to this process of consensus-building on which the future of our great nation depends critically in the 21st Century and the coming millennium.

This year is significant in more ways than one. It is the Golden Jubilee of our Independence. It also marks the 50th anniversary of the martyrdom of Mahatma Gandhi—one of the greatest men of this Century. We are the inheritors of the fruits of the sacrifices made by the Mahatma and other freedom fighters. We have the responsibility to live up to their dreams and ideals.

My best wishes are with you in this momentous task.

Jai Hind.

ADDRESS TO PARLIAMENT—22 FEBRUARY 1999

Lok Sabha	—	Twelfth Lok Sabha
Session	—	First Session of the Year
President of India	—	Shri K. R. Narayanan
Vice-President of India	—	Shri Krishan Kant
Prime Minister of India	—	Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee
Speaker, Lok Sabha	—	Shri G.M.C. Balayogi

HONOURABLE MEMBERS,

It gives me great pleasure to address this first session of both Houses of Parliament in 1999. An important session is ahead of you. I wish you the very best for the successful completion of the budgetary and the legislative tasks before Parliament.

As we approach a new century and a new millennium, our hopes, aspirations, and expectations for the coming era should be matched by sound and determined efforts now. The people have bestowed on this Parliament a unique opportunity to make the transition from this century to the next. With pride in India's many achievements since Independence, we should together accomplish the unfulfilled tasks and face the challenges of the future with self-confidence and determination. Parliament, as the country's apex elected body and beacon of the world's largest democracy, has the greatest responsibility to channel the national energies toward these efforts. As the Golden Jubilee of our Republic draws near, I am confident that the Honourable Members would discharge this responsibility with a unity of vision and direction.

I am happy to note that the National Agenda for Governance, which is the common policy covenant of the coalition Government, is being implemented faithfully. In the past eleven months, my Government has acted decisively on many fronts to promote people's welfare, accelerate economic development, strengthen internal and external security, and develop deeper bonds of friendship and cooperation with India's neighbours and other countries. Taken together, these initiatives have instilled a new sense of self-confidence among Indians, increasing our ability to effectively face the challenges of the present and the future.

A historic initiative of the Government has been the successful nuclear tests at Pokhran on May 11 and 13 last year making India a nuclear weapons State. The Government took this step after a careful appraisal of our national security needs. India's nuclear doctrine is based on minimum deterrence and it is firmly opposed to an arms race in the region. India has declared that she will never use her nuclear weapons against a non-nuclear nation and will never resort to a first strike against any nuclear weapons nation. We shall redouble our efforts to champion a cause that has always been sacred to us—namely, securing world peace through speedy, universal, and comprehensive dismantling of all weapons of mass destruction. Continuing the national consensus on foreign policy matters, the Government has been working vigorously for global nuclear disarmament on a comprehensive and non-discriminatory basis.

Some countries have imposed technology restrictions on us. The nation is meeting this unwarranted action with determination and I am confident that we shall emerge stronger and more self-reliant. I would like to felicitate the Armed Forces, our nuclear scientists, the Defence Research and Development Organization and the Defence Production units for their concerted efforts in developing indigenous capabilities to meet the requirements of advanced technologies and equipment for our defence and developmental needs.

The nation expresses its gratitude to the brave jawans and officers of the Armed Forces and other paramilitary forces who have laid down their lives in fighting the proxy war unleashed by terrorists. The country recognizes the sacrifices of those posted in places like Siachen and other remote border areas in the service of the nation. The role of the defence forces in aiding the civilian authorities in handling exigencies like the cyclone in Kutch and in relief and rescue operations for victims of natural calamities has been exemplary.

The Government has set up the National Security Council. This will go a long way in providing a holistic and in-depth analysis of military, economic, and political threats to India and help in evolving an integrated approach to decisions impinging on national security.

The Government is firmly committed to uphold secularism, which has deep roots in our society and polity. The recent incidents in Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, and Orissa* have caused us anguish and concern. However, these have to be seen as an aberration, which do not reflect the national ethos. The Government is fully committed to the protection of minorities. State Governments have been advised to quickly apprehend culprits in all such cases. The Government's record in maintaining peace and communal harmony is shown by the fact that 1998 had the fewest deaths due to communal violence in the last ten years.

* Now known as Odisha.

Ensuring internal security is the primary duty of any Government. I note with considerable satisfaction that terrorism and subversive activities in various parts of the country are being effectively contained. Owing to the sustained pressure, vigil, and concerted actions of the security forces and the State Administration and active cooperation of the people, there has been a conspicuous turnaround in the law and order situation in Jammu and Kashmir during 1998. This is reflected, among other things, in the recovery of tourist traffic, which had virtually dried up in the preceding decade. The Government will continue its efforts to strengthen peace in the State and revive the normal economic, social, cultural and educational activity. It is committed to ensure the early return of the many Kashmiris to their homes and hearths, in the wake of the restoration of normalcy.

In the North-East, public security is being constantly improved and upgraded. The modernization of State police forces emphasizing the supply of vehicles, equipment, arms, and ammunition, has been taken up to improve the law and order situation. This is being accompanied by increased assistance for economic development. The Government of India is considering repeal of the Illegal Migrant (Determination by Tribunals) Act, 1983. The decision to hold the National Games in Imphal is an indication of the many possibilities that exist for accelerating the process of emotional integration and bringing the people of the North-East into the national mainstream.

Non-Resident Indians are a part of the great global Indian family. Their emotional, cultural, social and economic links with India are a source of great strength to us. The Government has approved the Persons of Indian Origin (PIO) Card Scheme. This will permit visa-free entry and offer other facilities to persons of Indian origin who are citizens of other countries.

The National Agenda for Governance calls for an accelerated and well-balanced economic development as a precondition for fulfilling the goal of *Berozgari Hatao* (eradication of unemployment). The Government has set the target of an annual GDP growth rate of 6.5 per cent. The Indian economy, however, has had to face a very adverse situation owing to the general slowdown in the global economy, as illustrated by the sharp decline in global trade and market crises in many countries around the world, including those in South-East Asia. This led to a fall in capital flows to emerging markets. Many inherited bottlenecks in the domestic economy compounded these external challenges.

In spite of these external and internal odds, the economy has fared reasonably well and our GDP growth rate should be one of the highest among the developing countries. Despite considerable volatility in the currency markets elsewhere, the Indian rupee has remained stable within a manageable exchange range. Our foreign currency reserves have grown to US \$ 27.9 billion as on February 17, 1999. The excellent response to the Resurgent India Bonds, which mobilized US \$ 4.2 billion, is a clear manifestation of the Non-Resident Indians' continuing commitment to India.

Presently, the finances of both the Central and the State Governments are under severe strain. The aggregate general Government deficit has increased in recent years. Besides having inflationary potential, this is causing severe consequences for interest rates, investment and growth. It is, therefore, critically important for both Central and State Governments to restore health to their finances by reducing the revenue and fiscal deficits. This calls for tight control over wasteful and low-priority expenditure and determined efforts to mobilize resources, including appropriate cost recovery policies.

The Government has acceded to the Paris Convention for the Protection of Industrial Property and the Patent Cooperation Treaty. This will improve industrial climate by increasing information flow, provide better protection for Indian inventors, and encourage technological development. The Insurance Regulatory Authority Bill, 1998 is similarly intended to strengthen the insurance sector and enable it to seize the opportunities that globalization offers.

Our Space programme continues to grow from strength to strength. The IRS-P4 satellite for remote sensing is being launched this year along with the INSAT-2E. The next launch of the PSLV will also carry the Korean KITSAT and the German TUBSAT satellites. This will be another milestone in the development of our Space programme. Success in this area holds great promise for better telecommunications and broadcasting services, as well as for distance learning, mapping of land and water resources, and crop forecasting.

Agriculture is the mainstay of our economy and the lifeline of a majority of our population. I extend my hearty felicitations to our hardworking *kisans* who, in spite of many odds, have continued to increase farm production and feed the nation. I am happy to inform the members that the expected milk production of 720 lakh tonnes in 1998-99 will make India the world's largest milk producer. Increased growth in production of foodgrains, pulses, and other crops will play an important role in the revival of the economy. It is a matter of pride that India now ranks among the top three countries in wheat production.

The Government is formulating a new National Policy on Agriculture to strengthen our agriculture and agro-based industries. The policy seeks to boost irrigation, especially through small and medium projects, increase the viability of small and marginal farmers, and enhance farm productivity through better management of natural resources and introduction of technological and institutional changes. The focus will specifically be on raising food production in the country's vast rain-fed areas and in the Eastern and North-Eastern regions. Efforts will be made to expand and revitalize agricultural cooperatives and other rural credit institutions, to

enable them to seize the opportunities of economic liberalization. The policy also aims at maximizing production in horticulture, floriculture, medicinal plants, and afforestation, especially to increase our exports in these areas.

Management of prices of agricultural commodities is a critical need, since it concerns both farmers and consumers. One of the major impediments in this area has been the lack of accurate and timely information. A National Crop Forecasting Centre has been set up to provide advance warning of critical commodities about their supplies and prices. A special cell has been created in the Ministry of Food and Consumer Affairs to closely monitor prices of essential commodities. The cell is servicing a high-powered Price Monitoring Board, which is meeting every week to review the price situation. A Bill to amend the Essential Commodities Act to check hoarding and black-marketing more effectively is being introduced in this session of Parliament.

Optimal usage of water is critical to our economic progress. Improper use of water, besides causing economic loss, can lead to degradation of lands and the environment, and cause increased social tension. A National Commission is currently preparing an integrated plan for the development of water resources for multiple use. Its report, which is expected this year, will recommend short-term and long-term measures to achieve integrated and efficient management of the nation's diverse water resources. The progress in developing a consensus in respect of the long running Cauvery water dispute last year was a triumph of the co-operative and national spirit. The importance of this breakthrough lies in the possibility of following a similar approach to help resolve other long standing inter-State river disputes that are holding up many big development projects.

The Government accords high priority to the rapid development of infrastructure, which is the key to accelerated growth in all sectors of the economy. The Task Force on Infrastructure, set up under the aegis of the Planning Commission, has finalized the blueprint for the construction of a six-lane National Integrated Highway Project with an East-West corridor linking Silchar to Saurashtra and a North-South corridor linking Kashmir to Kanyakumari. It incorporates and further extends the earlier Golden Quadrangle project linking the four metros of Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, and Calcutta*. Expressways of international standards will be built at suitable stretches. Work has already begun on this most ambitious infrastructure project since Independence. Sufficient resources will be mobilized for implementing it from multiple points in the country. Private sector participation is being enabled through build-own-transfer schemes.

The Task Force on Infrastructure has prepared a draft of the National Integrated Transport Policy that seeks to maximize the synergy between railways, roads, ports, airports, and inland waterways. Based on the

* Now known as Kolkata.

recommendations of the Task Force, the Government has decided to undertake a major exercise to modernize and expand the airports in the country. As a first step, five airports—Mumbai, Delhi, Calcutta*, Chennai, and Bangalore®—will be corporatized.

Information Technology presents the greatest single developmental opportunity for India in the 21st century. The entire edifice of tomorrow's knowledge-based economy and society will rest on its foundation. India's natural advantage in establishing global dominance in IT is today widely recognized. This recognition is based on the shining success already achieved by our IT professionals and entrepreneurs both in India and Indians working abroad.

Consequent to the recommendations of the Task Force on Information Technology, the Government has taken a number of decisions to give a big boost to software development with the goal of achieving exports of US \$ 50 billion by 2008. An Action Plan to make India a major centre for hardware design, manufacture, and exports is also on the anvil. For the first time, an Internet Service Provider Policy has been announced to accelerate the spread of Internet services in the country. In addition, the Government plans to unveil major initiatives to promote computer training and IT-based education; creation of Indian content on the Internet, especially in Indian languages; universal use of IT in administration, banking, the commercial sector, and in utilities; and IT for rural development through "Wired Villages" projects in many states.

The Government recognizes the crucial role that telecommunications will play in making India's dreams in information technology come true. Accordingly, it has set up a Group on Telecommunications that is finalizing a New Telecom Policy. The policy will, *inter alia*, take into account the revolutionary phenomenon of the convergence of computers, telecom, television, multimedia, and consumer electronics. It will aim at vastly increasing teledensity in India, especially in rural areas; bringing high-speed connectivity to critical sectors of the economy; and ensuring affordable telecom services. These objectives will be achieved in a better competitive environment by creating a stronger regulatory framework.

Major advances are being made in the power sector due to a proactive approach of the Government to remove the bottlenecks in clearing a large number of pending power projects. Very soon, many independent power projects will attain financial closure, leading to their expeditious construction. The Government recently held a conference of Chief Ministers and Power Ministers of States specifically to discuss faster progress in this critical infrastructure sector. I am happy to note that, more and more State

* Now known as Kolkata.

® Now known as Bengaluru.

Governments are setting up Regulatory Commissions, restructuring their electricity boards to cut down transmission and distribution losses; and facilitating the inflow of expected investments. There has to be a national consensus that electricity generation, transmission, and distribution being commercial activities, user charges should be recovered fully. If there is any conscious decision to charge less, subsidies have to be provided for by the concerned State Government in a transparent manner.

India is committed to the peaceful use of nuclear power. The work on the Kaiga Atomic Power Unit 2 and the Rajasthan Atomic Power Project Unit 3 continued; these units are expected to become critical this year. The Kalpakkam Reprocessing Plant—the third, and the largest reprocessing plant built by us—was dedicated to the nation in September, 1998.

The Government has continued its commitment to the promotion of non-conventional energy. India now ranks fourth in the world in its use. Besides, as India is the largest producer of cane sugar, we are implementing the world's largest bagasse-based co-generation programme in our sugar mills.

A home of their own is the dream of every Indian family. In pursuance of this, the Government has formulated a new Housing and Habitat Policy 1998 that will facilitate the building of an additional twenty lakh houses a year. This will also create employment opportunities for skilled and unskilled on a large scale, besides giving a boost to our steel, cement, and construction material industries. After wide consultations with the interests involved, major roadblocks in the path of the housing industry have been removed and others are on their way to removal.

The Government has decided to create a Technological Upgradation Fund for strengthening the competitive advantage of the Indian textile industry. The scheme will commence from April 1, 1999. Separately, the Ministry of Agriculture would soon launch a Cotton Technology Mission.

Small-scale, cottage, and village industries, as well as the handloom and handicrafts sectors, generate a lot of employment. To help the small-scale sector, the Interest on Delayed Payment to Small Scale and Ancillary Industrial Undertakings Act, 1993, has been amended. The Prime Minister's Rozgar Yojana has also been revised to give the programme an added impetus.

The National Agenda for Governance committed to free industry from bureaucratic control. The Government has delicensed industries like coal, lignite, petroleum products, sugar, and certain bulk drugs. It has also decided to liberalize technology imports by allowing automatic clearance for projects appraised by financial institutions, public-sector projects, and projects of private companies that have a good track record.

The Government is also reforming public-sector undertakings through restructuring, rehabilitation, disinvestment, and strategic sale. A separate Cabinet Committee will oversee and expedite decisions on disinvestment and restructuring plans.

The Second National Commission on Labour has been set up after three decades to suggest rationalization of existing labour laws in the organized sector and an umbrella legislation for ensuring minimum protection to the workers in the unorganized sector. The Commission will consider the emerging economic environment involving rapid technological changes that necessitate quick changes in methods, timing, and conditions of work. It will recommend changes in existing laws to bring them in tune with the future labour market requirements. It will also recommend improvements in the effectiveness of the measures relating to social security, occupational health and safety, minimum wages, and linkage between wages and productivity. It will suggest safeguards and facilities required for women and handicapped workers.

Ensuring the well-being of all our citizens is the first duty of any Government. Investment in literacy, education, particularly primary education, health, sanitation, and drinking water is a major priority for the Government, as these determine the quality of life of our citizens and improve India's standing in the Human Development Index. In the last Budget, the Government considerably increased the allocation for the Social Sector. This commitment will continue. In addition, the Government will take further measures to strengthen the social safety nets for the poorest sections of our society.

Pulse polio immunization is one of the greatest health-care success stories in recent years. Encouraged by the tremendous experience gained in this campaign, the country should now aim to achieve zero incidence of polio by the end of 2000, as per the goal set by the World Health Organization. NGOs are being involved in creating awareness about public health. To promote Indian systems of medicine, the Department of Family Welfare has incorporated Ayurveda in the Reproductive Child Health Programme.

The nation faces a particularly grave health challenge—namely, the rapid spread of AIDS. The Government has drawn up a draft National AIDS Policy and National Blood Policy. This will check the proliferation of this dreaded disease; improve services for the care of the people living with AIDS both in hospitals and at homes; and provide an enabling socio-economic environment so that all sections of population can protect themselves from HIV infection. Drug addiction has been an important factor in the spread of HIV. The Government is also committed to pursue the programmes for drug de-addiction and rehabilitation of persons who have been drug addicts.

The Ministry of Welfare was renamed as the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment on Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar's birthday last year. To promote self-employment among scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and backward classes, the Government has more than tripled the authorized capital of the National Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Finance and Development Corporation and the National Backward Classes Finance and Development Corporation. More steps will be taken for their speedy economic development.

The Government has launched the Rural Women's Development and Empowerment Project in six states. A National Policy for Empowerment of Women is being finalized. A new initiative in child development would be the setting up of a National Commission for Children.

The Government has evolved a National Policy for Older Persons to address the emerging aspirations of the many older people in healthcare, shelter, welfare, life, property, and financial security.

The Rehabilitation Council of India has been reorganized to standardize and expand the training of rehabilitation professionals working with disability. A specially designed Prime Minister's Programme for the Mentally Challenged has been launched, covering fifteen thousand children. More will be covered later. A National Trust for the welfare of persons with autism, cerebral palsy, mental retardation, and multiple disability will be established soon after the Bill, being introduced in the Parliament in the current session, is passed.

Development of the social sector, however, is not dependent on increased financial resources alone. Investment of better and more committed administrative and managerial resources is equally critical. There is a great need to sensitize the Government machinery at both the Central and State levels. I must emphasize here that no tangible progress will be made unless the officers and employees concerned adopt a participative approach to involve the people in the implementation of these schemes.

The sustained investment in higher education and other facilities is beginning to pay off. Many young Indians are doing exceedingly well in India and abroad. As India's economy grows, more opportunities will be available for our youth to show their mettle. In sports too, the momentum is picking up. The medal tally at the Asian Games last year, including the gold medal in hockey, is the highest since 1982. There is immense sports talent in our society of nearly 100 crore people. We must intensify our efforts to discover and promote this talent to improve India's standing in international sports.

The Government has set up a Commission to review Administrative Laws. The Commission has presented its report, which is under consideration. The Government is also planning to bring forward a Freedom of Information Bill.

Both Houses of Parliament have frequently discussed electoral reforms. To impart much-needed momentum to them, the Government constituted a committee headed by Shri Indrajit Gupta, a senior and respected Member of Parliament, to suggest measures on State Funding of Elections and other connected matters. This committee submitted its report on January 14, 1999. It suggested partial funding of elections in kind by the Government to the candidates of recognized political parties. The Government will finalize its recommendations in consultation with all the parties.

Strengthening the Panchayat Raj system is at the heart of the challenge to revitalize the Indian democracy. India lives in her villages. The quality of governance has, therefore, to be judged by the quality of the Government-Citizen interface at the grassroots. Many schemes have been formulated to improve the functioning of these Panchayats, especially by educating its member to work better. I must note here that both the need and the scope for improvement in this area are immense.

The Ministry of Rural Affairs and Employment, in consultation with the State Governments is restructuring many of the schemes for the betterment of the lives of the rural poor. This restructuring must give Panchayats and Municipalities a greater role in the sanction and disbursement of benefits to avoid procedural delays.

Honourable Members, continuity and consensus are the hallmark of India's foreign policy. Our relationship with our neighbours was considerably strengthened this year. The visits by the Prime Minister of Bangladesh to Delhi in June 1998 and Calcutta* in January 1999 contributed in better understanding with our eastern neighbour. My visit to Nepal in May 1998 and the visit of the King of Nepal to India, as our special guest for this year's Republic Day celebrations, consolidated the deep-rooted friendship and underlined the goodwill and warmth that characterize our ties with Nepal. The Transit Treaty with Nepal was also renewed. The King of Bhutan's visit to India in October 1998 provided new impetus to the close friendship and cooperation that India and Bhutan have traditionally enjoyed. Likewise, we were glad to receive a visit by the President of Maldives, with which country we have very close ties.

The Prime Minister visited Pakistan on February 20-21, 1999 on the inaugural run of the Delhi-Lahore Bus Service. During his visit the Prime Minister conveyed to the Government and people of Pakistan India's deep desire for peace and friendship with them and to develop a comprehensive structure of cooperation for the benefit of the two peoples. The Prime Minister and the Pakistan Prime Minister signed the Lahore Declaration which is a landmark for the peace and security of the two countries.

India and Pakistan will now work to enter into agreements to put in place far-reaching Confidence Building Measures. The two countries also identified new and significant areas of cooperation such as Information

* Now known as Kolkata.

Technology and decided to address humanitarian issues at a ministerial level on an urgent basis. It is our hope that the Prime Minister's historic initiative for the welfare of the peoples of the two countries and his reiteration that a secure, stable and prosperous Pakistan is in India's interest will mark a new chapter in our bilateral ties.

India seeks to strengthen and deepen our historic and friendly relations with China in all spheres of mutual benefit and is looking forward to continuing the dialogue with that country.

In keeping with our policy of strengthening regional cooperation, the Prime Minister announced some bold initiatives at the SAARC Summit in Colombo in July 1998 to speed up trade liberalization in the region by lifting the Quantitative Restrictions for SAARC countries on August 1, 1998. This demonstrates our commitment to the creation of a South Asian Free Trade Area. During the visit of Sri Lanka's President in December 1998, a historic free-trade agreement was signed between the two countries. This will allow closer economic cooperation and can be a model for other SAARC countries.

The Prime Minister participated in the 12th NAM Summit in Durban highlighting the relevance and importance of non-alignment in international relations. The outcome of the Summit, vindicated India's stand on disarmament. It endorsed our proposal for an International Conference, preferably in 1999, to agree, before the end of the millennium, on a phased programme for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons within a specified time.

The Government considers the countries of West and Central Asia important partners. In keeping with the priority we attach to this region, the first bilateral visit abroad of Prime Minister was to Oman, with whom we are building close economic linkages. My visit to Turkey in September 1998 helped renew the long-standing ties between our two nations. The visit of the President of Tajikistan in January 1999 to India was a useful opportunity to renew our links and share perceptions on regional development in Central Asia.

Our ties with East and South-East Asian countries and with ASEAN as an entity are developing satisfactorily. The Prime Minister of Republic of Korea visited India for the inauguration of the IETF '99. This is another concrete step in strengthening our economic relations with East and South-East Asia. And we were happy to receive a visit from the Crown Prince of Thailand.

During the visit to India of the Prime Minister of Russia in December 1998, both sides reaffirmed their close partnership as well as their determination to improve our ties by covering many more areas. Our ties with Bulgaria receiving a further impetus through the visit to India by its President in October 1998. It gave us great pleasure to receive a visit by the Governor General of Canada in March 1998. The first ever Presidential visit from Estonia in February 1999 laid the foundation for a relationship full of promise.

I visited Germany, Luxembourg, and Portugal in September 1998 and had very useful discussions with the leadership of these countries. In September 1998, Prime Minister Vajpayee visited France, with whom our relations now are one of shared perceptions, deep understanding, and full of promise. The visits by the President of Switzerland, the Crown Prince of Belgium, and the Prime Minister of Luxembourg in January 1999 helped bring these important European nations closer to India.

The enduring foundation of India's relationship with Africa was strengthened by Prime Minister's visits to Namibia, South Africa, and Mauritius in August-September 1998 and to Morocco in February 1999. The Prime Minister of Mauritius visited India in October 1998.

We are now strengthening our relationship with Latin American and Caribbean countries. My own visit to Brazil and Peru in April-May 1998 and Prime Minister's visit to Trinidad and Tobago and Jamaica in February 1999, reflect the growing importance that my Government attaches to reaching out to the Latin American countries.

The need for strengthened international cooperation through a revitalized United Nations cannot be over-emphasized. India has been working with other Member States for the reform of the United Nations to make the organization more effective and responsive to the requirements of the Member States.

President's Rule was imposed recently in Goa and Bihar under Article 356 of the Constitution. Goa was suffering from prolonged political instability, leading to paralysis of administration in the State. There was a near-unanimous recommendation from the MLAs for dissolution of the State Assembly to enable early elections. Bihar has witnessed a series of massacres of innocent people in recent times, many of them targeted at Dalits. These mass killings have brought immense pain and anguish to all of us. The first duty of any government is to protect the life and property of citizens, especially those who are poor and socially oppressed. In both cases, situations had arisen in which the government of these States could not be carried on in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution. The Goa State Assembly has been dissolved, and the Bihar State Assembly has been kept under suspended animation.

Honourable Members, you have the rare privilege of contributing to the success of all these diverse initiatives and efforts aimed at strengthening India in all areas of our national life. I am confident that you will use the ensuing session of Parliament, as also the other sessions in the year, for constructive debate, leading to successful conclusion of all the scheduled business. I wish you well in your endeavour.

Jai Hind.

ADDRESS TO PARLIAMENT—25 OCTOBER 1999

Lok Sabha	—	Thirteenth Lok Sabha
Session	—	First Session after the 13th General Election
President of India	—	Shri K. R. Narayanan
Vice-President of India	—	Shri Krishan Kant
Prime Minister of India	—	Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee
Speaker, Lok Sabha	—	Shri G.M.C. Balayogi

HONOURABLE MEMBERS,

I am pleased to address this first session of both Houses of Parliament after the elections to the 13th Lok Sabha. I extend a warm welcome to all of you, including the newly elected members.

The just-concluded parliamentary election was the last of this century. It has given us the first Lok Sabha of the next century. As behoves a great nation with a history of many millennia, it is natural for India, at this historical juncture, to look at her past with pride and her future with hope and confidence. We must also look at our many missed opportunities that have prevented Free India from becoming a land of all-round progress and prosperity. Let us pledge today to use our collective strength, determination, and a sense of national purpose to meet the great future that beckons our country.

The coming year marks the 50th anniversary of the creation of the Indian Republic. The adoption of our great Constitution, authored by Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar and other distinguished members of the Constituent Assembly, was a proud event in the history of this ancient nation reborn as a Free and Modern Republic. The majestic words of the Preamble, beginning with “*We the People of India...*” and carrying the epochal message of unity, sovereignty, democracy, and equality, still reverberate in our ears. They motivate us to rededicate ourselves to the ideals of our glorious Freedom Struggle and the enlightened Constitution that it gave birth to.

They inspire us to work for the realisation of the ideal that Mahatma Gandhi set before the Constitution much before India became free. As far back as 1931, Gandhiji wrote: “*I shall strive for a Constitution,*

which will release India from all thralldom and patronage. I shall work for an India in which the poorest shall feel that it is their country in whose making they have an effective voice; an India in which there shall be no high class and low class of people; an India in which all communities shall live in perfect harmony... This is the India of my dreams. I shall be satisfied with nothing less.” Can we be satisfied with anything less?

The just-concluded elections have again demonstrated the strength of Indian democracy and the maturity of the Indian voter. The electorate has put an end to the phase of instability at the Centre by giving a clear and decisive mandate to my Government. The participation of regional parties in managing the affairs of the country at the national level in a stable and coherent coalition augurs well for our democracy and federal polity.

I am happy to note that the “Agenda for a Proud, Prosperous India”, which is the Government’s common policy document, reaffirms its faith in the principles of Secularism, Social Justice, Federal Harmony, Probity, and Socio-economic Equity. Rooted in the eternal values of our ancient civilisation, these are also the cornerstones of Modern India. Government will fully implement the promises made in its common Agenda.

The interregnum between the dissolution of the last Lok Sabha and elections to the 13th Lok Sabha witnessed a grave challenge to our national security. The armed aggression in Kargil by Pakistan to occupy strategic territory on the Indian side of the Line of Control, was decisively foiled by our brave jawans, airmen, and officers. Pakistan suffered a double defeat—both on the battlefield and on the diplomatic front. Today we pay our grateful tribute to the martyrs of the Kargil war. Their sacrifice and heroism will forever remain a source of inspiration and strength to the nation.

There was unprecedented support across the nation for our jawans fighting Pakistani intruders in Kargil. The entire nation stood as one. Common people, who have little to spare, made generous contributions for the welfare of our brave jawans and their families. We have been actively looking after the rehabilitation needs of the families of our brave soldiers who laid down their lives during “Operation Vijay”, or who have been invalidated due to injuries sustained during the war. A package of assistance for the welfare of such families is being implemented.

While there is every reason for us to rejoice at India’s victory in the Kargil war, there is little room for complacency. This is evident from the sudden spurt in terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir and other parts of the country and the recent attacks on security forces following the Kargil conflict. Government is determined to thwart all disruptive activities and maintain vigil on all fronts. The Kargil conflict has also underlined the need for modernisation of our defence forces. Government will ensure that our defence forces are fully equipped to meet any challenge to our national security.

We remain firmly committed to global nuclear disarmament on a universal and non-discriminatory basis. At the same time, Government will ensure that India's strategic autonomy is preserved. This will be done in a way that India's legitimate security concerns are suitably addressed, in keeping with our own assessment of the evolving international security environment. The National Security Council will advise the Government in this regard and, also, in the establishment of a credible nuclear deterrent. A Draft Nuclear Doctrine has already been prepared and presented for public debate.

During the current year, the Indian economy is expected to grow over 6 per cent. Inflation as measured by the Wholesale Price Index is around two per cent, which is the lowest in the last two decades. Notwithstanding an adverse global economic environment last year, our balance of payments position has remained comfortable and our foreign exchange reserves are at a record level of nearly \$ 33 billion.

However, despite these achievements, the challenge to overcome the scourge of poverty remains a daunting one. Crores of our people, particularly in villages, are still to be provided with basic services such as clean drinking water, reasonable shelter, primary education, health services, and roads. Illiteracy is still a curse for large masses of our people—especially among Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, OBCs, minorities, and rural women. Millions of young men and women continue to be victims of unemployment. We have failed to stabilise our population, despite being one of the first countries to initiate an official programme for this purpose. We must redress these serious inadequacies as we chart a new course for the future.

The broad theme guiding the policies and programmes of my Government is: "Faster Growth with Employment and Equity". Government is committed to create one crore additional employment opportunities each year. These will be mainly in the areas of agriculture, agri-based businesses, small-scale and cottage industries, housing and construction, services, and self-employment. However, unless India grows in the coming years at a rate of at least seven to eight per cent, there is no way we can eradicate poverty and unemployment. Experience, both domestic and international, suggests that rapid and multi-sectoral growth is possible only by pursuing a bold strategy of economic reforms. The nation's re-oriented strategy of development will have to rest on a triad in which the Government provides a strong policy and regulatory leadership; the private sector brings the dynamism and efficiency of the competitive environment; and local democratic institutions and the civil society brings enthusiastic participation by the people. This strategy demands a new pro-development mindset in every section of society, polity, and administration, creating a strong national consensus for a bold departure from the past.

Guided by this overarching vision, Government has decided to give topmost priority to Social Sector development. In the field of education, a separate Department of Primary Education and Literacy has been created. An action plan to give greater thrust to female literacy and primary education will be shortly announced. Further, a programme for provision of primary school buildings for all unserved habitations will be formulated. Private sector participation in higher and technical education will be actively promoted.

A National Health Policy will soon be presented, whose twin aims will be the provision of adequate primary health services to all citizens and a stabilisation of population. Reproductive and Child Health services will be further strengthened through greater community participation. The use of Indian systems of medicine will be greatly encouraged. Greater attention will be paid to the welfare of the disabled and the aged through joint Government and Non-Government initiatives. Private sector participation will be encouraged in tertiary health services, including speciality hospitals, diagnostic centres, and related activities.

Government will give renewed thrust to improving Rural Infrastructure. The newly created Department of Drinking Water Supply in the Ministry of Rural Development will implement a programme to provide clean drinking water to all villages in the next five years. A Programme for Rural Connectivity through construction of all-weather roads to connect all villages will soon be started. Fifty per cent of the diesel cess will be earmarked for this programme. A massive "Shelter for All" programme will be taken up to facilitate construction of twenty lakh additional housing units each year. Of these, thirteen lakh will be built in rural areas.

Prosperity and employment generation in rural areas depend crucially on a fast-growing agricultural sector, complemented by a nationwide network of agro-based industries. In agriculture, Government will address issues such as development of rain-fed farming, soil conservation, wasteland development, watershed management, agriculture credit system, promotion of horticulture and floriculture, expansion of the cold-storage network, fertiliser pricing, balanced use of chemical fertilisers, and promotion of organic manure. Cooperative sector reforms, issues relating to crop insurance, post-harvest management, pricing and procurement policy for agricultural produce, forecasting and early warning systems etc., will also be thrust areas in the new policy. An action plan for the early completion of pending irrigation projects in a time-bound manner will be taken up.

Scarcity of water is fast becoming a serious national problem. Unless water is conserved and managed properly, there will not be enough to meet the country's burgeoning demand from households, farms, and industries. Government will present a Water Policy that will facilitate the creation of appropriate administrative, commercial, and technological solutions to ensure

that the present and future generations are not deprived of this life-sustaining resource. Inter-State water disputes will be equitably resolved. The needs of environmental protection and afforestation will be fully addressed in achieving the goal of sustainable development.

The most obvious constraint to rapid economic growth today is the inadequacy of our infrastructure. Government shall take urgent steps to improve the situation, guided by the principle of greater private investment within a strong regulatory mechanism. In the power and energy sector, the Centre will work closely with State Governments for time-bound corporatisation of the State Electricity Boards. Generation, transmission, and distribution of electricity will be unbundled as separate activities. Tariff reform, privatisation of transmission and distribution of power, and setting up of State Electricity Regulatory Commissions will be accelerated. A Task Force under the Finance Minister was set up some time back to prepare a "Hydrocarbon—Vision 2020" report. The recommendations of this Group will be implemented. An accelerated timeframe for dismantling the administrative price regime will also be finalised quickly. The Coal Mines Nationalisation Act will be suitably amended to remove hurdles in the growth of this vital industry.

The Ministry of Surface Transport has been reorganised into the Department of Road Transport and Highways and the Department of Shipping. The Integrated Transport Policy shall be soon finalised. NHAI will be strengthened to enable it to quickly implement the National Highways Development Project including the East-West and North-South corridors. A Dedicated Road Fund will be created. A Railway Reforms Commission will soon be set up to evolve a new resource mobilisation strategy, rationalise tariff, prioritise the project portfolio, and urgently fulfil the unmet needs of railway safety. High priority will be accorded to improving the efficiency of existing ports, corporatisation of some of our major ports, and private sector participation in setting up new ports. A new Civil Aviation Policy will be formulated, designed to secure India's needs in the 21st century. The programme for modernisation of our airports through private sector participation would also be implemented in a time-bound manner.

The New Telecom Policy-1999 shall be expeditiously implemented to achieve the objective of providing universal access to world-class telecom services at the lowest possible price to the public. Rapid spread of rural telephony will be promoted through a special plan to cover all the uncovered villages in a time-bound manner. Corporatisation of the Department of Telecommunications as India Telecom will be speedily implemented. As a first step, a new Department of Telecom Services has been created to separate the policy-making function from the service provision function. The TRAI will be strengthened to increase investor confidence and create a level playing field between public and private operators by suitably

amending the TRAI Act. A Group of Experts will be constituted to recommend a new legislation in place of the Indian Telegraph Act, 1885 to enable India to seize the new opportunities created by the technological convergence between telecom, computers, television, and electronics.

A new Ministry of Information Technology has been created to be the nodal institutional mechanism for facilitating all the initiatives in the Central Government, State Governments, academia, the Indian private sector, and successful Indian IT professionals abroad. The Ministry will implement a comprehensive action plan to make India an IT Superpower in the early part of the next century and achieve a target of \$ 50 billion in software exports by 2008. It will accelerate the Internet revolution in India, emphasising the creation of useful content in Indian languages. IT-enabled services, IT education, hardware manufacturing and exports, e-commerce, and Internet-based enterprises will be actively promoted. These have the potential to create employment and business opportunities for hundreds of thousands of young Indians. A legislation to promote E-Commerce will be introduced soon. A Task Force for the pharmaceutical and other knowledge-based enterprises will be constituted for making India a world leader in this sector. I am happy to note that India is well on the way to ensure Y2K compliance in all our critical computer systems before the end of this year.

All these infrastructure initiatives will lay a firm foundation for the revival and expansion of India's industrial base—especially the vast and hitherto neglected sector of small-scale and cottage industries, rural craftsmen and artisans, and the KVIC. Special emphasis will be laid to meet the multiple needs of this sector such as timely and adequate credit including the implementation of a credit guarantee scheme, marketing, technological upgradation, skill improvement—and, above all, removal of bureaucratic harassment. Rules will be suitably modified in some carefully identified industries in the SSI sector, which have a huge potential for exports and employment generation. Government will make comprehensive and sustained efforts to solve the long-pending problems of India's textile industry, especially in view of the challenges in the post-MFA regime. Necessary steps for modernisation and restructuring will be taken to restore Indian textiles to their traditional pre-eminence in global markets.

Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) plays a crucial role in rapid economic development by bringing in modern technology and management practices. Government will review existing FDI regime in order to bring in greater transparency, cut delays in project implementation, and create an enabling policy to ensure FDI inflow of at least \$ 10 billion per year. There shall be an automatic route for FDI clearances except in a small list of carefully chosen areas.

We will evolve a programme for achieving fiscal rectitude through improved expenditure management, undertake far-reaching tax reforms,

and secure speedier restructuring and disinvestment of public sector undertakings, including strategic sales. The Expenditure Commission, which would be setup shortly will review all direct and indirect subsidies, examine all ongoing expenditure streams and schemes, as well as lay down the roadmap for downsizing of Government. A Task Force on Tax Reforms shall be constituted to recommend a time-bound programme of reforms of tax structures, both direct and indirect. Reform of banks and financial institutions, would be accelerated by reducing non-performing assets and strict application of prudential norms. Necessary legislation on bankruptcy, foreclosure, debt recovery, and mergers would be enacted to underpin financial sector reforms.

We are fully committed to promote the interests of labour, especially those in the unorganised sector, in the new environment of economic reforms. The Second Labour Commission will study the changes needed in various labour laws in order to better achieve the welfare of labour, faster generation of additional employment, accelerated industrial growth and exports.

Government will institute effective measures to eliminate chronic delays in the dispensation of justice, through suitable reforms in the judicial system. Independence of Judges shall be fully respected and efforts made to attract the best talent to the Bench. Government had undertaken a study some time back on which of the existing laws, rules, and regulations have become obsolete and are proving an obstacle to rapid socio-economic development. Based on the recommendations of this study, all such outmoded and inessential laws will be repealed.

As a member of the World Trade Organisation, India will continue to interact with other nations to further protect and promote our national interests. Towards this objective, Government is preparing a well-thought out strategy for the forthcoming Seattle Conference. My Government will ensure that in any new round of WTO negotiations, India's national interests are fully protected, and that our gains from global trade are maximised.

Government will intensify the promotion of science and technology—in education, basic research, and application for meeting the critical challenges of socio-economic development. Interaction between Indian industry, CSIR laboratories, universities, IITs, DRDO, ICAR, ICMR, and the departments of Space, Atomic Energy, Biotechnology, and Ocean Development will be strengthened. In keeping with the message of “Jai Vigyan”, special efforts will be made to nurture scientific temper and problem-solving attitude among our children, and also to encourage promising young scientific talent.

Government will endeavour to give a new direction to Urban India and bring about an orderly, healthy, and dynamic development of our cities, which is necessary to tackle the problem of urban poverty. Special efforts will be made to raise the quality of civic services and to carry out a

fundamental restructuring of the administration of municipal bodies and public utilities.

Youth power provides the dynamo in the mission of nation-building. Government will focus and facilitate the efforts of thousands of youth and students organisations across the country to give a renewed thrust to their enthusiastic participation in constructive activities, sports, arts and culture. The main energising aim of these efforts will be to strengthen national integration, rekindle the spirit of voluntary work, and to enable our talented young men and women to achieve global excellence.

Internal security is an integral part of national security. Government is committed to ensuring the safety and security of all citizens of India, irrespective of their caste, religion, gender, or language. The incidence of communal violence last year was at its lowest in the last decade. Government is already engaged in taking effective steps to create a riot-free and terrorism-free India.

The past two years have seen a marked improvement in the situation in Jammu and Kashmir. Education, tourism, and other economic activities are fast returning to normal in this State. More than 110,000 pilgrims participated in the Amarnath Yatra this year. Nevertheless, terrorism continues to pose a challenge in Jammu and Kashmir. We will meet this challenge firmly and provide all assistance to the State Government to neutralise terrorists. After its crushing defeat in Kargil, Pakistan has stepped up its proxy war against India. The immediate objective of the Pakistan-sponsored terrorists was to disrupt the election process in Jammu and Kashmir, and also in the North-Eastern States. The people in these States, however, have once again opted for the ballot in the face of the terrorist's bullet. This is a ringing endorsement of their faith in India's unity, secular democracy, and a rejection of theocratic separatism.

The Prime Minister has announced that Government will follow the principle of "Zero Tolerance" while dealing with terrorism. Simultaneously, Government will continue to focus international attention on the deadly impact of trans-border terrorism that has claimed countless lives all over the world. There is no dearth of evidence to show how state-sponsored terrorism has affected peace and stability in South Asia and beyond. India is actively working to initiate concerted international opinion and action against state-sponsored terrorism in any part of the world. The menace of illicit drug trafficking, money laundering, and narco-terrorism has also to be effectively countered through both national and international efforts.

Government will soon restructure the North-Eastern Council for faster socio-economic development of the North-Eastern States. The NEC (Amendment) Bill, 1998 will be moved shortly. A special scheme to modernise police forces has been introduced in the North-East; it is expected that the

States' police forces will soon be better equipped to tackle insurgency and law and order problems. The remaining portion of the India-Bangladesh border will be fenced shortly.

Harmonious Centre-State relations are fundamental to a healthy federal polity and to achieve balanced socio-economic development. The pending recommendations of the Sarkaria Commission's report in this regard will be considered for expeditious implementation. My Government believes that the States should have greater financial and administrative powers and that there should be decentralisation right up to the grassroots through the Panchayati Raj system. Necessary action will soon be initiated to give full Statehood to Delhi and for the creation of Uttaranchal*, Vananchal, and Chhattisgarh as new States.

A Commission comprising noted constitutional experts and public figures shall be appointed to study a half-century's experience of the Constitution and make suitable recommendations to meet the challenges of the next century. Government will also examine replacing the present system of no-confidence motion by a system of "Constructive Vote of Non-Confidence", and a fixed term to the Lok Sabha and the Vidhan Sabhas, in order to prevent political instability both at the Centre and in the States.

No nation can prosper unless there is a concerted effort to empower women and invest in the girl child. Some of the miracle stories of rapid development are hinged to economic, social, and political empowerment of women. Government proposes to reserve, through legislation, 33 per cent seats for women in Parliament and State Legislatures. Further, we shall provide free education to the girl child upto college level, including professional courses, and set up a Development Bank for women entrepreneurs in the small-scale and tiny sectors. Nari Shakti shall fuel the engine of a modern, dynamic Indian society.

We are committed to safeguard the interests of Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Backward Classes, and minorities through appropriate legal, executive, and societal efforts. Our focus will be on large-scale education and socio-economic empowerment. We are determined to wipe out the last vestiges of untouchability from our society. Reservations for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes will be extended for another ten years and reservation percentages above fifty per cent followed by some States will be sanctified through legislative measures. Government has already created a new Ministry of Tribal Affairs for better formulation, implementation, and monitoring of policies and programmes aimed at all-round welfare of our tribal brethren.

Comprehensive electoral reform is necessary if elections are to be made a truly democratic exercise, free from the clutches of muscle and money power. A broad consensus already exists on the need for extensive

* Now known as Uttarakhand.

reforms in our electoral laws. Government will soon bring forward a comprehensive electoral reform Bill to further strengthen our democracy. Government will also ensure the right to franchise of Defence and Security Forces by introducing the system of proxy voting.

The canker of corruption is eating into every institution of our nation. Government is determined to ensure probity in public life. Towards this end, the Lokpal Bill has already been introduced. It will, *inter alia*, also cover the office of the Prime Minister. Government will also soon enact the Central Vigilance Commission Bill for conferring statutory status on the Central Vigilance Commission.

Continuity and consensus have always been the underpinnings of India's foreign policy. Successive Governments have demonstrated their commitment to secure for India a place, role, and position in the global arena, commensurate with its size and importance.

The recent military takeover in Pakistan is a matter of grave concern. Democracy alone can best guarantee peace, understanding, and cooperation among countries and peoples. We are watching the situation in Pakistan with careful attention. We had initiated the composite dialogue process and had sought to reinforce it through the Lahore Declaration. Pakistan must stop cross-border terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir and other regions of India, and also put an end to hostile propaganda against India.

The situation in Afghanistan demands a careful reassessment and a fresh approach. The world has unfortunately watched passively while Afghanistan disintegrated into a source of terrorism, narcotics, and dangerous instability. As a result, India's security interests have been affected. We shall work together with like-minded countries for an early return to stability in Afghanistan. An essential requirement for this is the cessation of outside interference in the internal affairs of Afghanistan.

Recent years have seen significant strengthening of India's traditionally close friendship and cooperation with Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bhutan, and Maldives, as well as our interaction with SAARC. We shall continue to work actively with these neighbouring countries and within SAARC to reinforce the trend of cooperation in this region. India will also forge closer cultural and economic relations with South Africa, Mauritius, Guyana, and Trinidad and Tobago, Fiji, and such other countries where large numbers of people of Indian origin live.

India seeks to further deepen and broaden her relations with the United States of America, on the basis of the values and ideals we both share. We are also committed to further strengthen our traditionally close and friendly ties with Russia. We shall develop our links with France, Britain, Germany, along with other members of the European Union and Japan, in a spirit of

goodwill and mutual benefit. We would continue our dialogue with China with a view to improving and broadening our relations. India highly values her cordial and steadily growing relations with the countries of Central Asia, West Asia, East and South-East Asia and the Pacific, as well as Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean. The forthcoming Commonwealth Heads of Government Meet (CHOGM) in Durban provides a useful forum for presenting India's views on a wide range of subjects of regional and global significance.

My Government will maintain and foster close understanding with our strategic partners and key interlocutors in order to strengthen our political and economic relations with the outside world. We also continue our efforts for a more equitable world order and for greater democratisation of the United Nations and its organs. A greater role for the developing countries in the councils of the world will bring in much-needed stability and justice in global affairs.

Honourable Members, you have a highly challenging, but equally rewarding, task before you in the 13th Lok Sabha. The people who have elected you have high expectations from all of you. They hope that the proceedings in Parliament will be of high standards, marked by consensus and cooperation among all members, cutting across party lines. In this context, I would like to compliment the 13th Lok Sabha on the unanimous election of the Honourable Speaker. This, indeed, is a welcome development. I am confident that the coming Session, as also all the subsequent sittings of Parliament will witness constructive debate in both Houses, leading to successful conclusion of all the legislative and other scheduled business. I wish you the very best in your endeavour.

Jai Hind.

ADDRESS TO PARLIAMENT—23 FEBRUARY 2000

Lok Sabha	—	Thirteenth Lok Sabha
Session	—	First Session of the Year
President of India	—	Shri K. R. Narayanan
Vice-President of India	—	Shri Krishan Kant
Prime Minister of India	—	Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee
Speaker, Lok Sabha	—	Shri G.M.C. Balayogi

HONOURABLE MEMBERS,

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to the first session of Parliament in the year 2000. I felicitate the Members and extend to all of you my best wishes for the successful completion of the budgetary and legislative business that lies ahead.

Last month India completed fifty years as a Republic. It was a proud moment in the history of this ancient civilization, which re-emerged as a free and democratic nation in the modern era. For all of us, the last fifty years have been a period of triumph and tribulation, of achievement and shortfalls. The Golden Jubilee of our Republic is, hence, an occasion for both celebration and reflection.

If the global march of democracy was the hallmark of the 20th Century, India has won worthy laurels for not only being the largest democracy in the world, but also zealously preserving it against all odds. The entire world looks to India with hope and expectation. Our founding fathers did their duty by giving us a great Republican Constitution. It is now our responsibility to transform our democracy into an effective instrument for the economic, social and cultural development of every Indian. As the Father of the Nation always exhorted us during our struggle for freedom, we must ensure that the first claim on the fruits of development belongs to the poor and the weak.

The Constitution, which India adopted fifty years ago, has served us well. It has been a reliable guarantor of parliamentary democracy, secularism and fundamental rights, which all of us cherish. It has also inspired the spread of democratic consciousness in our society, empowering dalits, adivasis, backward classes and women and making our system of governance

more participative and progressive. While keeping the basic structure and salient features of the Constitution inviolate, it has, however, become necessary to examine the experience of the past fifty years to better achieve the ideals enshrined in the Constitution. The Government has, therefore, set up a broad-based Constitution Review Commission. The recommendations of this Commission will be presented before Parliament, which is the supreme decision-making body in Indian democracy.

India has undoubtedly had many spectacular achievements in the past five decades. There is no other experiment in human history where a billion people, belonging to so many different traditions, are living and striving together for a better life without being denied their rights and freedoms. We cannot, however, be satisfied with this alone. As the experience of the many newly-independent and developing nations has shown, fifty years is a long time to achieve all-round progress for all. If the first half-century of our Republic makes any demand on us, it is simply this: we must lose no more time to eradicate mass poverty, remove illiteracy and assure basic minimum services to all our fellow citizens. While accomplishing this historic task, we must simultaneously strengthen social justice, promote gender justice, remove regional imbalances and bridge the rural-urban divide.

India cannot achieve the strength and prosperity that we all desire, and that our country is capable of, if vast areas and large sections of our population remain deprived and poor. Faster economic growth is a precondition for removing social and regional imbalances in development. The economic reforms started in the beginning of the last decade, with the express intention of accelerating economic growth, were a historical necessity. The shortcomings that have crept into our development process over the decades needed to be removed. It is a matter of pride and satisfaction that our country has implemented these reforms without social unrest and with a high degree of political consensus. These reforms are now yielding desired results in several areas. The sustainable rate of growth of our economy has increased. Our industry and financial system have become stronger and more competitive.

The Government is committed to accelerating the pace of economic reforms and to broadening their scope. At the same time, we shall make conscious and concerted efforts to bring the fruits of economic reforms to those regions and communities that have so far not benefited from them. The approach to India's economic development may have changed in the past ten years, but the goals of equity and social justice have not. We shall re-double our efforts to ensure that the poor and the deprived have an even greater stake in economic reforms than at present. We realize that this is essential for mobilizing people's enthusiastic participation in the development process.

The “Agenda for a Proud, Prosperous India”, which is the common policy document of the Government of the National Democratic Alliance, provides the framework for faster development with equity and employment. The Government’s record of speeding up the work of taking decisions on policy issues and the passage of pending legislation shows its determination to fulfil the promises made in this Agenda. The Government will continue to vigorously pursue a coherent plan of economic reforms. These reforms will cover agriculture, industry, public enterprises, fiscal consolidation and devolution, tax reform, financial sector reform and foreign investment policies. Most importantly, they will also cover policies for improving the performance of key infrastructure sectors, namely, power, roads, railways, ports, civil aviation, telecommunications and petroleum.

We are primarily a rural nation and most of our people depend on agriculture for their livelihood. Therefore, development of agriculture, particularly in the rainfed and drought-prone areas where poverty is extreme, shall be accorded high priority. This would call for substantial capital formation in agriculture and investment in the areas where productivity has been relatively low. As the agriculture sector still employs about two-thirds of our total workforce, greater investment in agriculture, including agri-businesses would be mobilized to enhance employment opportunities and create greater prosperity in rural areas. The Government will shortly finalize the National Agriculture Policy to address these issues.

At present, the programmes relating to conservation, development and management of land resources are scattered in different Ministries and Departments in the Central Government. There is an imperative need to put in place an integrated mechanism capable of responding effectively to the challenges of managing our scarce land resources—especially those arising from globalization, liberalization and privatization. The Government will therefore, bring all the programmes and schemes as well as the institutional infrastructure relating to land in rural areas, under the control of the newly created Department of Land Resources in the Ministry of Rural Development.

Special programmes for the generation of productive wage employment in the rural areas, especially for creating permanent infrastructure assets and self-employment opportunities for the unemployed youth will be given greater thrust. The Swarna Jayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana, the Jawahar Gram Samridhi Yojana and the restructured Employment Assurance Scheme will be vigorously implemented and closely monitored.

The process of urbanization has led to a rapid rise in the proportion of Indians living in cities and towns. Sadly, the rate of growth of urban infrastructure and civic amenities has not matched the explosion of our urban population. The Government realizes that urban renewal is critical

to the emergence of a new and resurgent India. This calls for a better coordination among the Centre, States and municipal authorities to effectively implement the policies and programmes on urban employment, housing construction, transportation and other utilities. The Government will facilitate increased public and private investment in the development of physical and social infrastructure, with an emphasis on improving the living conditions of the urban poor. It will also step up efforts to promote good municipal governance.

Our nation's future lies with our children and youth. The Government will soon set up a National Commission on Children to promote and channel all the efforts in the government and non-government sectors to achieve their all-round development and to unleash their creative energies both now and when they grow up. All existing programmes for sports and youth affairs will be reviewed and re-activated to give effect to our resolve to encourage physical, social and cultural development of our young men and women.

A decision has been taken to launch Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan to ensure that every child in the age group of six to fourteen goes to a school, or an Education Guarantee Centre, or a "Back to School Camp" by 2003. We shall intensify efforts to involve the non-governmental sector in higher and technical education. The Government proposes to come out with a policy that would fully incorporate non-governmental efforts within the national endeavour to provide Education For All.

Women constitute half of the Indian population but their status in our society is poor. They are largely excluded from decision-making in public life. No nation can progress unless its women enjoy good health, are literate and are equal partners with men in the socio-economic and political processes. Our Constitution guarantees equality and non-discrimination between men and women and we are committed to achieving this objective. The Constitution (85th Amendment) Bill, 1999, seeking to provide reservation of not less than one-third of the seats for women in the Lok Sabha and in Legislative Assemblies of States, was introduced in the Lok Sabha during the last session. The Department of Women and Child Development will also soon finalize a National Policy for Empowerment of Women, which aims to mainstream gender into laws, policies, programmes and budgetary allocations of the Government. The Indira Mahila Yojana will be made more effective and expanded to 450 more blocks.

India has one of the largest populations of older people in the world. In recent times, there has been a withering away of the joint family system, which has exposed elderly people to emotional neglect and a lack of physical support. The Government has formulated a National Policy on Older Persons and has established a National Council for Older Persons to

focus on problems faced by our senior citizens. An Expert Committee has recently submitted a report on a proposed pension scheme for old age security, which is being examined by the Government. A decision will be taken on this scheme shortly.

When I last addressed both Houses of Parliament on October 25, 1999, I had taken the opportunity to lay before you the medium-term economic agenda of the Government. Since then, the economic data suggests a distinct upturn in the economy. Economic growth in 1999-2000 is expected to be around 6 per cent. Inflation has also remained well under control during the current fiscal 1999-2000. Our foreign currency reserves at over US\$ 32 billion are also comfortable. There has been a general upward trend in stock indices, primarily due to the revival in the industrial sector. To build on these clear economic strengths, we must seize the opportunity to deepen and accelerate the reform process.

I am happy to say that the Government has begun to implement the medium-term economic agenda outlined by me in my last address to Parliament. I will briefly dwell on some of these issues:—

- (a) The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (Amendment) Ordinance, 2000 was promulgated to strengthen the TRAI. This will remove many hurdles in the path of speedy development of telecom services, increase investor confidence and create a level playing field between public and private operators. The corresponding Bill will be brought before Parliament in its current session.
- (b) A Group of Experts has been constituted to recommend a new legislation reflecting the phenomenon of the Convergence of IT, Telecom and TV in place of the Indian Telegraph Act, 1885.
- (c) The Government has already initiated a major programme of road construction to be called the National Highway Development Project consisting of the Golden Quadrilateral and the East-West, North-South Corridors costing Rs. 54,000 crore. We will ensure the speedy implementation of this vitally needed highway network.
- (d) The Government is carrying forward the restructuring and reform process in the power sector. Emphasis has been given on development of hydel power, particularly in the North-Eastern parts of the country. The national power grid will be strengthened to facilitate efficient inter-regional power flows.
- (e) In the petroleum sector, under the New Exploration Licensing Policy, 25 blocks have been awarded in a record time, thereby accelerating domestic exploration efforts. The Group on India Hydrocarbon Vision-2025 has also finalized its recommendations and the Government will initiate early action to implement them.

- (f) A Bill to amend the Coal Mines (Nationalization) Act, 1973 will be introduced in the current session of Parliament to allow Indian companies in the private sector to undertake coal mining.
- (g) It has been decided to enable private participation in the airport sector through long-term leasing of airports. The existing airports of Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai and Calcutta* will be given out on long-term lease basis while a new international airport at Bangalore[®] will be developed as a greenfield venture with private sector participation. This will go a long way in improving the airport infrastructure and the functioning of our airports to world class levels.
- (h) The Government has also decided to take innovative steps to bring about a major improvement in the working of our ports and to develop other efficient and modern port facilities with greater private sector participation.
- (i) The Information Technology Bill, 1999 to promote E-Commerce was introduced in the Lok Sabha in its last session.
- (j) A National Venture Capital Fund of Rs. 100 crore for promoting new Information Technology businesses by promising entrepreneurs has been launched. Guidelines to allow acquisition of foreign companies abroad by Indian IT companies have been liberalized. To accelerate the growth of high-speed Internet services in the country, a liberal policy for setting up international gateways and use of foreign satellites for greater bandwidth has been put in place. Further measures will soon be taken to promote the spread of the Internet and telecom services, especially in rural and backward areas.
- (k) The Ministry of Information Technology is taking further initiatives to promote the development of the IT industry in the country. These include the proposal to establish the “India IT and Software Brand Equity Fund”, facilitate greater usage of IT for increasing productivity in small and medium enterprises, developing Indian initiatives in E-Commerce and setting up IT-enabled services and distance education programmes.
- (l) The Insurance Regulation and Development Authority Act was passed by Parliament in its last session. This will enable participation by private Indian companies in the insurance sector leading to better service to customers, as well as mobilization of larger long-term investment for faster economic development.
- (m) The Government has reviewed and recast the Foreign Direct Investment regime, ensuring an automatic route for FDI clearances

* Now known as Kolkata.

[®] Now known as Bengaluru.

except in a small list of carefully chosen areas. This will bring in greater transparency, cut delays and create an enabling framework to ensure FDI inflow of at least \$ 10 billion a year.

- (n) The Debt Recovery Tribunal Act has been amended by an Ordinance. It is one of the crucial measures underpinning financial sector reforms. The corresponding Bill for replacement of the Ordinance by an Act will be introduced in Parliament in the current session.
- (o) The Second Labour Commission has been constituted to suggest changes in various labour laws in order to achieve the goals of labour welfare, generation of additional employment, higher investment and accelerated industrial growth.
- (p) A major milestone in tax reforms was achieved with the introduction of a uniform rate of sales tax throughout the country from January 1, 2000. This was made possible by close co-operation between the Centre and the States. As a progressive step towards further tax rationalisation, the States have also decided to move over to a Value-Added Tax (VAT) regime with effect from April 1, 2001.
- (q) A large number of outdated or inessential laws and regulations have been removed from the statute book. This is a part of the Government's continuing effort to speed up much-needed legal reforms.

However, the growing fiscal deficit continues to be an area of considerable concern. This is undoubtedly the most challenging macro-economic management problem faced by us. The deficit reduces public investment, crowds out private investment, raises interest rates and generates inflationary pressure. The burden of interest payments continues to be large at above 4 per cent of GDP, accounting for about two-thirds of tax revenue of the Central Government net of States' share. As the interest burden on Government borrowing increases, it limits the ability of the Government to expand health and education services and anti-poverty programmes. Subsidies on non-merit goods which are currently very high, have to be brought down and phased out.

For India to sustain accelerated growth with high employment coupled with modest inflation, the growing fiscal deficit needs to be contained. We have to adopt measures to curb the rising trend of Non-Plan Expenditure. These require difficult decisions relating to the quality of Government expenditure, downsizing the Government, recovery of economic cost for goods and services and greater austerity in Government spending. The programme of disinvestment and restructuring of Public Sector Undertakings also needs to be accelerated. Our tax system must be modernized for

improving the Tax-to-GDP ratio. If we achieve fiscal consolidation, then given our stable macro framework, India can truly hope to achieve growth rates of well over 7 per cent in the coming years. If sacrifices have to be made for achieving this challenging goal, they are well-worth making because the long-term rewards of restructuring will benefit all Indians and will far outweigh the temporary costs.

The financial condition of the States is also very worrisome. State Government finances have shown signs of rapid deterioration in the nineties. The year 1998-99 witnessed a very high gross fiscal deficit of States amounting to more than Rs. 75,000 crores, touching a level of 4.3 per cent of GDP. This is, indeed, an unsustainable situation. The deteriorating trend in the fiscal position of State Governments needs to be urgently reversed. The Central Government has, therefore, initiated necessary measures in consultation with the States, to seek policy reforms aimed at fiscal correction and consolidation to bring about long-term sustainability of the fiscal position of the States.

The Government is committed to the speedy economic development of the North-Eastern States. The North-Eastern Council is being expanded to include Sikkim and we shall strive to make it an effective agency for accelerated development of these States. In a meeting last month at Shillong, the Prime Minister, accompanied by the Home Minister, Defence Minister, Finance Minister and the Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission, reviewed development and security issues with the Governors and Chief Ministers of the North-Eastern States and Sikkim. All assistance is being provided to those North-Eastern States that are affected by terrorism and anti-social activities.

The Government has announced an ambitious programme of over Rs. 10,200 crores for the socio-economic development of the North-Eastern States and Sikkim. This programme includes new initiatives in industry, health, education and security. It will also give a major impetus to infrastructure development in the region, especially power, roads, railways, airports and telecommunications. An important objective of this initiative is to create large-scale local employment. Trade with neighbouring countries is also going to be a thrust area for development of this region.

The super-cyclone that struck Orissa in end October caused the death of thousands of people and devastated the social and economic life of a large section of the State's population. The entire country participated generously in supplementing the Government's efforts to mobilize relief and rehabilitation for the affected people. We express our appreciation for the excellent work done by the armed and paramilitary forces, the meteorological department, the Railways, port authorities, other government departments and agencies like the Food Corporation of India, the relief

teams sent by State Governments as well as non-governmental and charitable organizations. To minimize the effects of natural calamities, the Government has set up a high-powered committee to prepare a Natural Disaster Management Plan. This will review existing arrangements for preparedness for natural disasters and their mitigation. It will recommend measures for strengthening of organizational structures and formulate a comprehensive model plan for natural disaster management at the national, state and district levels.

In the global context we shall continue to work for the establishment of a rule based, non-discriminatory multilateral trading system, which is fair and equitable to all nations. As a founder member of the GATT and the WTO, India has been an active participant in all the previous international trade negotiations and in all the three WTO ministerial meetings. India has always pursued its mission for greater equity and symmetry in trade relations and for avoidance of linkage of trade with extraneous issues. Economic integration cannot advance if the interests of the poor are ignored. As a developing country, India is sensitizing other member nations to this reality. We would continue to persevere for equitable implementation of the provisions of the Uruguay Round negotiations.

In the months following the military coup in Pakistan, there has been a marked increase in Pakistan-sponsored cross-border terrorism, targeted especially at our security forces. There has also been an increase in Pakistani firing across the border. These developments underline the need for constant vigil by our defence forces. However, the threat of terrorist attacks is one that affects all Indian citizens. We must, as a people, become more security-conscious in the face of the unremitting terror campaign against our country. For its part, the Government is fully alert to all threats to India's external and internal security. We are prepared to meet any challenge to our territorial integrity and to our open, democratic way of life.

I salute the brave jawans and officers of the Indian Army who are standing guard along the LoC in the Kargil and other sectors, far from their families and loved ones. It is a tribute to the courage, determination and dedication of our forces that they have withstood freezing temperatures of minus 40 degrees celsius and below and the hardship of patrolling snow-bound heights. It is due to the valour and skill of our soldiers that our frontiers are secure from enemy forces.

The Subrahmanyam Committee, appointed by the Government to inquire into the events and circumstances that formed the backdrop to Pakistan's armed incursion into Kargil and other parts of the LoC, has submitted its report. This will be tabled in Parliament during this session. The Government is committed to take all necessary follow-up measures after a thorough scrutiny of the committee's recommendations.

Backing up our soldiers are our defence scientists and defence production units. I am happy to inform the Honourable Members that, since I last addressed both Houses of Parliament, our defence scientists have added two major successes to their list of achievements. The short-range, quick-reaction-time surface-to-air missile, Trishul, has been successfully tested. The remote-controlled Nishant has been successfully flight tested. Our defence production units have proved their capability to produce sophisticated defence equipment. Production in ordnance factories in the first nine months has been higher by 33 per cent, compared to the corresponding period last year.

The overall law and order situation in the country has remained satisfactory except in certain areas affected by Pakistan-sponsored terrorist and separatist activities. Terrorist violence has been most pronounced in Jammu and Kashmir, especially after Pakistan's defeat in Kargil and the military coup in Islamabad. Government, both at the Centre and in the State, has met the challenge posed by Pakistan-backed terrorists and foreign mercenaries with determination. We are continuing with our four-pronged strategy to counter terrorist and separatist violence in Jammu and Kashmir by deepening of the democratic process, accelerating economic development, isolating foreign mercenaries and terrorists and playing a pro-active role to neutralize them. Apart from strengthening and modernizing the Jammu and Kashmir police, Government has been reimbursing the State's security related expenditure and providing financial support over and above the normal Plan assistance. I acknowledge the invaluable contribution of our armed forces, paramilitary forces and police personnel in combating terrorism and extremism in Jammu and Kashmir and some other parts of the country.

The Government is fully committed to preserving and further strengthening the secular ethos of our country. Communal harmony in the country has improved remarkably in the past few years. The last two years have been largely free of communal violence. In 1999, this trend gathered speed with the number of communal incidents declining by 10 per cent, the number of people killed by 32 per cent and the number of injured by 11 per cent.

The Government stands by its promise to create the States of Uttaranchal*, Vananchal and Chhattisgarh. Bills for this purpose are being referred to the concerned State legislatures for their views.

The Inter-State Council has been reconstituted. Based on the experience of its working in the past, the Government will make it an effective platform for further harmonizing the relations between the Centre and the States and among the States themselves.

Our space programme continues to forge ahead in establishing systems that are crucial for telecommunications, broadcasting, meteorology, disaster warning and management of natural resources. India has established

* Now known as Uttarakhand.

indigenous capability to launch Indian remote sensing satellites into the required polar sun-synchronous orbit. We are now well on our way to develop the geo-synchronous satellite launch vehicle. The INSAT system is one of the largest domestic satellite systems in the world and the next satellite in this system, INSAT-3B, is awaiting launch. It is scheduled to be commissioned in March-April 2000.

The Government continues to pursue its policy of harnessing nuclear energy for peaceful purposes for the welfare of the people. All nuclear plants have been operating smoothly and their average capacity factor has increased from 75 per cent to 78 per cent. India's eleventh nuclear power reactor at Kaiga in Karnataka achieved first criticality on September 21, 1999 and has been connected to the grid. The twelfth nuclear power reactor at Rawatbhatta in Rajasthan achieved first criticality on December 24, 1999.

The Government is fully committed to support science and technology in the interests of national development and national security. However, a serious concern that needs addressing is that not enough young men and women are taking up careers in research and development. The Government is committed to reversing this trend by guaranteeing our highly talented young persons an attractive career profile, so that they can produce world-class scientific research and technological development while living and working in India.

The Government is committed to rapidly moving towards electronic governance, which will ensure better citizen-Government interface and greater transparency. In order to increase accessibility to and application of, computers, the Government has intensified efforts in developing and promoting software for popular applications in Indian languages. I am happy that many State Governments have also taken major steps to complement the Centre's thrust to make India a front-runner in the IT revolution.

India's foreign policy of Non-Alignment and peaceful co-existence is relevant to the multi-polar world of today. This is based on the principle of protecting our vital interests and promoting our national ideals. The Government continues to pursue the policy of continuously expanding and deepening its friendly, close, wide-ranging and constructive relations with our neighbouring countries—Nepal, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Maldives and Bhutan. Regular interaction with these countries has contributed to further strengthening of ties and mutual appreciation of each other's interests, sensitivities and concerns.

However, Pakistan has shown no inclination to end its policy of aiding and abetting cross-border terrorism and its hostile anti-India propaganda. Pakistan's role in acts of terror has been recently underscored by the hijacking of the Indian Airlines flight from Kathmandu. Irrefutable evidence

has been provided by the Government about the Pakistani origins of the hijackers as well as the role of Pakistani officials posted in Kathmandu. We sincerely hope that Pakistan will reverse this policy of hostility towards India so that normal relations could be restored.

The return of peace and tranquillity in Afghanistan is important for the stability of our region. It is also necessary for curbing narco-terrorism. Above all, it is needed for the people of Afghanistan with whom we have age-old ties. It is only through the setting up of a broad-based Government in Kabul, truly representative of all ethnic groups and the cessation of Pakistan's interference, that peace can be restored in Afghanistan.

We shall continue to deepen and broaden our relations with our extended neighbourhood of Central Asia, West Asia, the Gulf and the Asia-Pacific Region. We value our relations with our Asian neighbour China and we will commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations with China. In this context, I am looking forward to my State visit to China in May this year. We hope that the Middle East peace process would reach a satisfactory conclusion. Our relations with Israel will continue to grow. India values her close and friendly relations with the European Union, as well as with the countries of East Europe, with whom our ties of traditional friendship have seen a new dynamism in recent years. We will further strengthen our friendship with African, Latin American and Caribbean countries.

India looks forward to the consolidation of her time-tested, comprehensive relations with the Russian Federation into a strategic partnership. We await a visit to India by the President of the Russian Federation and the signing of the Declaration on Strategic Partnership between our two countries.

Relations with the United Kingdom, Germany, Japan and France have shown a gratifying consolidation in recent times. As a result of high-level decisions, we have launched a strategic dialogue with France that has produced encouraging results. The Indo-French Forum has also imparted a new dynamism to our engagement with France in the fields of culture, science and technology and business. I am looking forward to my State visit to France scheduled for April this year.

The Government has continued to engage the United States in a serious dialogue on security, non-proliferation and disarmament issues predicated on India maintaining a credible minimum nuclear deterrent. A significant outcome of this dialogue is the decision to set up a Joint Working Group to deal with cross-border terrorism, which is a menace to the whole world. We expect that President Clinton's visit to India next month will pave the way for a broad-based and multi-dimensional expansion of our bilateral relations.

India reaffirms her commitment to global nuclear disarmament in a time-bound manner on a comprehensive and non-discriminatory basis. While addressing multilateral disarmament initiatives and treaties, the Government will continue to abide by the imperative of preserving India's strategic autonomy.

The growing challenge posed by non-conventional threats, in particular by terrorism to global security, calls for urgent international co-operation and action so that these can be dealt with effectively. We call for the early adoption and implementation of a Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism. India shall participate in any global effort to battle this crime against humanity.

Our vision of achieving a higher growth rate is not aimed at benefiting only the rich or the middle-class. On the contrary, the poor are at the centre of all our developmental efforts. We must recognize that we cannot improve the lot of the common man without achieving high rates of growth in the economy. Only an expanding economy can ensure growing employment and rising incomes for all. Unless India's GDP grows at a brisk rate of 7 to 8 per cent a year, there is no way we can banish poverty and underdevelopment. Higher growth alone will ensure that we can mobilize larger and larger resources for the social sector—for education, health, drinking water, sanitation and roads—particularly for those living in the villages and in urban slums. Towards this end, the Government stands committed to implement the social and economic agenda outlined in my last address to both Houses of Parliament.

Honourable Members, we begin the Budget session today, after transacting record legislative business in the last Winter Session of Parliament. Apart from financial business arising out of the General and Railway Budgets and the statutory requirement of replacing two Ordinances by Bills, we have a large agenda of legislative business relating to the all-round development of our economy and society. The Government is keen to complete this agenda in this very session.

I convey my best wishes to all of you.

Jai Hind.

ADDRESS TO PARLIAMENT—19 FEBRUARY 2001

Lok Sabha	—	Thirteenth Lok Sabha
Session	—	First Session of the Year
President of India	—	Shri K. R. Narayanan
Vice-President of India	—	Shri Krishan Kant
Prime Minister of India	—	Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee
Speaker, Lok Sabha	—	Shri G.M.C. Balayogi

HONOURABLE MEMBERS,

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to this first session of Parliament in 2001. I extend to you my best wishes for the successful completion of the budgetary and legislative business ahead.

This session of Parliament is being held under the grim shadow of the devastation caused by the earthquake that struck Gujarat last month. It claimed thousands of lives, destroyed public and private property worth thousands of crores, and left many people homeless. Today, we pay our heartfelt condolences to the bereaved families. We assure them and all others affected by the earthquake that they are not alone in this hour of loss and suffering. The entire nation has rallied behind and demonstrated its sympathy and solidarity. The tragedy has evoked the response of Governments, NGOs, and multilateral agencies across the world to contribute generously to our national effort. My Government and the people of India express their deep gratitude to all of them.

The Union Government and the Government of Gujarat have been working closely in the relief and rehabilitation operations throughout the State. I compliment the jawans and officers of the Army, the Air Force, and the Navy for their outstanding role in this effort. The Governments of all the other States have also come to the aid of Gujarat. Indeed, it is a tribute to the coordinated effort of all Central and State agencies that power, telecommunication, rail, air, and road links were restored with such remarkable speed. The commendable contribution of a wide range of voluntary organizations have greatly supplemented and strengthened these efforts. Thousands of volunteers have been working tirelessly to bring succour to the survivors. On behalf of this august House, I applaud them for their devoted and untiring activities. In times of crises, external or internal, our

countrymen have always shown exemplary unity and voluntary activism. We should nurture these virtuous qualities, so that they influence all aspects of our national life at all times.

The catastrophe in Gujarat, as also the super cyclone in Orissa in 1999 and natural calamities in other parts of the country in recent years, have once again highlighted the urgent need to expand and modernize our disaster management capabilities. We need to urgently revise and update the rules and regulations governing construction and town planning. We also need to enforce them with rigor, and ensure that stern action is taken against their violators. Beyond this, we must have a comprehensive disaster management plan at the Centre, States, and districts with specific long-term and short-term objectives. It must be our common endeavour to ensure that life after a calamity is better than life before it.

I am happy that the Government convened an all-party meeting to discuss the Gujarat earthquake. Following up on the consensus at that meeting, a National Committee on Disaster Management has been set up under the chairmanship of the Prime Minister. It comprises *inter-alia* representatives of national and state parties. It will suggest short, medium and long term steps for relief, rehabilitation, and reconstruction activities in Gujarat. It will also deliberate on the necessary institutional and legislative measures needed for an effective and long-term strategy to deal with national calamities in the future. In addition, it will look into the parameters that should define a national calamity. Based on the recommendations of this committee, the Government will consider setting up a permanent National Disaster Management Authority, with suitable statutory authorities in States.

Throughout India's history, pilgrimages have played a unique role in tying our people together with the bonds of religious piety and national unity. The Maha Kumbh at Allahabad, which witnessed one of the largest gatherings of humanity in a spectacular act of faith, demonstrated this yet again. I compliment the Uttar Pradesh Government, the Railways, and all other governmental and non-governmental agencies for their coordinated efforts at smoothly managing this mega-congregation, which has impressed the whole world.

This year marks the conclusion of the Golden Jubilee celebrations of our Republic. As years go by, both August 15, 1947 and January 26, 1950 will recede more and more into history. They may seem distant, especially to the youth of India, who constitute nearly 37 per cent of our population. However, time cannot weaken the import of these two defining dates in our country's long history. The sacred flame of freedom and democracy will continue to illuminate India's journey in the new century and the millennium. This Parliament, the highest elected body of the world's largest democracy, should resolve to contribute its utmost to the furtherance of the republican values enshrined in our Constitution.

While all of us are proud of India's achievements since Independence, we are equally aware of the enormous challenges that still confront us. The cautionary words of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar should guide us in our march forward. While presenting the draft of the Constitution, he had said with great fervency, "On January 26, 1950, we are going to enter into a life of contradictions. In politics, we will have equality; and in social and economic life, we will have inequality. We must remove this contradiction at the earliest." Unfortunately, the contradiction that Dr. Ambedkar and many other stalwarts of the Freedom Movement had warned us about, continues to mar our national life even today. Therefore, all of us should hold our freedom and our democracy to be incomplete until we erase this contradiction and make our great nation a land of justice and equal opportunity for all its billion plus citizens.

One of the major gains of democracy in India is the ever-growing active participation of women in the political process - not only as voters, but also as elected representatives and bearers of executive responsibility. At the same time, this positive experience has made both women and men acutely aware of the under-representation of our sisters in Parliament and State legislatures. The Constitution (85th Amendment) Bill, 1999, which was a response to this all-round support for women's political empowerment, has already been introduced in Parliament. It is unfortunate that this Bill has not yet been enacted. I urge all political parties to arrive at a consensus and pass this Bill during this session. This would be a fitting tribute by India's Parliament to the "Year of Women's Empowerment", which we are observing this year.

Last fortnight, India launched its biggest-ever Census operation. Our population has now crossed one billion. Last year, we adopted a comprehensive National Population Policy. The policy has three principle objectives—to reduce the rate of growth; stabilize the absolute size; and, providing welfare and developmental opportunities for the entire population, especially women. To realize these objectives, it is necessary to evolve, in concert with the States, a set of incentives and disincentives. These should be enforced in a non-coercive manner with the fullest cooperation of social, cultural, and religious institutions.

India's external and internal security is the highest priority for the Government. We are committed to further strengthening the country's strategic response capability to meet any eventuality. A Group of Ministers has examined the recommendations of the Kargil Review Committee on the national security system, and will soon submit its proposals. The maiden flight of the indigenously developed Light Combat Aircraft took place successfully last month. The nation commends the dedicated work of our scientists and engineers for this aeronautical achievement, as also for their path-breaking accomplishments in missile development.

The Government is pursuing a multi-pronged strategy to bring peace and normalcy in Jammu and Kashmir. As part of this, it launched a major peace mission on November 19, 2000, by announcing a unilateral non-initiation of combat operations in the State during the holy month of Ramzan. This bold initiative was extended twice up to February 26, 2001. As anticipated, this was warmly welcomed by the people of Jammu and Kashmir, who are longing for an end to militancy and violence in their beautiful State. The international community has also given overwhelming support, because it sees in it yet another demonstration of India's sincere commitment to a peaceful and permanent solution to the Kashmir issue.

It is a matter of deep distress and concern to all of us that Pakistan has not reciprocated India's sincerity. There has been no let up in, much less an end to, cross-border terrorism and vicious anti-India propaganda, originating from Pakistani soil. Many innocent lives continue to be lost every day to acts of barbarism by those who cloak them in the garb of "Jihad". Pakistan bears the responsibility for these acts against humanity, which are a travesty of religion. Its protestations about its eagerness to resume talks with India will not carry conviction so long as it allows the terrorists' guns and bombs to do the talking. Should Pakistan create an atmosphere conducive for meaningful talks, India will be more than ready to resume the dialogue process. The Army and our paramilitary forces are working under trying circumstances and the nation appreciates their supreme determination and sacrifice. Action against terrorist organizations will continue relentlessly.

Militancy in Jammu and Kashmir is now increasingly confined to foreign mercenary groups. This has widened the scope for democratic activity in the State. The people of the State participated enthusiastically in the recent Panchayat elections. I reiterate the Government's readiness to have talks with every group in the State that abjures violence.

There is relative improvement in the situation in the North East. Peace and normalcy in this strategic region require both political stability and faster socio-economic development. This has to be combined with firm action against militant and extremist outfits. The special developmental package devised for the North East is being speedily implemented. Substantial developmental resources flow into the region each year. However, their impact on the ground is not commensurate. I urge the State Governments to ensure that there is no mismanagement or leakage of public funds. For this, they should carry out effective decentralization, strengthen democratic institutions, and increase the participation of people's organizations. They must also protect the minorities in their respective States.

The Government is uncompromising in its commitment to secularism. The levels of communal and caste violence have continued to decline. This improvement is especially remarkable in view of the unceasing efforts from

across the border to foment communal trouble in India. We have stepped up our vigil against communal and extremist organizations. The law will take its course unsparingly and impartially against those who seek to create trouble.

One of the momentous events to take place last year was the creation of three new States—namely, Chhattisgarh, Uttaranchal* and Jharkhand, taking the number of States in the Union of India from 25 to 28. The creation of these new States has met the long-standing aspirations of their people. It will also hasten their socio-economic development. I join all of you in extending warm felicitations to these new States.

Centre-State relations continue to be harmonious. The Inter-State Council, and its Standing Committee, has been meeting regularly. This augurs well for our democracy and for our federal polity. The Chief Ministers' Conference on Internal Security in August helped in the evolution of a better understanding and greater coordination among States, and between the Centre and the States, in dealing with militancy, terrorism, and organized crime. The Central Assistance for modernization of State Police Forces has been increased from Rs. 200 crore to Rs. 1,000 crore a year for the next ten years based on matching contribution by the States.

The Eleventh Finance Commission has submitted its report, which has addressed the serious issue of the worsening fiscal health of State Governments. Among its recommendations is a monitorable fiscal reform programme to reduce their revenue deficits and bring about fiscal corrections in a phased manner. The Fiscal Responsibility Bill seeks to achieve the same positive objectives at the Centre.

The process of economic reforms in India is now a decade old. During this period, several Governments at the Centre and in the States, belonging to various parties and alliances, have carried this process forward. The agenda of reforms has, thus, been sustained by a growing national consensus. This consensus needs to be broadened and strengthened, guided always by the criteria of whether or not specific policy changes promote the interests of the country and the common man. The scope of the reform process itself needs to be widened so as to fortify self-reliance, create more employment opportunities, and to rapidly remove poverty. The past decade's experience has clearly shown that economic reforms can yield desired results only if they are fully complemented by administrative, judicial, educational, and labour reforms. Each of these reforms is a part of an integral national endeavour that seeks to convert the immense potential of India into a renescent reality in the 21st century.

India is among the ten fastest growing economies in the world. Our economy has grown at impressive annual rates of between 6 and 7 percent during the past three years. This, despite formidable challenges on the

* Now known as Uttarakhand.

external front, as well as droughts, floods, and other natural calamities in several parts of the country. However, we need to set an ambitious target of 9 per cent annual growth for the next ten years to double our per capita income and halve poverty. Today's problems can be turned into opportunities for a big surge forward, if the Centre and State Governments, all political parties, and the people adopt "Faster and More Balanced Development" as the common Mantra of the Decade.

Agriculture continues to provide livelihood for most of our people. Our hard-working kisans deserve applause for the record foodgrains harvest of 209 million tonnes last year. Our buffer stock has crossed an all time high of 40 million tonnes. Today India has become the largest producer of milk, and the second largest producer of rice, wheat, fruits, and vegetables in the world. We are also the world's fifth largest producer of eggs and its sixth largest producer of fish. Accelerated and sustainable development of agriculture is a high priority for Government. The first National Agriculture Policy was announced last year. It sets a growth rate of over four per cent a year, based on efficient harnessing of our soil, water, and biodiversity resources. It also seeks to promote higher public and private investments in agriculture, irrigation, agro-processing, distribution, and marketing. Organic farming and bio-fertilizers will be especially encouraged. The National Storage Policy, announced last year, will facilitate private investment in building state-of-the-art silos for integrated bulk handling, storage, and transportation of foodgrains.

To protect our farmers against unfair global competition, import duties were increased on many agricultural commodities, including edible oils. The Government has begun phased decontrol of sugar, by reducing the proportion of levy sugar from 40 per cent to 15 per cent. During last year's kharif season, 65 lakh farmers were insured under the National Crop Insurance Scheme. So far, 105 lakh farmers have been given the Kisan Credit Card.

The policy of emphasizing higher farm production through subsidy on inputs rather than through building new capital assets in irrigation, power, and rural infrastructure, has considerably reduced public investments in agriculture. Besides inducing inefficient use of scarce resources, this has also degraded soil, water resources, canals, and roads. In turn, this has caused farm productivity and the kisans' profitability to stagnate. This vicious circle needs to be turned into a virtuous circle of greater efficiency and productivity, to benefit both the kisans and the consumers, especially the poorest among them.

Poor road connectivity is the biggest hurdle in faster rural development. The Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana seeks to provide all-weather roads to over one lakh unconnected rural habitations with a population of more than 500 in the next seven years. For the first time, the Centre has made a provision of Rs. 2,500 crore a year for improving rural roads. This Centrally

sponsored scheme would be effectively implemented with the fullest participation of State Governments and Panchayati Raj bodies.

Steps have been initiated to bring all watershed and area development programmes implemented by different ministries under a single umbrella. Although considerable resources have been spent so far on drinking water schemes in rural areas, these have not yielded tangible and expected benefits, owing to a lack of clarity on ownership and poor planning and maintenance. Therefore, a new initiative has been introduced, initially on an experimental basis in many districts, to institutionalize community participation in implementing, managing, and maintaining the rural drinking water supply schemes.

Keeping in view the consensus on better targeting of food subsidies, the Government has increased the monthly allocation of foodgrains to Below-Poverty-Line families from ten kilos to twenty kilos, at half the economic cost. The Antyodaya Anna Yojana, launched in December, shows the human face of our economic reforms. It will provide 25 kilos of foodgrains each month to the one crore poorest families in the country, at still lower rates of two rupees a kilo for wheat and three rupees a kilo for rice. Because of Government's policies, the prices of most essential commodities have remained reasonable; no shortage of any commodity has been reported from any part of the country.

Expanding and modernizing India's physical infrastructure is urgently needed for faster and more balanced economic growth. We have made significant progress in some areas in recent years, although critical bottlenecks remain in several other areas. I am happy to inform you that the Government has resolutely pursued reforms in the telecom sector. Several important milestones indicated by the New Telecom Policy have already been crossed. The Department of Telecom Services has been corporatized into Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited. The fruits of these reforms are now clearly visible. Tariffs have plunged, areas for local calls have been expanded, and there has been a remarkable growth and improvement in Internet services. The proposed Communication Convergence Bill will respond to the emerging scenario of the coming together of telecom, broadcasting, and IT technologies.

Information Technology has emerged as one of the fastest growing sectors in our economy. Our software exports, which were US\$ 4 billion last year, are continuing to grow at an impressive annual rate of over 50 per cent, giving us the confidence that the target of US\$ 50 billion by 2008 is certainly achievable. The Knowledge Economy presents India with an epochal opportunity to remove poverty and create prosperity for all our citizens, provided we quickly harness our rich human capital by improving education at all levels. The Government has drawn up a programme to double the intake of students in IITs and other premier engineering

institutions in 2002 and treble it in 2003. A scheme to allow establishment of world-class science and technology institutions through philanthropic initiatives of the private sector and NRIs is under consideration. A National Mission on Technology Education, under the chairmanship of the Minister for Human Resource Development, will soon be set up. All these efforts will hasten the pace of development of trained manpower for realizing our full potential in IT, biotechnology, and other hi-tech areas.

Direct-to-Home services with suitable safeguards have been permitted, so that benefits of this superior technology are available to our television viewers. Doordarshan's contribution to developmental broadcasting and its role in promoting national solidarity are well known. It has launched a Kashmir channel devoted to Jammu and Kashmir and a dedicated 24-hour satellite North East channel to strengthen the bonds of emotional and cultural integration between our brethren in these States and the rest of the country. Private FM radio services will soon be available in several cities. One channel in each of these cities has been exclusively assigned to promote distance education.

Integral development of the transportation infrastructure, with a well-coordinated multi-modal approach, is a vital need of our economy. Work on the National Highway Development Project, comprising the Golden Quadrilateral and the North-South and East-West corridors, is proceeding at a fast pace. Considerable non-budgetary resources, including multi-lateral funding, are being mobilized for this ambitious project, which is estimated to cost Rs. 54,000 crore. A number of policy changes have been effected by the Centre and the States to attract private and captive user sector investment for augmenting the capacities of our ports. A new major port at Ennore was dedicated to the nation early this month. Being the first corporate port in India, it will be a trend-setter for future port development in the country.

Although Indian Railways are a lifeline of the nation, they have suffered from long years of neglect. Their finances are in a critical state, rendering them unable to implement many long-pending developmental projects. They are also starved of resources to fund the much-needed programme to improve rail safety, which is estimated to need Rs. 15,000 crore. There is a great untapped potential for the Railways to raise internal resources through non-traditional means. They have recently started many innovative initiatives with the private sector and State Governments to implement new lines, gauge conversion, and doubling projects. An expert committee on Railways has just completed a comprehensive study of the operations, organization, finances, investment, tariffs, and other policy issues. The Government will review the recommendations of this committee and initiate necessary action expeditiously.

The public sector has played a vital role in the development of our economy. However, the nature of this role cannot remain frozen to what it was conceived fifty years ago—a time when the technological landscape, and the national and international economic environment were so very different. The private sector in India has come of age, contributing substantially to our nation-building process. Therefore, both the public sector and the private sector need to be viewed as mutually complementary parts of the national sector. The private sector must assume greater public responsibilities, just as the public sector needs to focus more on achieving results in a highly competitive market. While some public enterprises are making profits, quite a few have accumulated huge losses. With public finances under intense pressure, Governments are just not able to sustain them much longer. Accordingly, the Centre as well as several State Governments are compelled to embark on a programme of disinvestment.

The Government's approach to PSUs has a three-fold objective: revival of potentially viable enterprises; closing down of those PSUs that cannot be revived; and bringing down Government equity in non-strategic PSUs to 26 per cent or lower. Interests of workers will be fully protected through attractive VRS and other measures. This programme has already achieved some initial successes. The Government has decided to disinvest a substantial part of its equity in enterprises such as Indian Airlines, Air India, ITDC, IPCL, VSNL, CMC, BALCO, Hindustan Zinc, and Maruti Udyog. Where necessary, strategic partners would be selected through a transparent process.

Reforms in the power sector are crucial for achieving the ambitious growth targets of the economy. To remove the chronic shortages in most parts of the country, and to make power affordable to all, we have set a target of installing an additional capacity of 100,000 megawatts by 2012, along with the associated transmission and distribution systems. This will require an investment of around Rs. 800,000 crore. The Electricity Regulatory Commissions, both at the Centre and in the States, will have to play a pivotal role in rationalization of tariffs, restoration of the financial health of SEBs, and creation of confidence in private investors. I urge the State Governments, all the political parties, as well as employees of power utilities and consumers, to support the reforms in the power sector. The transition may be difficult initially, but will ultimately be rewarding for all.

Three nuclear power reactors were connected to the national grid during this year. Nuclear Power Corporation of India created a world record with only fourteen days between criticality and synchronization of the fourth unit of the Rajasthan Atomic Power Station. The world is now looking at renewable energy as a viable and clean option to bridge the energy gap and to contain the problem of environmental degradation. Our goal is to add 10,000 megawatts from renewables over the next twelve years, increasing their share in the additional capacity installed to ten per cent.

The “India Hydrocarbon Vision 2025” Report has been finalized to chart out a long-term policy for the petroleum and natural gas sector. The steep rise in crude oil prices in the last eighteen months have increased our oil import bill to nearly Rs. 80,000 crore this year. Therefore, the Government is taking specific steps to further raise indigenous crude oil production. We have awarded 25 blocks for exploration during this year; we expect to award another 25 by September. We have also acquired oil equity abroad by buying twenty percent in the Sakhalin—I oil field in Russia. Efforts for similar acquisition of oil equity overseas are underway. We have discovered oil and gas in the deep sea of the Krishna-Godavari basin and in the shallow waters of Cambay region. India has this year achieved complete self-sufficiency in refining of crude oil. I am happy to inform you that, last year oil marketing companies have released about 12 million LPG connections, against the target of 10 million. The waiting list for LPG connections has ended and they are now available across the counter. Large-scale efforts are being made to provide LPG connections to our rural population.

The Government is following a twin strategy to achieve growth in the coal sector. We will allow participation of the private sector in coal mining. We shall also strengthen Coal India by facilitating joint ventures. The issue of safety in coal mines has been once again sharply highlighted by the recent tragedy in Bagdigi near Dhanbad. The imperative of safety is closely linked to the modernization of the coal sector, with the introduction of the latest mining technology and management techniques. It brooks no delay. A comprehensive re-survey of all coal mines vulnerable to mishaps has been ordered.

Textiles is a traditional industry, in which India enjoyed a global advantage for a long time. However, this edge has been blunted because this sector was not enabled to restructure itself to respond to the growing competition in the global market. To end this neglect and to achieve accelerated development of this sector, a new Textile Policy has been unveiled. It aims to promote a state-of-the-art textile manufacturing capability in our country to meet domestic demand and to enhance textile and apparel exports from the present level of US\$ 13 billion to US\$ 50 billion by 2010. In addition to the Textile Upgradation Fund Scheme and the Technology Mission on Cotton, separate schemes like the Deen Dayal Hathkargha Protsahan Yojana have also been launched to cater to the needs of weavers, farmers, and artisans.

India enjoys a significant competitive advantage in chemicals and pharmaceuticals. To encourage R&D and investment in this sector, it is proposed to raise the FDI limit through the automatic route from the present 74 per cent to 100 per cent. A new Drug Policy is being finalized to enable India’s pharmaceutical industry to become a world leader.

India has a huge untapped potential in tourism, which is the fastest growing industry in the world. The Government has strengthened, in coordination with the States, its efforts to improve the infrastructure and market both traditional and non-traditional destinations to domestic and international tourists.

After years of sluggish growth, our exports have been rising rapidly. They grew by 20.4 per cent in dollar terms between April and December, against the target of 18 per cent for the entire year. Foreign currency assets on February 2 stood at a comfortable level of US\$ 38.5 billion. Our liberalization of the trade policy continues to focus on procedural simplification to improve competitiveness of the Indian economy. While removing most Quantitative Restrictions in April, as per our WTO commitment, we will see that the transition will not be painful to Indian agriculture and industry, especially to the small-scale sector. The existing Export Promotion Zones at Mumbai, Kandla, Surat, and Kochi have been converted into Special Economic Zones. New such zones will also be set up at nine other places.

The Small Scale Sector contributes more than 38 per cent of the industrial production and 35 per cent of direct exports. We have put in place a Comprehensive Policy Package for the Small Scale and Tiny Sector. A scheme to restructure and modernize the Khadi and Village Industries Commission is also on the anvil. A common brand name known as "Sarvodaya" has been launched to effectively promote KVIC products in the domestic and international markets.

In view of the daunting challenges that India faces in a highly competitive global market, there is growing recognition that amendments to some of our labour laws cannot be delayed any more. These amendments are indeed pro-labour, because they will facilitate greater employment opportunities in both the organized and unorganized sectors. They will do so by removing the hurdles to faster economic development by giving businesses the opportunity to make investments both in new units as well as to expand existing ones. For example, India can command a significant competitive advantage in the international market in labour-intensive industries like garments, light engineering, toys, handicrafts, leather, and in IT-enabled services. The Government will encourage large-scale investment in such industries and create necessary infrastructure for their rapid growth.

In implementing these much-needed labour reforms, the Government pledges not to dilute its commitment to workers' welfare in any way. Programmes for training and retraining of workers to adapt to new technologies will be expanded. Facilities for their entrepreneurial development and self-employment will be augmented. Many steps have already been taken to expand the coverage, and liberalize the benefits, of

social security schemes for workers. For the benefit of poor families and the unorganized working class in rural and urban areas, the Janashree Bima Yojana was launched in June 2000. The Ministry of Labour is working on a comprehensive social welfare scheme for agricultural workers, who constitute the largest segment of the workforce in the country. We propose to cover all child labour endemic States with projects for rehabilitation through education, with emphasis on girls.

Education, especially education of girls, is the most rewarding investment we can make in India's future. An integrated National Education Programme, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, has been launched for universalizing elementary education. For this, a national mission has been constituted with the Prime Minister as its Chairman. It aims to provide eight years of quality elementary education to all children up to the age of fourteen by 2010, by making local communities own and manage the programme. It will especially focus on girls and disadvantaged groups through alternative modes of education. The Government will step up efforts for vocationalisation of education and enable the youth to start their own enterprises as well as new self employment ventures.

Faster socio-economic progress of all the weaker sections of our society is a fundamental commitment of my Government. We are taking many steps to make the finance and development corporations for the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Backward Classes, Safai Karamcharis, and Minorities more effective. More facilities will be created to provide assistance for income generation ventures, self-employment activities, and enhancement of skills and talents. The coverage of micro-credit to Self Help Groups, especially those managed by women, is being expanded for the economic advancement of the poor in rural and urban areas. The Government is determined to check atrocities against the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

The wealth of a nation lies chiefly in the health of its citizens. A new Health Policy will soon be unveiled, which will draw upon on the positive as well as negative lessons of the past efforts to achieve the unmet goal of "Health For All". One of these useful lessons has been the highly successful Pulse Polio Immunization Campaign, which ended last month. The Government will soon launch similar national campaigns, with the widest possible mobilization of official and non-governmental resources, to deal with other major challenges in public health such as malaria, kala azar, and the epidemic spread of HIV/AIDS. We have made considerable progress in eliminating leprosy. The coverage under the Revised Directly Observed Treatment Short Course Strategy for Tuberculosis has risen to over 300 million from 20 million two years ago. It has saved nearly seventy thousand lives since its inception. I commend the Government for its bold step to initiate a legislation to ban all forms of tobacco advertising and

sponsorship, along with other measures to prevent minors from getting addicted to nicotine. We have set in motion medical research based on the Human Genome to make India a front-runner in this highly promising new area of modern science.

Ayurveda, Homeopathy, Siddha, Unani, Yoga, and Naturopathy offer a wide range of preventive, promotive, and curative treatments that are both cost-effective and efficacious. We are working to end the long neglect of these holistic systems in our national healthcare strategy. A National Medicinal Plant Board has been set up to promote cultivation, processing, production, and standardization of herbal products, both for domestic and export markets. Steps are also being taken to protect our traditional knowledge in this area, which promises to attract immense global attention in the coming years.

Deteriorating quality of life in our urban areas is a matter of deep concern. We need to promote environmentally sustainable, economically efficient, socially equitable, culturally vibrant, and regionally balanced urban development. The Government will foster such policies with the cooperation of State and local self Governments. The programme to facilitate construction of 20 lakh additional housing units each year in urban and rural areas, with the assistance of HUDCO, is progressing satisfactorily. The Swarna Jayanti Shahari Rozgar Yojana and the National Slum Development Programme are expected to significantly contribute to the alleviation of urban poverty and provision of shelter to the poor.

Recurring droughts, floods, falling ground water table, and shortages of drinking water in rural and urban areas have forcefully reminded us that we will face graver crises in the future unless we begin prudent management of our water resources today. Since the adoption of the National Water Policy in 1987, many problems have emerged in the development and management of our water resources. Therefore, a revised draft water policy was framed, which was discussed in the fourth meeting of the National Water Resources Council in July last year. To sort out the differences that emerged, a Working Group of Ministers has been constituted. The Government will soon launch a national campaign for water conservation, with the active participation of various user groups. I am happy to inform you that Forest Survey of India Report for 1999 has indicated that our forest cover increased by 3,896 square kilometers since the previous assessment in 1997.

India continues to make rapid strides in space science. The first test of an indigenously developed cryogenic engine last year was an important milestone in the development of our geo-stationary satellite launch capability. Our latest satellite INSAT-3B will initiate the Swarn Jayanti Vidya Vikas Antariksh Upagraha Yojana, aimed at providing developmental

education in rural areas. Two Jai Vigyan National Science and Technology Missions were launched—one on conservation of agro-biodiversity and the other on household food and nutrition security.

The Department of Justice is in the process of reviewing various procedural and substantive laws to reduce delays in litigation. Two specific schemes have been initiated for this purpose. The first involves setting up of 1,734 Fast Track Courts for expediting the disposal of long pending cases. The second is a pilot project for computerization and networking of courts in the four metros. This will serve as a model for district and subordinate courts.

The Government is taking significant steps to reinvigorate the creative spirit of India's culture, by building bridges between the present and the past. We have launched an innovative initiative to facilitate the equal partnership of the public and private institutions to manage our rich and diverse cultural heritage, through the National Culture Fund. We have also stepped up our efforts to promote cultural and sporting ties with other countries. India will host the first ever Afro-Asian Games in November.

India's foreign policy, resting on a strong foundation of continuity and national consensus, has responded creatively to the changing global scenario. The international community is beginning to recognize that a resurgent India – peace loving, prosperous, and strong – is a reliable factor for peace, stability, and balance in Asia and in the world. The principal thrust of our foreign policy is to promote an external network of peaceful and friendly relations, which would enable us to focus on our internal task of nation-building. Central to this objective is our consistent pursuit of friendly relations with all our neighbours. Indeed, our ties with all of them, barring Pakistan, have continued to grow both in substance and in scope.

India and Nepal share an intimate relationship characterized by wide-ranging interaction in all spheres. Prime Minister G.P. Koirala visited India last July, when our countries comprehensively reviewed our bilateral relations to further strengthen them. This process will continue in the future despite efforts by vested interests in recent times to hinder it. We have a strong interest in the progress of Bhutan and Maldives and our relations of mutual respect and trust enhance this objective. India hopes that peace will soon return to the troubled land of Afghanistan, so that its people could shape their own destiny free from external interference and religious extremism.

Improvement of infrastructural links has also been a focus of bilateral co-operation with our neighbours. A third broad gauge rail link with Bangladesh has just been restored, further promoting our close co-operation and people-to-people relations. The operationalization of the India-Sri Lanka Free Trade Agreement is expected to significantly increase economic linkages between our two countries. We look forward to welcoming

President Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga in Delhi later this week, and to review with her the whole range of our excellent bilateral relations. The new road link with Myanmar, built with Indian assistance, would ease travel and facilitate trade between our two countries.

My visit to China last year, and the recent visit of Mr. Li Peng, Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, have further developed our bilateral relations. We are committed to friendly and good-neighbourly ties with China based on Panchsheel and mutual sensitivity to each other's concerns.

India's "Look East" policy saw the Prime Minister make successful visits to Vietnam and Indonesia last month. I paid a State visit to Singapore in November 2000. India's historical links with Indo-China and Southeast Asia are deep and strong. There is immense scope for increasing economic and people-to-people relations with the countries of this region, which forms our extended neighbourhood. In this endeavour, the establishment of the Mekong-Ganga Co-operation Initiative is an important milestone. During the landmark visit of Japan's Prime Minister, Mr. Yoshiro Mori, in August last year, we agreed to build a Global Partnership in the 21st Century. We are looking forward to the visit of the President of the Republic of Korea, Mr. Kim Dae-jung, to India later this year.

We share deep-rooted historical and cultural bonds with the Central Asian countries and attach great importance to further developing our relations with them. Our civilizational contacts with West Asia and the Gulf go back several millennia, and we value our relations with all the countries in this region. We have expressed our deep concern at the stalemate in the Middle East Peace Process, the excessive use of force, and the recent violence. We believe that all States in the region, including Palestine and Israel, have a right to exist within secure and internationally recognized boundaries.

Our time-tested friendship with Russia attained a highpoint during the October visit of President Vladimir Putin, when we signed a Declaration on Strategic Partnership, charting out a detailed roadmap for stronger Indo-Russian ties in the new century.

The steadily growing strength of India's interaction with the United States of America forms an important new dimension of our external relations. President Clinton's visit to India, and the Prime Minister's visit to the US last year, laid a firm foundation for this new phase in our relationship. I compliment Indian IT professionals in Silicon Valley and, indeed, the entire Indian-American community, for their shining successes. They have changed the American perception—in fact, the world's perception—of India. We continue to engage with the Administration of President George W. Bush to foster a stronger and mutually beneficial bilateral relationship.

The first-ever India-European Summit in Lisbon, during the Prime Minister's visit to Portugal in June last year marked a qualitatively higher level in India's strategic partnership with EU. It formulated an agenda to intensify our political, economic, and commercial exchanges. We are confident that our warm relations with UK, France, Germany, Italy, and other European countries will continue to acquire new dimensions. India is further consolidating her historical links with the countries of Eastern and Central Europe. High-level exchanges are planned with many of them.

Our relations with African countries are marked by warm friendship and a shared concern for the interests of the developing world. The Indian Ocean Rim offers great potential for closer co-operation with Southern and Eastern Africa. The recent visit to India of Prime Minister Sir Anerood Jugnauth underscored our intimate friendship with Mauritius. I am looking forward to visiting Mauritius on the occasion of their National Day celebrations. The President of Algeria, Mr. Abdelaziz Bouteflika, was the chief guest at this year's Republic Day Parade. The visit of the President of Nigeria, Mr. Olusegun Obasanjo, has further consolidated our ties with this important African country. We are looking forward to the visit of His Majesty King Mohammed VI of Morocco later this month.

We will continue to strive for closer relations with the countries of Latin America, and to expand our traditionally warm ties with the Caribbean countries and other members of the Commonwealth. The suppression of democracy in the multi-ethnic society of Fiji continues to cause us grave concern. India will work closely with the international community for the peaceful restoration of a non-discriminatory democratic order in Fiji.

The international community agreed at the UN Millennium Summit that the globalization process should be inclusive and equitable. It condemned international terrorism, including cross-border terrorism, trafficking in illicit arms and drugs, religious fanaticism, and military adventurism. India's call for an early international conference against terrorism was endorsed. An increasing number of countries have joined the demand for making the United Nations Security Council to be more representative and responsive. India's candidature for the permanent membership of an expanded Security Council is also finding increasing support. We reiterate our call for global, comprehensive and non-discriminatory nuclear disarmament. At the same time, our security imperatives compel us to maintain a credible minimum nuclear deterrent until this objective is achieved.

My Government has taken major initiatives to strengthen our multi-faceted bonds with the Indian Diaspora. They are twenty million strong, spread all over the world, and have maintained close cultural, economic, and spiritual links with their motherland, even while integrating harmoniously into their host societies. A high-level committee has been appointed to

make policy recommendations to encourage their participation in India's socio-economic transformation.

Honourable Members, you begin the Budget session today. Apart from the financial business relating to the Railway and General Budgets, there is a heavy legislative agenda awaiting completion in this Session. Two Ordinances also need to be replaced with Bills. All this work is intrinsically linked to our country's all-round and rapid socio-economic development. The people who have elected you have a high expectation that the precious time of Parliament is best used for the completion of the scheduled business.

I wish you success in your endeavours.

Jai Hind.

ADDRESS TO PARLIAMENT—25 FEBRUARY 2002

Lok Sabha	—	Thirteenth Lok Sabha
Session	—	First Session of the Year
President of India	—	Shri K. R. Narayanan
Vice-President of India	—	Shri Krishan Kant
Prime Minister of India	—	Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee
Speaker, Lok Sabha	—	Shri G.M.C. Balayogi

HONOURABLE MEMBERS,

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to this first session of Parliament in 2002. My best wishes are with you for the successful completion of the heavy budgetary and legislative business ahead.

As we begin this session, most of the results of the elections to the Legislative Assemblies of four States—Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Manipur, and Uttaranchal*—have come in. I join you in congratulating the newly elected legislators. Our special felicitations go to the people of Uttaranchal*, who have elected their Vidhan Sabha for the first time after the formation of their State. I also welcome the newly elected Members of the Lok Sabha, consequent to the bye-elections in some constituencies.

This is the first session of Parliament after the unprecedented terrorist attack on this Temple of India's Democracy on December 13 last year. It was an audacious challenge to our sovereignty. It was an assault on our national honour. It was a diabolical plot to carry out large-scale annihilation of the leaders of different political parties and peoples' representatives. Had the plot succeeded, it would have resulted in a catastrophe of unthinkable proportions. Nine brave souls sacrificed their lives to defend our Parliament and its members. We pay our grateful homage to these martyrs.

What happened on December 13 was the nadir of a long list of reprehensible acts in a twenty-year long campaign of cross-border terrorism against India. It strengthened our resolve to deal decisively and conclusively with this challenge. The investigation into this conspiracy has clearly revealed the hand of terrorist organizations, which have for long operated from Pakistani soil with the support of the ruling establishment of that country.

* Now known as Uttarakhand.

It is now also established that these terror outfits are closely aligned through ideology, inspiration, resources, and logistics to those who carried out the terrorist attacks against the United States on September 11, 2001.

My Government has made it absolutely clear that India is determined to end cross-border terrorism by all the means at our command. The brave jawans and officers of our armed forces have been fully mobilized on our western borders and have maintained vigil despite difficult conditions. The necessary level of military strength and preparedness will be maintained to deter any aggression. On a parallel track, we have taken several diplomatic and political measures against Pakistan. We have also intensified our efforts to increase awareness among the Governments and the peoples of the world on our just struggle against cross-border terrorism. We have emphasized that terrorism cannot be condemned somewhere and condoned elsewhere. The fight against terrorism has to be global and comprehensive. It should target not only the terrorist, but also those who sponsor, finance, support, or shelter them. Several Members of Parliament, belonging to different political parties, have travelled to various capitals of the world in recent weeks as a part of this exercise. There is far greater appreciation and support abroad for India's position than ever before. An illustration of this is our success in persuading the United Arab Emirates to hand over a key accused in the recent terrorist attack in Kolkata.

The entire nation is united in this decisive phase of the battle against terrorism. The complete consensus among political parties on this issue has once again demonstrated the maturity and greatness of our democracy.

We keep hearing calls of resumption of dialogue with Pakistan. Terrorism and dialogue cannot go together. Recent history is witness to the fact that, whereas India has always been ready for meaningful and fruitful talks with Pakistan, it is Pakistan that has ensured their failure with its acts of betrayal. India is prepared to resume the dialogue process with Pakistan, provided Islamabad satisfies us that it has indeed taken effective steps to end the training, equipping and financing of the terrorists and stop their infiltration into Jammu and Kashmir and other parts of India. We also demand that Islamabad hand over to us the twenty terrorists who have committed grave crimes in India and who continue to receive shelter in Pakistan. Positive action by Islamabad on these demands is the test of its sincerity to end its hostility against India and to pave the way for discussing all the outstanding issues, including that of Jammu and Kashmir, in a peaceful manner, through bilateral dialogue.

The Government has a clear strategy to deal with the internal situation in Jammu and Kashmir. First, to counter the terrorists with a firm hand. In this, our security forces have already recorded demonstrable successes. We shall triumph in our mission to root out terrorism from Jammu and Kashmir

in the same way that we did in Punjab in the last decade. Let no one have any doubts about it. The second objective in our strategy is to support faster economic development of all the three regions of the State, especially to create employment for the youth. Thirdly, we are prepared to talk with any group of people within the State who eschew the path of violence and who may have legitimate grievances.

The people of Jammu and Kashmir will elect a new Legislative Assembly later this year, through free and fair elections. No doubt, we have to be vigilant against those who have no faith in democracy and have shown their willingness to go to any length to subvert the manifestation of people's aspirations. I am confident that the forthcoming elections will help the return of peace and normalcy, and accelerate the process of all-round development of Jammu and Kashmir.

The Government attaches the highest priority to national security. Based on the recommendations of the Group of Ministers, which comprehensively reviewed our National Security systems, far-reaching reforms are being carried out in the higher defence management, leading to closer coordination between the three services of the Armed Forces and integration of military and civilian defence structures. A separate Defence Procurement Board has been set up to speed up defence purchases, make them more responsive to needs of the Armed Forces, and to bring greater transparency in procurement.

I congratulate our defence scientists and engineers for the successful test of the Agni missile last month. Coupled with other missiles, which we have already tested, this will strengthen India's defence against any military adventures aimed at us.

In our continuing quest for self-reliance, the manufacture of many types of defence equipment has been opened up to the private sector, so that our national security can benefit from the impressive capabilities developed in recent decades by private Indian companies. They may now apply for licenses to set up defence industries, and to establish collaborations with public-sector defence undertakings. Such companies can also have foreign direct investment of up to 26 per cent of the equity. This will impart a new vigour to indigenous defence production and exports.

Internal security has now become an integral part of national security. The Union Government, in close cooperation with State Governments, has been taking necessary steps to strengthen internal security throughout the country. Today terrorism and organized crime pose the most serious threat to internal security. They also endanger our external security and our national unity because of their well-known links to the network of anti-India forces in our neighbourhood. The Government therefore thought it necessary to put in place a federal law to deal effectively and expeditiously

with terrorist offences. In this exercise, it was also guided by similar laws already in place in some States or being considered in others. Accordingly, the Prevention of Terrorism Ordinance 2001 was promulgated on October 24, 2001. Since Parliament could not pass the Bill to replace it, this ordinance had to be re-promulgated. While doing so, the Government took care to seek suggestions from various political parties and made suitable modifications.

Maintenance of communal harmony and adherence to the secular ideals of our Constitution are the bedrock of our national ethos. I wish to record with much satisfaction that, in keeping with the trend in recent years, there have been relatively fewer incidents of communal violence in 2001. However, the Government will continue to maintain vigil against those who try to foment communal trouble. Towards this end, it has banned some fundamentalist organizations for their anti-national activities. I appeal to the people and to all political and non-political organizations to do everything they can to fortify peace and amity in our multi-religious society and, thereby, further strengthen the bonds of national unity.

The Ayodhya dispute is one of the contentious issues before the Nation. Its amicable and speedy resolution is crucial for communal harmony and national integration. The Government is firmly of the view that this dispute can be resolved, either through mutual agreement among all the parties concerned, or through a verdict of the judiciary. To facilitate a resolution of this dispute, an Ayodhya Cell has been recently created in the Cabinet Secretariat. The Government of India, being the statutory receiver, is duty bound to maintain the status quo at the disputed site in Ayodhya. It will also ensure that all necessary measures will be taken to ensure the preservation of law and order.

Peace, security, and development in the North East continue to receive my Government's focussed attention. Militancy and extremism are the chief obstacles to tranquility, prosperity, and welfare in the region. The mischievous hand of anti-India forces in the neighbourhood is clearly at work behind many of these extremist groups. The Government will deal firmly with those who have taken to the path of violence. However, it is ready to hold talks with all those who reject the culture of the gun. Simultaneously, it will continue to respond sensitively to the grievances of the people in this multi-ethnic region. For the first time, a special Ministry for the Development of the North Eastern Region has been set up. The North Eastern Council has been strengthened. Tardy implementation of various developmental projects, for which large sums have been set aside, has long been the bane of the North East. The new Ministry has begun to reverse this state of affairs. I urge all the State Governments in the region to fully cooperate in this endeavour.

The peace process in Nagaland has been strengthened with the satisfactory progress of talks with various militant groups. What is especially heartening in the last one year is that the people of Nagaland have come out strongly in favour of peace, dialogue, and development, often by staging spontaneous mass activities. Mizoram has already been reaping the benefits of peace. The Government will fully support the efforts of all the other North-Eastern States to emulate their example.

A healthy economy is vital to secure our twin objectives of national security and all-round development. The slowdown in the global economy has also affected India. There was a decline in the rate of growth in 2000-2001. However, the advance estimates for the current year show a pick-up in growth to 5.4 per cent, restoring India to the group of the five fastest growing large economies in the world. However, this rate of growth is neither sufficient nor satisfactory. We need to accelerate a host of reforms to enable our economy to reach a trajectory of growth of 8 per cent and above. This alone can ensure success in our objective of doubling per capita income in the next ten years and reducing the number of people living below the poverty line by half. Realizing the urgency of this task, the Government has constituted a Cabinet Committee on Economic Reforms, with the mandate of drawing up, facilitating, and monitoring the implementation of the reform agenda.

The Tenth Five-Year Plan begins this year. The Approach Paper to the Plan aims at the stepping up the growth rate of GDP to 8 per cent a year over the Plan period 2002-2007. It also proposes to establish specific, monitorable targets covering economic, social, and environmental dimensions of human development. The attainment of Plan targets is contingent on our ability to significantly increase the investment rate in our economy; step up the productivity of existing capital assets; undertake second generation policy reforms to improve the efficiency of new investment; and facilitate and encourage a deepening and broadening of reforms in all the States.

I join all of you in extending hearty congratulations to our kisans who have once again produced a bumper crop. The output of foodgrains is projected to touch a new high of 210 million tonnes in 2001-2002, from 196 million tonnes last year. With production of 81 million tonnes of milk during 2000-2001, India continues to be the world's largest producer of dairy products. We have also made impressive strides in many other areas of agricultural production.

The Government proposes to respond to the new situation with several measures to free Indian agriculture from the shackles of the past. The Essential Commodities Act will be modified. Restrictions on inter-State movement of agricultural commodities will be removed to enable farmers to realize better prices. The sugar industry, which has already begun to

benefit from de-licensing, will also be fully decontrolled soon. For the first time, sugar mills have been allowed to supply ethanol to be mixed with petrol and diesel, up to five percent. This will not only result in savings in our oil imports, but also add to the commercial viability of our sugar mills. Above all, the sugarcane farmer will be able to gain a higher price. The Government is committed to strengthening the cooperative sector by enabling it to reap the full benefits of economic reforms. Timely and adequate credit is almost as important as timely and adequate water supply in the development of agriculture. The Government will take steps to strengthen rural credit cooperatives, which provide this critical input to kisans at their doorsteps, for the sake of agricultural sustainability and farmers' well-being.

Food security of the poorest of the poor is the first priority of our agricultural policy. Accordingly, the allocation of foodgrains under Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS) for BPL families, which was increased from 10 kilos per family per month to 20 kilos per family per month from April 2000, has been further increased to 25 kilos per family per month from July 2001. The Central Issue Price of foodgrains for APL families has also been reduced to about seventy percent of the economic cost. In addition, more than three million tonnes of foodgrains have been allotted to eleven States affected by drought or other natural calamities, free of cost, since January 2001 for undertaking the Food for Work programmes.

Wastage and losses in production, transportation, and distribution continue to be a major bane of the food economy in India. It is estimated that the harvest and post-harvest losses in agricultural commodities are over Rs. 70,000 crore each year. The Government proposes to formulate a comprehensive strategy to check these losses.

India's cattle wealth is one of the neglected areas of our rural economy. Last year the Government set up a "National Commission on Cattle" to review the relevant laws relating to protection, preservation, development, well being, and movement of cattle, and to ensure improved functioning of gaushalas, gausadans, and pinjarapoles. The recommendations of the Commission will be given serious consideration.

Industrial growth at 2.2 per cent in April-November 2001 is lower than 6 per cent achieved in April-November 2000. This decline in industrial growth is attributable to various factors including external slowdown, the business cycles, inherent adjustment lags of corporate restructuring, etc. and the consequent decline in both consumer and investment demand.

Despite the slowdown in certain sectors of our economy, its fundamentals continue to be robust. Inflation has touched a new low, the lowest in the last two decades. Our foreign exchange reserves are at a record level. Foreign direct investment has risen. Despite a hardening of international

prices of petroleum products during the course of last year, the country's balance of payments situation has remained comfortable. India's exports continued to show positive growth. Indeed, the rate of growth in the last fiscal year was the highest in the past decade.

India successfully defended her national interests at the WTO Ministerial Conference in Doha last year. We coordinated with like-minded developing countries to highlight various implementation concerns arising from the Uruguay Round Agreements. We also ensured that the subsequent round of trade negotiations would address the key concerns of the developing world.

The various policy reforms unveiled by the Government in the past few years to improve the economic environment and remove infrastructure bottlenecks have begun to show results. This is clearly seen in the crucial sector of telecom services. I am happy to inform the Honourable Members that India now adds one thousand telephone lines every hour. The number of cellular phone subscribers has crossed 5.7 million from a mere 1.2 million in 1999. The number of fixed line connections has risen to more than 36 million from 21 million in 1999. Many more Indians today have access to telecom services, including in rural and remote areas. But, unbelievably, they are also paying far less than before. The STD rates have fallen by up to 62 per cent. Today, a farmer can make calls to many places in his district almost at local call rates.

A similar achievement is also seen in bringing the benefits of information technology to the masses. Internet subscribers have grown to nearly four million from a modest base of quarter of a million in 1999. The usage of the Internet in Indian languages is also steadily increasing. Honourable Members can now read on the same day several newspapers of their States on the Internet when they are in Delhi to attend to Parliamentary business. We can therefore claim with legitimate pride that we have indeed reduced the Digital Divide to some extent, although a long way still needs to be traversed. Driving this process of ensuring faster, wider, and cheaper digital connectivity across the nation is the new Ministry of Communications and Information Technology. It has been created by merging the Ministries of Communication and Information Technology to respond to the imperative of technological convergence, keeping in view the natural synergies between the two sectors.

In spite of a downturn in the global economy, India has continued to maintain its dominant place in IT exports. From a negligible base ten years ago, our software exports now contribute 14 per cent of India's total exports. The IT software and services industry in India accounts for about 1.7 per cent of India's GDP. We are well on our way to achieving our target of software exports of \$ 50 billion by the year 2008. Other knowledge-based industries like biotechnology too are at a take-off stage, and their contribution to the economy will only rise in the coming years.

India's entertainment industry has emerged as a leading-edge sector in the knowledge economy, with a huge promise for the future. Exports of Indian films have practically doubled every year for the last three years. The Government is taking several supportive policy initiatives to increase the exposure as well as exports of our films and music to world markets. This will also enable Indian content and service providers to become as sought after abroad as our IT professionals are. Our liberalized policies, both in television and FM radio, have already resulted in increased private investments and more choices for consumers. The Government has approved a special package for development of broadcasting services in the North East. The Government has initiated action to set up a world-class National Press Centre. In recognition of the risks run by working journalists, a scheme for journalists' welfare has been notified.

If providing universal "Digital Connectivity" is one of the Government's priorities, the other is to speedily and significantly improve physical connectivity all across the country. Two specific projects the Government has launched to achieve this objective – and both are among the most ambitious infrastructure projects since Independence – are the National Highways Development Project and the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana.

With the speedy progress of the National Highways Development Project, the Government is promoting road development on a massive and unprecedented scale. Thirteen thousand kilometres of National Highways are being widened to four and six lanes. Of this, 1,800 kilometres have already been widened. The first phase of this project, namely the Golden Quadrilateral connecting the four metros, is progressing almost a year ahead of schedule. It is expected to be completed by the end of 2003. The National Highways Authority of India will spend Rs. 10,000 crore during each of the next two years. This first phase alone will generate 19 crore mandays of direct employment. In addition, it is going to create a demand for 10 million tonnes of cement, 1 million tonne of steel, and a very large quantity of road-related domestically manufactured equipment. Further, the Union Government is giving almost Rs. 1,000 crore a year to States to improve State Highways and Major District Roads.

The implementation of the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana has begun in right earnest. In its first phase, construction of all-weather roads to unconnected villages with a population of more than 1,000 will be completed by 2007. Under this fully Centrally funded scheme, proposals amounting to nearly Rs. 7,000 crore have already been sanctioned in all the States and Union Territories. The Government proposes to further enhance allocation to this scheme through non-budgetary resources.

A non-lapsable Special Railway Safety Fund of Rs. 17,000 crore has been formed for replacement of Railway assets, especially in safety related areas. With the Ninth Plan, which comes to an end this year, Indian Railways

would achieve the target of electrification of 2,300 route kilometres. With this, 25.2 per cent of the Indian Railways network will be electrified, hauling about 63 per cent of freight and 49 per cent of passenger traffic.

Ministry of Shipping, newly created to give greater focus to this critical infrastructure, has been able to achieve significant increase in the capacity as well as the efficiency of our major ports. For the first time, ships do not have to wait for berthing. The Government will soon announce new policy initiatives to encourage Indian-owned shipping companies to compete globally. An Inland Water Transport Development Council has been set up. The amendment to the relevant Act, which was passed last year, has helped to bring about organizational changes in the Inland Waterways Authority of India and authorized it to raise funds from the market by issue of bonds or debentures. These steps will help our country realize the huge potential for this cost-effective and less polluting mode of bulk transport.

The Indian power sector is at crossroads today. The country has a persistent peaking shortage of 13 per cent and energy shortage of 7 per cent, coupled with poor quality of supply, low voltage and grid instability. The primary reason for this alarming situation in the power sector is the deteriorating financial health of the State Electricity Boards and State Utilities. The yearly losses of the State Electricity Boards have increased from Rs. 4,560 crore in 1992-93 to Rs. 20,527 crore in 2000-01. This poor financial health of the State Electricity Boards is due to various factors which include large-scale theft of electricity and unsustainable cross-subsidy in favour of domestic and agricultural consumers.

To give further impetus to reforms in the electricity sector, the Government has drafted a new Electricity Bill, which was introduced in the Parliament last year. The Bill would make reforms mandatory across all States and it would be incumbent upon the States to set up their own State Electricity Regulatory Commissions. At the same time, however, the Bill is flexible and gives freedom to the State concerned to adopt its own model of reforms depending upon the ground realities.

The dismantling of Administered Pricing Mechanism from April this year would result in the gradual emergence of a competitive market with minimal intervention, thereby benefiting both the consumers of petroleum products and the petroleum industry. The provision of subsidies through the Government budget, instead of the oil pool account mechanism, would be a more transparent mechanism. For the first time, seven blocks of coal bed methane have recently been awarded to tap non-conventional sources of hydrocarbons. Contracts for these are expected to be signed soon. I am happy to announce that the waiting list of over 1.1 crore LPG connections was entirely liquidated in 2001. Over 1,500 LPG distributorships are proposed exclusively for rural areas to increase the reach of LPG for rural people.

The textile sector plays a critical role in the Indian economy. The new textile policy has helped the industry to prepare itself for the challenges of the phasing out of the Multi-Fibre Agreement in 2005. The Technology Upgradation Fund is helping in speedy modernization, which is critical for facing global competition from other textile producing countries.

The New Tourism Policy is in the process of finalization. It has been discussed widely with State Governments, the hotel industry, tourism and travel operators, and other concerned organizations. It aims to develop integrated tourism circuits of international standards, and leverage India's unique attractions. By focusing on public-private partnerships to provide infrastructure and tourism services, and by promoting environmental sustainability and the development of heritage sites, this forward-looking policy will help Indian tourism become a major catalyst of economic growth, employment generation, and earner of foreign exchange.

The Public sector has played a laudable role in enabling our country to achieve the national objective of self-reliance. However, the significantly changed economic environment that now prevails both in India and globally makes it imperative for both the public sector and the private sector to become competitive. Learning from our experience, especially over the last decade, it is evident that disinvestment in public sector enterprises is no longer a matter of choice, but an imperative. The prolonged fiscal haemorrhage from the majority of these enterprises cannot be sustained any longer. The disinvestment policy and the transparent procedures adopted for disinvestment have now been widely accepted and the shift in emphasis from disinvestment of minority shares to strategic sale, has yielded excellent results. The Government has taken two major initiatives to improve the safety net for the workers of PSUs. The first, enhanced VRS benefits in those PSUs where wage revision had not taken place in 1992 or 1997. The second, increased training opportunities for self-employment for workers retiring under VRS.

To ensure productive utilisation of our resources, it is not desirable that these remain locked up in unviable, non-operating units. It would be much better for the units, its workers and creditors and the economy in general, if there was a system of quick take over of non-viable units, so that capital continues to be productively employed. There is accordingly, a need to urgently bring about a bankruptcy legislation, which will allow quick payment of the dues of workers and exit of non-viable firms.

The removal of Quantitative Restrictions has thrown up several challenges and opportunities for the Small Scale Sector, bringing global competition to its doorsteps. To overcome this challenge of increased competition, the sector has to raise its efficiency to attain global standards in product quality with internationally competitive prices. The Government is already

implementing many schemes to assist this sector. More will be formulated, if necessary.

Electoral reforms for strengthening our democratic system are long overdue. As a part of this endeavour, greater transparency in accounts of political parties and incentives for payment by cheque are being put in place. The Government has also decided to amend the system of elections to the Rajya Sabha by introducing open voting and by doing away with requirement of residence in a particular State for contesting an election to the Rajya Sabha from that State.

Fast Track Courts are taking up sessions cases pending for two years or more and the cases of undertrials in jails. At present there are about two lakh undertrials in jails on whose maintenance State Governments spend about Rs. 400 crore a year. Presently, Lok Adalats can settle disputes only on the basis of compromise or settlement between the parties. If the parties do not arrive at a settlement or compromise, the case is either returned to the court of law or the parties are advised to seek remedy in a court of law. To remove the above drawback, it has been decided to amend the Act to set up permanent Lok Adalats. This will provide compulsory pre-litigation mechanism for conciliation and settlement of cases in certain public utility services.

Honourable Members, this year marks the first Decade of Democratic Decentralization through empowerment of Panchayati Raj Institutions. It was ten years ago that this august Parliament passed the historic 73rd and 74th Amendments to the Constitution. The functioning of these grassroots institutions of democracy has improved in many parts of the country. Of great significance is the increased participation, made possible through affirmative action, of women representatives and representatives of other disadvantaged sections of our society. However, we must in all honesty admit that the spirit of this revolutionary initiative has not yet been fully translated into genuine devolution of adequate administrative and financial powers to Panchayati Raj Institutions. I would like the State Governments to self-critically review the gap between the intent of the Constitution and the reality on the ground. On its part, the Union Government has decided to train all elected Panchayat functionaries, at all three levels, within three years.

Census 2001 recorded that the population of India was 1,027 million. The decline in both mortality and fertility during the nineties has been lower than the projections and the goals set for the Ninth Plan. However, the decadal growth during 1991-2001 was 21.3 per cent declining from 23.9 per cent for 1981-91, the sharpest decline since Independence. More than half of the increase in population over the next fifteen years is anticipated in eight States, which are lagging behind in critical socio-

demographic indices. The Government has set up an Empowered Action Group to address the needs and problems of these States exclusively.

India took a major step last year to achieve universalization of elementary education. I commend all of you for passing the historic Constitution (93rd Amendment) Bill, 2001 to make education for all children in the age group of six to fourteen years free and compulsory. It is the birthright of every Indian child to have access not only to education, but to good education. Accordingly, to emphasize and inculcate the culture of quality in the entire education sector, we have decided to observe 2002 as the “Year of Quality Education”.

The Census 2001 has brought home yet again the incidence of female foeticide, infanticide, and neo-natal mortality, all adverse to the girl child, in several pockets of the country. A massive campaign has been launched to tackle the situation both by social awareness and stringent implementation of the law. The Pre Natal Diagnostics Act is being amended to ensure complete stoppage of sex-determination tests all over the country.

India has become polio-free, except in a few, very small pockets. Eradication of polio from these areas is expected by the end of this year. Learning from the success of the anti-polio drive, the Government has intensified mass campaigns against other dreaded diseases like tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS. The anti-tobacco campaign will be further strengthened.

Poor sanitation affects the health and housing of a majority of our people. It has also made many parts of our cities and villages look dirty and ugly. The Valmiki Ambedkar Awas Yojana was launched last year to ameliorate the housing problems of slum dwellers. As a sub-component of this new scheme, the Government will soon launch a nationwide programme, called “Nirmal Bharat Abhiyan”, to build community toilet complexes in large numbers. These will be maintained by community-based organizations of slum dwellers themselves.

The Indian Board for Wildlife, under the Chairmanship of the Prime Minister, has recently adopted a landmark Wildlife Action Plan. Conservation of wildlife shall be declared a national priority. A Forest Commission will soon be set up. State Governments will be assisted to strengthen their staff and other requirements for better upkeep of parks and zoos and to prevent poaching and illicit trade in animal products.

To provide Social Security benefits to agricultural workers, the Government has launched “Krishi Shramik Samajik Suraksha Yojana”. The scheme, which is being implemented by the Life Insurance Corporation in fifty selected districts of the country, envisages to cover one million agricultural workers over a span of three years.

The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment has stepped up implementation of various programmes for the welfare of Scheduled Castes, Other Backward Classes, and Minorities. More Credit has been made available to the Micro-Financing Programme for funding self-help groups. Under the National Scheme of Liberation and Rehabilitation of Scavengers and their Dependents, Sanitary Marts have started functioning in many States.

The Ministry of Tribal Affairs has now decided to expand and modify the Grain Bank Scheme to cover all the 114,000 tribal villages in the country. The Government will provide a one-time grant of two-quintal foodgrains per family along with storage and other costs.

The successful development flight of the Geo-synchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle (GSLV) from Sriharikota in April last year, is a significant milestone in the Indian space programme. India is the sixth nation in the world to achieve such a capability. The GSLV will be operational after another two or three test flights. The INSAT system for telecommunications, television broadcasting, and meteorology received a further boost with the successful launch of INSAT-3C last month.

India's foreign policy has always served as a reliable protector and an effective promoter of our vital national interests—in security or in development. In the wake of the happenings of September 11 and December 13, enormous demands were made on our foreign policy establishment last year to put across India's point of view in the capitals of the world. In addition, a hectic schedule of incoming visits by important world leaders enabled the Government to share its perspectives on regional and global issues.

Afghanistan is a valued friend in our neighbourhood, a friend with whom we have had cultural, economic, and spiritual exchanges dating back to antiquity. We agonized with the rest of the civilized world the destruction by the Taliban of the Bamiyan Buddhas. India rejoices at the liberation of Afghanistan from the clutches of a fanatical and regressive regime that allowed its soil to become a breeding ground for jihadi terrorism around the world. The establishment of the Afghan Interim Administration on December 22, 2001 in Kabul was an important step in restoration of peace and stability in Afghanistan, as well as in the region. We fully appreciate the enormous task that faces that war-ravaged nation in addressing the humanitarian and reconstruction needs, and are committed to assist the fraternal people of Afghanistan in meeting them. We will soon have the pleasure of receiving Chairman Hamid Karzai of the Afghanistan Interim Administration on a State Visit to India.

India and Nepal continue to share traditionally close and friendly relations. Nepal has faced unprecedented challenges in recent months—first with the unfortunate tragedy in the Royal family and then with the

continuing senseless killings by Maoist insurgents. We have extended our hand of solidarity and support to the Government and the people of Nepal in their efforts to restore normalcy and maintain peace and security.

We continue to enjoy a close relationship of friendship, mutual trust, and beneficial cooperation with Bhutan.

India remains committed to strengthening friendly ties with Bangladesh in all spheres. To this end, there is a new visa regime in place to make travel between the two countries easier and for enhancing people-to-people contacts. Our economic interaction with Bangladesh has diversified in many areas that include services, joint ventures in infrastructure development, transport services, and sharing of river waters.

We have also noted with satisfaction the recent efforts in Sri Lanka towards ending ethnic violence and achieving lasting peace. We remain committed to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Sri Lanka and support the measures to further the peace process.

It is a matter of deep satisfaction that there has been a revival of the SAARC process, beginning with the meeting of the Foreign Secretaries in August 2001 in Colombo, and culminating in the Eleventh Summit of Heads of State and Government in Kathmandu in early January. Steps are being taken to deepen and broaden regional economic cooperation. India is committed to progressive tariff liberalization towards the goal of a South Asian Free Trade Area.

India continues to pursue a policy of constructive and positive engagement with Myanmar. Our Consulate General in Mandalay and the Myanmar Consulate General in Kolkata will both be reopened shortly.

The longstanding friendship and strategic partnership between India and Russia were further reinforced by regular political consultations on regional and international issues of mutual concern. These are being further intensified through economic co-operation and diversified defence collaboration. A number of important bilateral documents were signed during the Prime Minister's visit to Russia in November last year.

Our bilateral relations with China continued to gain momentum and diversify. The recent visit of Premier Zhu Rongji of China underlined this process. The effort to build trust and understanding continues. With Japan, our Global Partnership is being concretized around the two main pillars of our economic co-operation and our strategic convergences. The Joint Declaration issued during Prime Minister's visit to Japan in December 2001 sets out the common perspectives of both our countries on important bilateral issues and global challenges.

Our relations with Southeast Asian countries and with ASEAN have been on the upswing in recent years. There is a greater realization of the potential for partnership. The first India-ASEAN Summit later this year in Cambodia will be a significant event for the region.

India is concerned at the continued escalation of violence in the Middle East, which has derailed the peace process. The international community's realization is today reinforced that no durable peace can be achieved in the region without a viable State of Palestine, along side Israel, each within secure and recognized borders. We continue to be ready to extend all possible assistance to the fraternal Palestinian people.

The political dialogue with Europe was carried forward at the highest level during the visits of German Chancellor Schroeder, UK Prime Minister Tony Blair, and Norwegian Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg to India. The India-EU Summit held in New Delhi in December 2001 was another milestone in our relationship with the European Union. The institutionalization of summit level interaction recognizes the coalition of interests between India and the EU to meet the challenges of the 21st Century. We remain committed to intensification of our relations of friendship and co-operation with countries of Eastern and Central Europe.

Relations with the United States continue to grow stronger. The Prime Minister and subsequently other senior Cabinet Ministers paid successful visits to that country recently. The Government will maintain its policy of broad-based engagement with the United States in pursuit of mutually beneficial bilateral relations and of many common goals in Asia and beyond. The terrorist attacks of September 11 and December 13 have brought the two countries closer in defence of their shared values of democracy, freedom, and pluralism against forces of terror. We will continue to work to further strengthen mutual understanding on security issues and to advance international peace and stability.

Africa continues to occupy a special place in our diplomatic interactions. Our relationship with this important continent has strong political foundations based on our principled support for decolonization and national liberation movements and our strong opposition to apartheid. The challenge today is to give even greater economic content to this historic relationship taking into account new and emerging opportunities. A significant feature of our interaction with Africa has been the sustained high level of bilateral exchanges. I visited Mauritius in March last year as the Chief Guest on their National Day. Other bilateral exchanges have taken place and are being planned.

With the countries of Central and South America our political and economic relations have been steadily expanding.

The High Level Committee on the Indian Diaspora constituted in September 2000 presented its Report to the Prime Minister on January 8, 2002. The Government has accepted the recommendation of the Committee that 9th January every year may be celebrated as “Pravasi Bharatiya Divas”. It was on this day that Mahatma Gandhi, himself a Pravasi Bharatiya in South Africa for almost two decades, returned to India in 1915. Up to ten “Pravasi Bharatiya Samman” Awards will be conferred on prominent Non-Resident Indians or Persons of Indian Origin on Pravasi Bharatiya Divas from next year. The Government intends to restructure the Persons of Indian Origin Card Scheme and significantly reduce the fees for the Card.

Honourable Members, the Budget session begins today. Apart from the financial agenda relating to the Railway and General Budgets, there is also heavy legislative business awaiting completion in this Session. There are 36 bills pending in the Lok Sabha, and 40 in the Rajya Sabha. Four Ordinances need to be replaced with Bills. We know that the work of Parliament, especially in the Budget session, will be keenly watched by our people whose hopes and aspirations all of you represent. They especially want to see that the invaluable time of India’s Parliament is best used for completing all scheduled business.

I wish you success in your endeavours.

Jai Hind.



Dr. A. P. J. ABDUL KALAM



ADDRESS TO PARLIAMENT—17 FEBRUARY 2003

Lok Sabha	—	Thirteenth Lok Sabha
Session	—	First Session of the Year
President of India	—	Dr. A. P. J. Abdul Kalam
Vice-President of India	—	Shri Bhairon Singh Shekhawat
Prime Minister of India	—	Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee
Speaker, Lok Sabha	—	Shri Manohar Joshi

HONOURABLE MEMBERS,

I extend a warm welcome to you at this first session of Parliament in 2003. This is my first Address to Parliament at the start of the Budget Session.

Let me first welcome the newly elected Members of the Rajya Sabha, as also of the Lok Sabha. I congratulate the people of Jammu and Kashmir who, in the October elections to the State Assembly, replied to the threat of the bullet with the power of the ballot. The entire Nation is grateful to our Armed Forces, Paramilitary Forces, and Police Forces for their dedicated service under extremely trying conditions. We pay our homage to those who became martyrs in the call of their duty.

Today I would like all of you to join me in paying tribute to Kalpana Chawla and her six fellow astronauts, who died in the tragic break-up of Space Shuttle Columbia minutes before its touchdown on February 1. The remarkable journey of courage and determination that made this Indian woman, hailing from a small town in Haryana, a Citizen of the Milky Way will remain a source of pride for all Bharatvasis and Bharatvanshis. It will also inspire young Indians, especially women, to dream big and to work hard to realize their dreams. I commend ISRO's gesture in naming the METSAT series of satellites after Kalpana Chawla.

This is the first session of Parliament after the National Development Council adopted the Tenth Five Year Plan. The Plan aims at accomplishing faster economic growth with a stronger thrust on employment generation and equity. It has set the target of 8 per cent annual average GDP growth rate during the Plan period, with a companion target of 5 crore additional employment and self-employment opportunities. The Plan convincingly

explains why these ambitious goals are achievable. It has distinguished itself from the previous Plans by underscoring that it is not merely a Resources Plan, but a Reforms Plan. It has deepened the domain of economic reforms by, especially, providing reforms-linked incentives to State Governments. It has also broadened the agenda of reforms by showing the categorical imperative to remove numerous non-financial barriers to faster development through reforms in civil service, judiciary, education, and above all, in governance at all levels—at the Centre, States, and Panchayati Raj Institutions. I would especially like to draw the attention of the Union and State Governments to the detailed list, contained in the Plan document, of the legislative and administrative initiatives needed to translate the Tenth Plan's goals and targets into reality.

The Tenth Plan is important for yet another reason. No nation attains greatness without an energizing vision guiding it. The Prime Minister, in his Independence Day address last year, has called upon the people to strive towards the goal of transforming India into a Developed Nation by 2020. This vision captures our people's heightened self-confidence, rooted in India's impressive achievements in many fields. It also reflects the increased expectations of our people at the beginning of the new century, that India no longer be categorized as a developing, much less, a poor country. Nearly 260 million people, who are below the poverty line, want to join the mainstream of development. Our people are impatient to achieve 100 per cent literacy, health for all, shelter for all, prosperity through knowledge-driven productivity, and a better quality of life—all of these enriched with our value system. Hence, it is time India launched a new vision, which I would call "Vision-2020". I would like Parliament, which is celebrating its Golden Jubilee, to discuss this subject. I also call upon the Union and State governments to evolve an action plan for making the Tenth Plan—a People's Plan and Development a People's Movement. To achieve this, they should concentrate on two *mantras*: Effective Implementation with People's Participation; and Effective Communication for People's Participation.

A key element of "Vision 2020" would be "Providing Urban amenities in Rural Areas (PURA)". More than two-thirds of India's population lives in rural areas. We need to give a new thrust to their all-round development through a mega mission for their empowerment. This is best achieved through provision of four critical connectivities: Physical Connectivity by providing good roads, transport services and quality power; Electronic Connectivity by providing reliable communication networks; Knowledge Connectivity by establishing more professional institutions and vocational training centres, schools with high quality infrastructure, teachers who are devoted to teaching, production centres for rural artisans, primary health centres, recreation centres, etc.; and Market Connectivity that will help realize the best value for the products and services of rural people, and

constantly expand and enrich employment opportunities for them. The model envisaged is a holistic habitat that would improve the quality of life in rural areas and also help in de-congestion of urban areas.

National security is a matter of highest priority for my Government. After the December 13 attack on our Parliament by Pakistan-based terrorists, we were constrained to deploy our troops along the international border. This decision achieved its purpose by showing both our firmness and our self-restraint in dealing with our hostile neighbour. In October last year, the Government, after careful deliberation, decided to strategically redeploy the Armed Forces from their positions. This was done without compromising on their capacity to respond decisively to any emergency, and without lowering their vigil in Jammu and Kashmir.

A comprehensive Nuclear Doctrine has now been put in place. This places the ultimate control of our strategic assets in the hands of the civilian political executive. The country is truly proud of the scientists, engineers, and staff of DRDO for the successful test firing of the Agni-1 missile. DRDO's other accomplishments include Pinaka, the indigenously developed Area Weapon System, and the supersonic missile BrahMos, jointly developed with Russia, which has been successfully flight tested.

Continued incidents of cross-border terrorism in 2002 again underscored that the chief threat to our internal security is external. The killings of innocent men, women, and children; the choice of members of the families of security personnel as special targets; the attack on pilgrims—all this showed that there was a method in the madness of Pakistan-supported terrorist violence. However, the method did not succeed. Our people maintained calm even in the face of provocative attacks on the Akshardham Temple in Gandhinagar and the Raghunath Temple in Jammu. However, we must continue to be vigilant against an adversary which is unwilling to give up its anti-India stand. The assurances given by Pakistan on the issue of cross-border terrorism have remained unfulfilled; the infrastructure of terrorist groups remains intact in Pakistan; the funding of terrorist groups continues.

The Centre is fully committed to working closely with the newly elected Government in Jammu and Kashmir in its efforts to bring peace, normalcy, and economic development of the State. The Prime Minister has announced projects and schemes worth over Rs. 6,000 crore covering various aspects of development and security with a thrust on generation of new employment opportunities for the youth and relief for migrants affected by militancy and cross-border shelling.

The Government's concerted efforts to rebuild peace in the North-East are bearing fruit. I send my special felicitations to the people of Nagaland, whose yearning for peace has imparted strong momentum to the Centre's

efforts in this direction. I also heartily congratulate the Bodo community for the successful conclusion of the peace talks. Development work in the Northeastern Region has gathered further momentum. A number of infrastructure projects have been set up through the Non-Lapsable Central Pool, through which more than Rs. 1,500 crore have so far been released. The people's long-standing demand for better facilities for air travel in the Northeast has been addressed with the introduction of four 50-seater aircraft.

During the past three decades, about Rs. 550 crore were given to the States to modernize their police forces. In contrast, the Police Modernization Scheme launched two years ago has made a fund of Rs. 1,000 crore a year for the next ten years. I urge those State Governments with poor utilization of this fund to take urgent corrective measures. It has been decided to launch the Multipurpose National Identity Card Project on a pilot basis in thirteen States from April.

The problem of illegal migration from Bangladesh has assumed serious proportions and affects many States. There have been reports of Bangladesh territory being used by insurgent groups operating in the Northeast. The ISI is also active in Bangladesh. This makes the issue of infiltration even more ominous. The Government is determined to take all necessary steps to check this problem.

The Assembly elections in Gujarat have strengthened democracy and ended a sad chapter in the State's history. We must resolve to ensure that communal violence is never repeated in any part of our country. The Government remains committed to secularism.

My Government has repeatedly made it clear that the Ayodhya dispute can be resolved either through negotiations between the two communities or through a verdict of the judiciary, which has to be accepted by all concerned. While the judiciary should expedite its work and give an early verdict, it is also necessary for political parties, religious leaders, and eminent social personalities to promote an atmosphere of mutual understanding, goodwill, and accommodation.

The Government has a coherent and well-integrated strategy for boosting economic growth. Despite the global slowdown, the past year has been a fairly good year as India continues to be rated amongst the fast growing economies. In the first nine months of this financial year, India's exports grew by over 20 per cent to reach US \$ 38 billion (Rs. 181,300 crore). Despite a relative slowdown in the economy, the total revenues from excise and customs rose by over 15 per cent in the first nine months of the year. Inflation remained at a moderate level. Our forex reserves have crossed US \$ 73 billion (Rs. 348,429 crore). Food stocks are comfortable, and prices of essential commodities are stable, despite a severe drought in fourteen States. The recent dip in the estimates of the GDP growth has been almost

entirely due to the shortfall in agricultural production. This has once again highlighted the need to rescue our agriculture from its excessive dependence on the monsoon by increasing public investments in irrigation and in all other inputs that increase farm productivity.

A Task Force on Drought under the chairmanship of the Deputy Prime Minister has been constituted. So far more than Rs. 1,000 crore have been released to the States under the National Calamity Contingency Fund, in addition to over Rs. 1,400 crore as the share of the Central Government to the Calamity Relief Fund of the States. Nearly 50 lakh tonnes of foodgrains worth nearly Rs. 5,000 crore have been allocated to the drought-affected States to generate relief employment through the Food for Work programme under the Sampurna Grameen Rozgar Yojana.

The Nation has been searching for a lasting solution to the recurring problem of droughts and floods, which have been taking a huge human and economic toll. Networking of our river systems to transfer water from the surplus basins to the areas of deficit has engaged people's attention for many decades. The Government has set up a Task Force to prepare a practical blueprint for this project, without compromising environmental safety and the interest of displaced people. This initiative will bring significant benefits in drinking water, irrigation, power generation, inland navigation, and tourism. I must emphasize that this mega project does not negate the need for promoting small and micro programmes for water conservation at local levels. The two are mutually complementary.

The National Water Resources Council has adopted a new National Water Policy emphasizing integrated water resources development and management for optimal and sustainable utilization of available surface and ground water. The Centre has launched a Fast Track Programme for the completion of those major and medium irrigation schemes that can be completed in one year. Subsequent to the approval by the Narmada Control Authority, the dam height was raised, and this has mitigated the problem of drinking water and irrigation in arid areas of Saurashtra and North Gujarat.

The Swajaldhara programme, launched in December, has scaled up the rural drinking water supply initiative to cover the entire country. It is a community-led, participatory programme to be implemented by the community and the Gram Panchayats. The community contributes 10 per cent upfront towards capital investment; and 90 per cent is matched by the Centre. I am happy to inform you that the programme's message "Dus kadam aap chale, nabbe kadam hum chalenge" has evoked excellent response from all parts of the country. A new initiative called "Hariyali" has been launched to promote integrated development of watershed programmes through Panchayati Raj Institutions. Considering the acute and growing water scarcity, in rural and urban India, it is high time we launched water conservation and efficient water use as a people's movement.

The flow of institutional credit for agriculture and allied activities has increased from about Rs. 45,000 crore to nearly Rs. 75,000 crore in three years. The Kisan Credit Card Scheme has made rapid progress since its inception three years ago. Over 2.7 crore cards were issued till September 2002. All the eligible farmers will be covered under this scheme by March 2004. The National Agricultural Insurance Scheme is picking up well.

The policy of procurement at the Minimum Support Price, while ensuring remunerative prices for wheat and rice farmers in surplus States, has resulted in huge stocks of rice and wheat with the public agencies. As a response to this, the Government has been encouraging exports of foodgrains. The wide-ranging recommendations on long-term food management made by the High Level Committee are being examined. There is an urgent need to review the current policies, which have impeded crop diversification and led to unsustainable food subsidies, and to ensure crop neutral support to our farmers without excessive procurement.

Fertilizers are a critical component in our scheme of food security. The new pricing policy for urea to be implemented from April, 2003 aims at greater transparency, efficiency, and fiscal discipline. While the Government is committed to deregulate the marketing and distribution of fertilizers, it would ensure that major fertilizers are available in the country both in adequate quantity and quality at affordable prices to farmers in all the States.

The sugar industry has lately faced serious difficulties, constraining the capacity of sugar factories to make timely payment to sugarcane farmers. Several steps have been initiated to protect the interests of sugarcane growers, while ensuring viability of sugar mills. Sustained efforts are being made to promote horticulture as a major area of diversification in agriculture. The cold storage scheme is working well and has created an additional capacity of 28 lakh tonnes. A new scheme of construction, renovation, and expansion of rural godowns called Grameen Bhandaran Yojana has been launched. This scheme will help prevent distress sales by small and marginal farmers. A new National Policy on Cooperatives has been announced. A National Seeds Policy has been finalized. Under the scheme of Agriclincs and Agribusiness Centres, launched last year, unemployed agriculture graduates provide extension services to the farmers on payment. Recognizing the need for value-addition in agricultural and horticultural produce, the Government has given high priority to the development of food processing industries. A Group of Ministers has been constituted to propose a single modern integrated food law and related regulations, to replace the existing myriad laws, which have affected the growth of this sector.

Ensuring food security for the poor through a strengthened Public Distribution System remains a major commitment of the Government. The Antyodaya Anna Yojana, under which one crore poorest of the poor

households are entitled to wheat at Rs. 2 a kilo and rice at Rs. 3 a kilo, is a proof of this commitment. The Centre hopes that State Governments would speedily remove the remaining obstacles in the smooth functioning of the PDS.

The Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana is the most ambitious rural infrastructure project since Independence. During the last two years, it has sanctioned over Rs. 7,000 crore to the States, enabling construction of about 20,000 kilometres of roads. Efforts are being made to raise additional resources for this project and also devise innovative ways of speeding up its implementation. The Ministry of Rural Development organized an All-India Panchayat Adhyakshas' Conference in April. The *Sammelan* unanimously passed a Resolution urging the Central Government to ensure speedy and effective devolution of financial and administrative powers to Panchayati Raj Institutions through an amendment to the Constitution. I would like Honourable Members to discuss this important proposal from the grass-roots.

The National Highways Development Project is one of India's proudest success stories since Independence. As against a total of 556 kilometres of four and six-lane highways constructed during the first 50 years of Independence, today we are constructing 5 kilometres of world-class highways every day! The Government is spending Rs. 20 crore a day on construction of nearly 15,000 kilometres of world-class highways during 1999-2007. The Golden Quadrilateral, which measures about 6,000 kilometres, is progressing ahead of schedule in many cases. Contracts worth over Rs. 18,000 crore have already been awarded, mostly to Indian contractors. The Project is already generating daily employment for 2.5 lakh construction workers and 10,000 supervisors. On completion of its first phase alone, it would have created 18 crore mandays of employment. Besides giving a big boost to India's cement and steel industries, it is expected that the Golden Quadrilateral alone would achieve a saving of Rs. 8,000 crore yearly on fuel and vehicle maintenance costs. The greatest benefit of this Project, in my opinion, is that we have demonstrated to ourselves and to the world at large that India can now think of Big Projects and also implement them in record time.

The Government has taken various initiatives to put the Indian Railways, the country's premier transportation infrastructure, on a path of fast-track growth. A new non-budgetary investment initiative, called the National Rail Vikas Yojana, has been launched. It envisages investment of Rs. 15,000 crore over the next five years. A major project, costing over Rs. 3,500 crore, for constructing the Udhampur to Baramullah railway line in Jammu and Kashmir is being implemented. We will ensure that the first train rolls into Kashmir Valley before August 15, 2007. Completion of all viable sanctioned railway projects within the next ten years, out of a total shelf

of projects of about Rs. 40,000 crore is also being planned. A non-lapsable Special Railway Safety Fund of Rs. 17,000 crore has been set up for renewal of over-aged assets and for safety-enhancement works.

Shipping and port development is turning around strongly. Total cargo handling capacity of major ports in 2002 was more than the traffic in the previous year. Indian Ports no longer suffer from capacity constraints, resultant congestion, and high turn-around time for ships. In its continued endeavor to attract private sector investment, the Government has offered three major projects for operation of container terminals.

The Government intends to soon bring in a new Civil Aviation Policy, which will liberalize this sector, usher in regulated competition, attract investment, and modernize our airports to provide affordable, but world-class services to passengers.

The incredible rate of growth of the telecom services in India, the sheer size of the sector, the dramatic improvement in quality and the equally dramatic fall in tariffs have together scripted one of the major achievements of the country in recent years. This is an area where the fruits of reforms have benefited the common man directly. Until a few years ago, people were standing in queues to obtain a telephone. Today, several telephone companies are standing in queue to get the people to choose their telephones. Between April 1999 and October 2002, 1.67 lakh villages have been covered by village public telephones, resulting in 85 per cent coverage. The number of mobile phones, which was 14 lakhs in April 1999 has now crossed the one crore mark. What was only a few years ago a symbol of luxury has become an affordable tool of empowerment for the common man. The telecom revolution has also empowered postal services in the country. The Post Office network in India, in addition to modernizing its core postal services, is poised to offer many new value added services.

India's Information Technology industry, which has emerged as the pride of the nation, continued to do well in spite of a slowdown in the global economy. Software exports were US \$ 7.8 billion during last year and are expected to reach US \$ 10 billion this year. IT-enabled services are also beginning to create large-scale employment. I congratulate all our talented IT professionals and entrepreneurs, for not only creating wealth for the nation but also bringing prestige to India in the international community.

The media and broadcasting sector has seen a host of new initiatives. To promote consumer choice, the Government has mandated a Conditional Access System for Pay Channels. It will shortly come into force in four metros. Doordarshan and All India Radio will be supported to more effectively discharge their mandate of public service broadcasting. Community and campus radio stations will be allowed to be set up to promote educational

and developmental communication. After considered debate, the policy has been changed to permit 26 per cent FDI in Indian print media dealing in news and current affairs. However, suitable safeguards have been put in place. Effective steps will be taken to curb piracy to protect the interests of India's burgeoning entertainment sector.

The past few years have witnessed a silent revolution in housing construction in the country, thanks to a combination of government initiatives and falling interest rates on housing loans. I am happy to inform you that, whereas HUDCO sanctioned around Rs. 11,000 crore for housing construction from 1970 to 1998, in the last four years the sanctioned amount is more than that. It has sanctioned loans for construction of over 60 lakh new houses for poor and lower middle class people since the inception of this Government. Other public and private housing finance companies have done equally well. The Valmiki Ambedkar Aawas Yojana that aims at improving the living conditions of urban slum dwellers has received an overwhelming response. A Challenge Fund for catalyzing city-level economic reform programmes will be operationalized soon. The Government has given an in principle approval for a major project to build married accommodation for defence personnel at an estimated cost of about Rs. 17,000 crore and cleared the first phase at a cost of Rs. 5,500 crore. The successful commissioning of the first phase of the Delhi Metro has created great pride and excitement among the people. I congratulate all those involved in its meticulous implementation. An Urban Transport Policy, and plans to construct metro rail in other cities, are on the anvil.

Power is the prime mover of the development process. The good news is that power sector reforms are slowly, but surely, showing positive results. Till now 18 States have signed the Memorandum of Agreement under the Accelerated Power Development and Reform Programme. Privatization of power distribution in Delhi has already led to improved supply. To rationalize the tariff fixation mechanism, a Central Electricity Regulatory Commission has been set up. State Electricity Regulatory Commissions have been set up in 21 States. A comprehensive Electricity Bill is before Parliament for approval. The atomic energy programme has also been progressing well. The Bureau of Energy Efficiency has been established. I am happy to announce that the plan to achieve 30 per cent energy savings in Government buildings has well and truly begun in Rashtrapati Bhavan and in the Prime Minister's Office.

Maximum self-reliance is the cornerstone of our energy security strategy. So far, three rounds of bidding have been invited under New Exploration Licensing Policy, and 70 blocks have been awarded, involving an investment of about US \$ 3 billion (Rs. 14,500 crore). A fourth round is planned. This policy has been able to achieve its objective of expanding and accelerating exploration especially in deepwater areas. It has started showing positive

results with big discoveries made in several places. For the first time, eight blocks have been awarded for exploration and production of coal-bed methane. ONGC Videsh Limited has started its first gas production from the Vietnam Offshore Gas Project. The rate of royalty on crude oil was enhanced recently with retrospective effect from April 1998. This would provide additional revenue to the oil producing States. The Administered Pricing Mechanism in the petroleum sector was dismantled from April 2002. The good news for housewives continues. Three crore and thirty lakh gas connections were released during the last four years, as against only three crore and thirty-seven lakh in the last forty years.

Coal is India's principal source for meeting its primary and secondary commercial energy requirements. 27 coal mining blocks have so far been allocated to 22 companies for captive mining for specific end-use. The Standing Committee of Parliament on Energy has submitted its recommendations on the Coal Mines Nationalisation (Amendment) Bill 2000, which seeks to throw open coal mining to the private sector, without the restrictions of captive end-use.

On April 1, India's indirect tax regime will cross a major milestone. All our States will move to a uniform system of collecting taxes, namely the Value Added Tax. Apprehensions that the States may lose revenue in the initial period of introduction of VAT have been allayed by assuring them that the Government of India would compensate the revenue loss of the States, if any, upon introduction of VAT.

Well-run capital markets and well-regulated financial institutions help in mobilizing productive investments for faster economic growth. Last year the Government had to take a series of corrective and promotive steps to restore investors' faith and institutions' health. These include the Securitization, Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Securities Act, 2002 that allows lenders access to the assets of defaulters. The Unit Trust of India was successfully restructured with due protection to the interests of small investors. SEBI, the stock market regulator, has been strengthened. Investigations into the recent stock market "scam", which were carried out by different agencies have underscored the limitation of a fractured approach. To investigate such frauds, it has been decided to set up a Serious Fraud Investigation Office. The report of the Naresh Chandra Committee on Corporate Audit and Governance is being examined. The problems faced by IDBI, the nation's premier financial institution, have necessitated its restructuring into a regular corporate entity. A Bill has been introduced to corporatize IDBI.

The imperative of fiscal consolidation requires that public finances are managed better. This can take place only through greater collection of revenue and controlling unproductive expenditure. Increase in revenue will

need restructuring of the tax system with a focus towards a stable, transparent and efficient tax administration. The Kelkar Committee's reports on direct and indirect taxes are a roadmap to the creation of such a tax regime. On expenditure, both the Centre and the States need to rationalize their revenue expenditure and to target their subsidies better. The Twelfth Finance Commission, which has recently been set up, will address these important issues.

The process of disinvestment has gained irreversible momentum as a part of the wider policy of economic reforms. State Governments are also following this policy, which shows that there is a consensus in practice. The proceeds from disinvestment reduce the burden of public debt, thereby releasing public resources for the social and infrastructure sectors. During the current year, out of thirteen cases of disinvestment so far, eleven were of loss-making units. The procedures for disinvestment have established benchmark norms for transparency, efficiency, administrative simplicity, and non-discretionary decision-making.

Social security to the organized and unorganized workforce will continue to be the Government's priority even in the era of liberalization. Under the Employees Provident Fund Scheme, which benefits 3.7 crore subscribers, a novel programme to reduce claims settlement time from 30 days to 2-3 days has been introduced. A nationwide unique Social Security Number for each worker is being launched. The national minimum wage has been revised to Rs. 50 a day. The Second National Commission on Labour has given a comprehensive report covering a wide range of labour issues. Its specific recommendations are being discussed with various stakeholders. Based on these deliberations, a comprehensive umbrella legislation for workers in the unorganized sector is being finalized for introduction in this session of Parliament.

The textile sector is grappling with the challenges of a globalized market and problems created by slow modernization. Nine Apparel Parks have been sanctioned for setting up garment units with state-of-the-art machinery. Several new schemes have been approved to improve facilities in major textile centres in the country. At the same time, the problems of the traditional handloom and handicraft sectors, which provide livelihood to vast numbers of our weavers and artisans, are also being comprehensively addressed through a special package of measures.

The Government has taken new initiatives aimed at strengthening the small-scale sector in the country to make it globally competitive. These include schemes for technology upgradation, providing collateral free loans, enlarging the scope of ISO Certification Scheme, de-reservation of items in the SSI sector in a phased manner, and promotion of small scale industries in the Knowledge Economy. The Ministry of Agro and Rural Industries is

implementing a number of programmes for the creation of employment opportunities for the educated unemployed youth both within and outside the KVIC system.

The new Science and Technology Policy 2003 presents a blueprint for India's emergence as a major Knowledge Power. It outlines the approach to S&T governance, optimal utilization of existing physical and knowledge resources, development of innovative technologies, generation and management of intellectual property, and creation of awareness amongst the people about the use and benefits of science and technology. An India Science Award of Rs. 25 lakh has been instituted to promote and recognize scientific excellence. The rapid strides that India has been making in biotechnology give us the confidence that we can develop it both for finding cost-effective solutions to many difficult problems in healthcare, food security, pollution control, etc., and also for realizing new avenues of wealth and employment creation.

India's first meteorological satellite was successfully launched. The forthcoming launches of satellites in the INSAT-3 series will add further capacity to the INSAT system, which is already one of the largest domestic communication satellite systems in Asia. An exclusive satellite for education, EDUSAT, is also under development. ISRO has taken up the task of tele-medicine connectivity to provide medical services to remote areas. The Indian Remote Sensing Satellites continue to provide valuable data for our resources survey and management. Ground water prospect maps for six States were released recently to help locate sites for drilling borewells.

The richness and diversity of India's bio-resources are a major gift of nature to us. The Biological Diversity Bill, 2002, passed in the Winter Session, marked a major milestone in India's commitment to conservation and sustainable utilization of our bio-resources. An ambitious afforestation programme with people's participation that establishes Joint Forest Management Committees in all the 1.73 lakh villages located on the fringes of the forest areas has been launched. The scope of the National River Conservation Plan has been considerably broadened to include works in 155 towns along polluted stretches of 29 rivers spread over 17 States. India successfully hosted the Eighth Conference of Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in New Delhi last year. The successful adoption of the Delhi Declaration helped to raise awareness of developing country concerns in climate change. India welcomes the adoption of the Plan of Action at the World Summit on Sustainable Development, which was held in Johannesburg last year.

Honourable Members, in my interaction with thousands of children across the country in recent months, I have found that they all have a dream to make something out of their lives, and something for India. It

should be our collective responsibility to provide them an environment in which they can achieve their dreams. We have been implementing the largest intervention strategy in the world on child health and nutrition through the network of Integrated Child Development Services. In recognition of the significant services being provided by Anganwadi workers, their honoraria have been almost doubled since April last year. A National Nutrition Mission has been launched in 51 demographically most backward districts of the country. A National Commission for Children, a statutory body that will act as an ombudsman for children, will also be constituted.

The Nation's commitment to the universalization of elementary education is reflected in our move to make free and compulsory education for all children in the age group of 6-14 years a Fundamental Right. Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, our national programme to discharge this Constitutional obligation, has been successfully launched with an outlay of nearly Rs. 5,500 crore. Adult Literacy Schemes have now been implemented in nearly 98 per cent of the districts in the country. The University Grants Commission, which has completed fifty years, is proposed to be restructured into the University Development Commission. Necessary amendments to the UGC Act will soon be brought in. I also congratulate the IIT system for having completed fifty years of distinguished service to the nation. It has earned global acclaim for the quality of its graduates. Fourteen Regional Engineering Colleges have been upgraded as National Institutes of Technology. Special thrust has been provided to address the educational needs of minorities. Honourable Members, I cannot overemphasize the critical importance of improving the quality and management of higher education at all levels. This will necessarily entail many difficult reforms, which I would like the two Houses to discuss.

Economic empowerment is a key aspect of women's empowerment. The concept of Women's Component Plan was introduced as a strategy to ensure that at least 30 per cent of the budgetary resources are spent for the benefit of women. I am happy to note that nearly 43 per cent of the budgetary allocation in social sector ministries has actually been spent on women-specific or women-related schemes during the Ninth Plan period. This process shall be further strengthened during this year. The Self-Help Group movement among women has proved to be enormously successful.

The Government has announced National Health Policy 2002, which aims to achieve an acceptable standard of good health amongst the general population. This will be done through increased access to the decentralized public health system by establishing new infrastructure in deficient areas and by upgrading the infrastructure in the existing institutions. A new National Policy on Indian Systems of Medicine and Homoeopathy has also been announced. Our efforts at containing malaria, kala-azar, dengue, blindness, and leprosy are progressing well. The coverage under the Revised National TB Control Programme has risen to 560 million people from

20 million in 1998. The Government has strengthened its partnership with States and NGOs in implementing a comprehensive National AIDS Control Programme throughout the country. In the era of liberalization, the Government is committed to ensuring the affordability of basic drugs. It will take comprehensive steps to further strengthen our pharmaceutical industry, which in recent years has acquired impressive export capabilities and tremendous global competitiveness in developing new drugs.

Improvement in the poor standards of sanitation, in urban as well as rural India is essential for reducing the burden of disease, especially among the children and poor. The Government will soon launch, in active partnership with citizens' organizations, a major cleanliness drive, starting with Railways, government buildings, hospitals, and public places.

The poor performance of Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh in stabilizing their population is a matter of serious national concern. The Centre, in close co-operation with these four State Governments, has planned focused interventions to tackle this problem. A matter of equally grave concern is the fact that the female to male ratio in several developed parts of the country, such as Punjab, Haryana, Gujarat, Maharashtra, and Delhi, is significantly lower than the All-India average, which itself has been declining over the past few decades. Parliament has strengthened the punitive provisions of the law against pre-natal sex determination. However, the time has come for the governments and civil society to launch a sustained campaign against the evil of female foeticide and infanticide. Another area of concern is the revival of polio in UP and some other States, which has frustrated our resolve to make India polio-free by 2001. In view of the alarming spread of Hepatitis-B in 15 States, pilot projects have been launched for providing children with the necessary vaccine.

Promotion of social justice and mainstreaming of the weaker sections and minorities has been the constant endeavour of my Government. One of the key strategies for ensuring this is through economic justice and employment-oriented educational assistance. In the current year over 18 lakh SCs, 5 lakh STs and 6 lakh backward class students have been awarded scholarships. Two new merit-based scholarships after 10th standard have been introduced this year—one in the name of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar and the other for physically challenged students. The various concerned Finance and Development Corporations have a challenging role to play to live up to their mandate.

To give a further thrust to the welfare and development of Scheduled Tribes, a Scheduled Area and Scheduled Tribes Commission has been set up. The last such Commission was set up in 1960. Similarly, after fifty years, a summary revision of Scheduled Tribes' list has been done under Article 342 of the Constitution, involving inclusion or exclusion of

142 communities. To give focused attention to the needs of Scheduled Tribes, it is proposed to set up a separate National Commission for STs by bifurcating the National Commission for SCs and STs.

The Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports has finalized a new draft National Youth Policy. A National Youth Commission has been set up. Indian sportspersons deserve commendation on their spectacular performance in the 17th Commonwealth Games and 14th Asian Games. The decision to host the first ever Afro-Asian Games later this year will further promote sports in the country. I call upon our promising sportspersons and sports organizations to start preparing in full swing for the Olympics next year. Honourable Members, let us send our best wishes to the Indian cricket team playing in the World Cup tournament in South Africa.

The Government's commitment to electoral reforms is seen in the concrete legislative action undertaken last year. It showed that Parliament is responsive to people's concerns over criminalisation of politics. Further, the Representation of the People (Amendment) Bill, 2001 seeking to provide for open ballot system in respect of elections to Rajya Sabha for checking reported prevalence of money power in Rajya Sabha elections, and the Election and Other Related Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2002 providing election funding to political parties to check corruption and money power in elections, are pending before Parliament.

Judicial delays have been a cause for serious concern. To remedy this situation, nearly Rs. 500 crore have been allocated as special project and upgradation grant for judicial administration. This is the largest investment ever made for this purpose. Fast Track Courts in some States have improved the conviction rate. A concerted drive has been launched to fill about 2,000 vacant posts of Judges and Magistrates in District and Subordinate Courts.

The year gone by has seen a bouquet of initiatives to revive the glory of Indian culture. The much-needed synergy between Culture and Tourism has been brought to the fore by promoting a new concept of developing at least one Culture-cum-Tourist hub in each State. A number of monuments have been taken up for integrated conservation and development. All-round infrastructure development and public amenities around these complexes have been taken up in a big way. Kurukshetra, Red Fort, Ajanta, Ellora, Hampi, Humayun's Tomb, etc. are some of the examples. It is proposed to revive cultural tourism along the routes of the great Yatras of Adi Shankaracharya, Swami Vivekananda, and Mahatma Gandhi. Work is being undertaken to develop complexes along the route of the legendary river Saraswati. Many schemes have been taken up during commemoration of 2,600 years of the Janm Kalyanak of Bhagwan Mahavir. The Mahabharata Festival at Kurukshetra will now be held every year. Much of the ancient

wisdom of India is stored in a large number of manuscripts available with institutions and individuals all across the country. A National Mission for Manuscripts has been recently launched with the aim of surveying, cataloguing, preserving and collecting these invaluable manuscripts in a National Manuscripts Library.

My Government will continue its vigorous efforts to use India's Foreign Policy to promote and safeguard our critical national interests. Drawing on the strength of our civilizational and historical ties with countries across the globe, we will forge ahead towards broad-basing our political links, expanding our network of economic co-operation, strengthening strategic inter-linkages, and collaborating on cutting-edge technologies.

India has always striven for peaceful, friendly, and cooperative relations with all its neighbours. Unfortunately, Pakistan has consistently responded to our efforts with hatred and violence, sponsoring and actively supporting a sustained campaign of cross-border terrorism. Recent revelations have shown how every civilized diplomatic norm is being flouted by the use of its diplomatic mission in Delhi to arrange financing for terrorist groups in the country. We have had to take measures against the concerned diplomats, but have also reiterated that we would be willing to retain the level of our diplomatic representations by accepting replacements of the expelled officials. Our position remains unchanged that we are willing to resume bilateral dialogue with Pakistan, as soon as cross-border terrorism ends.

India's commitment to SAARC, as an engine for economic integration and equitable development in the region, remains undiluted. We have constantly pushed for progress on substantive aspects of the economic agenda outlined in the Kathmandu Declaration. We have repeatedly declared our willingness to attend the next SAARC Summit if meaningful progress is achieved on these issues.

India will continue to intensify its multi-faceted cooperation with Bhutan. Historical, cultural, and ethnic affinities have shaped our relations with Bangladesh and Myanmar. We are also implementing developmental projects with Indian assistance in Myanmar. With Bangladesh, we are also engaged in a dialogue on some important political and security issues that have arisen in our interactions. The visit of the Prime Minister to Maldives in September last year further enhanced our cordial relationship with that country.

Nepal is passing through a difficult phase of political changes and Maoist insurgency. We believe that multiparty democracy and constitutional monarchy are two essential pillars for stability, security, and development in Nepal. We hope that the current problems will be resolved within this framework, in a peaceful and consensual atmosphere. We have maintained an intensive political dialogue and fruitful economic cooperation with

Sri Lanka. We continue to support efforts towards a solution of political problems in that country in a manner that preserves its territorial integrity and meets the aspirations of all segments of its population.

The people of India and Afghanistan have a legacy of close and historic ties of friendship and co-operation. We welcome the expansion and consolidation of the authority of the Transitional Administration and fully support the Government of Afghanistan. We look forward to receiving the President of Afghanistan on a State visit to India in the very near future. India will continue to extend extensive humanitarian, financial, and project assistance for Afghanistan's reconstruction.

The close ties of friendship between India and Iran were put on a stronger footing, when we hosted the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran as the Chief Guest at our Republic Day Parade this year. We want to expand, consolidate, and diversify our ties with Iran, which have a strategic dimension in the areas of energy and transit.

India's interactions with China have grown and diversified. Trade and economic cooperation are expanding rapidly. Efforts to build trust and understanding in other areas continue. The Prime Minister has been invited to visit China this year and has accepted the invitation. We continue to strengthen our bilateral relationship with Japan, pursuing the shared objective of building a Global Partnership. India's co-operation with the Republic of Korea continues to expand. We continue to monitor developments in the Korean Peninsula. Reports that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea resumed its nuclear weapon programme with the help of technology from Pakistan arouse serious concern, both about the security implications and about the double standards with which much of the world has handled the question of treaty obligations as well as proliferation issues.

India's traditionally warm relations with South East Asia have been reflected in our recent bilateral interactions, including the Prime Minister's visits to Cambodia, Laos, and Thailand. Our engagement with the region reached a qualitatively higher platform, when our interface with ASEAN was raised to the Summit level in November 2002. We are making good progress on the economic initiatives outlined at the India-ASEAN Summit in Phnom Penh.

India's deep-rooted relations with Central Asia have been enhanced by an identity of views on recent political and economic developments. India and the countries of Central Asia also have a shared determination to tackle the negative focus of terrorism, extremism and drug trafficking, which stalk our common neighbourhood.

The Gulf region is of great importance to India. The region is a major source of India's energy needs and a major economic partner in trade and investment. Over 3.5 million Indians are engaged in the economic

development of the Gulf countries. These multi-dimensional ties have been further strengthened and diversified through sustained interaction.

We share the concern of the entire world on the unhappy situation relating to Iraq. We have deep interest in peace, stability and security in that region. We hope that the wisdom of the international community, expressed through the UN Security Council, will result in a peaceful resolution of this matter in a manner, which would benefit humanity.

My Government attaches great importance to the strategic partnership between India and the Russian Federation, which is enriched by regular political consultations, multi-faceted economic cooperation and intensive defence collaboration. During President Vladimir Putin's visit to India in December last year, we also signed a Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation in Fighting against Terrorism.

India's engagement with countries in Europe continues to be broad-based and intensive. Regular exchanges of views on regional and international developments have promoted a better appreciation in these countries of our legitimate concerns and helped to re-vitalize our bilateral relationships. The India-EU Summit in Copenhagen strengthened our institutional dialogue with the European Union, which we will take forward at the next Summit meeting in India later this year.

India and the USA continue to forge a new relationship. There is a mutual conviction between the two countries that their bilateral relationship must undergo a qualitative transformation in order to respond to the increasingly complex challenges to the international security and strategic architecture. The two countries are also engaged in building closer bilateral consultations on multilateral social and economic issues of mutual concern.

Africa continues to occupy a special place in our diplomatic interactions. This continent, which constitutes the largest group of countries in the United Nations, is also, increasingly, becoming an important economic partner for India.

Our bilateral relations with Latin America and Caribbean have grown considerably. The "Focus LAC" programme pursued since 1997 has resulted in increasing attention being paid to the region by the Indian public and private sector.

The Government's consistent efforts to nurture a close relationship with the overseas Indian community were highlighted by the celebrations of the first Pravasi Bharatiya Conference in January. On this occasion, we honoured ten eminent persons of Indian origin whose achievements in their countries of adoption and domicile have done our country proud. The Government has also decided to grant dual citizenship for persons of Indian origin living in certain countries. The necessary legislation for this will be introduced in this session.

Honourable Members, it is indeed heartening that the Winter Session of Parliament did exceptionally well in conducting its legislative business. During that session, both Houses passed as many as 42 Bills and I have accorded assent to all of them. The Government was able to bring forward several legislations last year, out of which 93 Bills have been passed, which also include important constitutional amendments. This is the highest number of enactment of legislations enacted in a single year during the last 25 years and the third highest since 1947. Apart from the fiscal agenda relating to the Railway and General Budgets, there is a heavy legislative business awaiting completion in this Session. I do hope that the Budget Session—and all the subsequent sessions of Parliament—will be as productive as the last one.

I wish you success in your endeavours.

Jai Hind.

ADDRESS TO PARLIAMENT—7 JUNE 2004

Lok Sabha	—	Fourteenth Lok Sabha
Session	—	First Session after the 14th General Election
President of India	—	Dr. A. P. J. Abdul Kalam
Vice-President of India	—	Shri Bhairon Singh Shekhawat
Prime Minister of India	—	Dr. Manmohan Singh
Speaker, Lok Sabha	—	Shri Somnath Chatterjee

HONOURABLE MEMBERS,

I am delighted to address the first session of both Houses of Parliament after the elections to the 14th Lok Sabha. My greetings to all the members, particularly to the newly elected members of the Lok Sabha. You had all worked during the last three months in the scorching heat of the summer, had many sleepless nights, travelled hundreds and thousands of kilometres, met thousands of voters and explained how you will shape the future of the people and the country. On your successful election to this august body, I congratulate you all.

Before I dwell on the task ahead of us, I would like to congratulate the Election Commission of India for smoothly conducting the 14th Lok Sabha elections using Electronic Voting Machines in all the booths for the first time.

The first general elections of this millennium reflect the firm conviction of our people in the democratic process of change. These elections have demonstrated the vibrancy of our democracy. The outcome of the elections is indicative of people's yearning for inclusiveness—economic, social and cultural and their rejection of the forces of divisiveness and intolerance. The verdict is for establishing the rule of law and repairing our secular fabric. This Government is committed to providing the right ambience for fulfilling the aspirations implicit in the people's mandate.

The Common Minimum Programme of the United Progressive Alliance, supported by the Left and other like-minded parties, reflects the commitment of all participants to implement this programme and making it the foundation for collective maximum performance. Only through your active participation

in discussions pertaining to national development and your determination to resolve all the problems coming in the way of implementing development programmes, will we be able to achieve the goal of making a billion people smile.

The Common Minimum Programme is indicative of the broad thrust of the priorities of this Government. It will be the sincere effort of the Government to implement the Programme during the next five years. However, the precise content and phasing of programmes will depend on both the availability of resources and the pace of improvement of the absorptive capacity of various sectors. Our effort will be to move forward on the twin roads of efficiency and equity while maintaining a high degree of fiscal and financial discipline. My government will need to devise imaginative measures to ensure that our macro economic policies balance appropriately the concerns for rapid growth, stability and social equity.

My Government is committed to preserving, protecting and promoting secular values and enforcing the law without fear or favour to deal with all obscurantist and fundamentalist elements that seek to disturb social amity and peace. We will ensure that the economy maintains a growth rate of at least 7-8 per cent per year for a sustained period and in a manner that generates employment and provides assured livelihood for each family. While doing so, my government will focus on improving income and welfare of farmers, farm labour and workers; empowering women and providing equality of opportunity for people belonging to the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, OBCs and religious minorities.

My Government will carry forward the process of social and economic development so that the 21st century becomes India's century. This calls for speeding up economic reforms that ushered the country into an era of rapid economic growth. Further reforms will be carried out in agriculture, industry and services. The reforms will have a human face and will ensure that the benefits flowing from such reforms reach the urban poor and rural areas, where the vast majority of our population lives.

The Government stands committed to accelerating the pace of rural development through grassroots democracy in consonance with the letter and spirit of the constitutional provisions in this regard. Our country has approximately 2.3 lakh Village Panchayats and Panchayati Raj Institutions at intermediate and district levels. These will be empowered through effective devolution of functions, functionaries and finances to emerge as true institutions of participative democracy. The Gram Sabha will be empowered to emerge as the foundation of the Panchayati Raj system. The Government will ensure that all funds for poverty alleviation and rural development programmes get directly credited to Panchayat bodies to enable them to serve the people better. Appropriate guidelines will be prepared for effective utilisation of such funds.

A substantial portion of Government's investment will be channelled to the villages, with special emphasis on improving basic infrastructure such as roads, power and drinking water in rural areas. Connectivity of village complexes for providing economic opportunities to all segments of people will get special emphasis to bridge the rural-urban divide. Let us not have a mindset that poorer quality rural infrastructure or poor products would suffice for rural consumption.

Public investment in agriculture will be stepped up significantly with focus on the backward and poor regions so as to substantially boost farmers' income. The Government will ensure that the flow of agricultural credit is significantly stepped up and the coverage of small and marginal farmers by institutional lending expands substantially. The entire rural credit system will be restored to health. Government is sensitive to the debt-burden of farmers and will take suitable steps in this regard. Farm insurance schemes will be made more responsive to the needs of farmers. The Government will actively encourage investments in agro-processing industries to reduce wastage and encourage value addition benefitting farmers.

The Government will introduce a special programme for dry-land farming. An intensive agricultural development programme for the districts in the arid and semi-arid regions of the country will be put in place. Watershed development projects will be promoted on a large-scale, and the wasteland development programme lying dormant these past few years will be revived.

My Government will ensure that farmers all over the country receive fair and remunerative prices and the government agencies, entrusted with the responsibility for procurement and marketing, pay special attention to farmers in poor and backward states and districts. Our negotiations in the World Trade Organization will be such as to fully protect the interests and livelihood of our large farming community, which is the backbone of our country. The Government will ensure proper implementation of minimum wage laws for farm labour. Effective measures will be taken to protect the interest of all agricultural workers. The process of land reforms will be speeded up and efforts to distribute surplus productive land to the landless will be redoubled.

The Government will accelerate the development and use of the country's irrigation potential. Starting with peninsular rivers, the environmental, ecological and techno-economic feasibility of linking the rivers of the country will be carefully examined. Steps will be taken to ensure that long-pending inter-state disputes on rivers and water-sharing, like the Cauvery Water dispute, are settled amicably keeping in view the interests of all parties to the dispute. All ongoing irrigation projects will be completed in a time-bound manner.

The Government is concerned that a significant portion of our population does not have access to safe drinking water. My Government will work with the State Governments to draw up innovative schemes including harvesting rainwater and de-silting existing ponds. Effective measures will be taken to put an end to the acute shortage of drinking water in drought prone areas and in cities like Chennai, including through setting up desalination plants wherever found viable. Special problems of habitations in hilly terrains will be addressed immediately.

The Government is painfully aware of the shrinking employment opportunities for the youth. The Government will adopt policies to expand employment opportunities by creating a climate conducive to investments in the organised sector. Along with vastly expanding credit facilities for small-scale industry and self-employment, the services sector will be given all support to realise its true employment potential. New jobs will also be created in other areas like village industries, textiles, handicrafts, horticulture, aquaculture, forestry, dairying and agro-processing so as to benefit the rural and urban youth. With a view to providing guaranteed employment for 100 days in a year to at least one able bodied person in each rural household, a national Employment Guarantee Act will be legislated soon and implemented in a phased manner.

To enhance the employability of our youth, systematic efforts will be made to appropriately vocationalise secondary education and to establish at least one industrial training institute in each development block of the country through creative public-private partnerships.

Women and children, particularly those belonging to poor households, are the most vulnerable groups of our society that need special attention. Government will earmark at least one-third of all funds flowing into panchayats for programmes relating to the development of women and children. Village women and their associations will be encouraged to assume responsibility for all development schemes relating to drinking water, sanitation, primary education, health and nutrition. There will be a major expansion in schemes for micro-finance based on self-help groups, particularly in the backward and ecologically sensitive regions.

The Government will take the lead to introduce legislation for one-third reservation for women in Vidhan Sabhas and the Lok Sabha. Legislation on domestic violence and against gender discrimination will be enacted. Complete legal equality for women in all spheres will be made a practical reality.

It is a matter of concern that even today over a third of babies born in India are under-weight reflecting acute malnourishment, particularly of the girl child. Nutrition programmes, will be expanded on a significant scale with special focus on the girl-child. A national cooked nutritious

mid-day-meal scheme, funded mainly by the Central Government will be introduced in a phased manner in primary and secondary schools. The Government will progressively universalise the Integrated Child Development Services scheme.

The State has an important role to play in providing requisite support to the disabled so that they do not get left out of the mainstream. The Government will initiate special measures to ensure that the disabled get equal opportunity and are in a position to meaningfully contribute to the task of nation building. Trade and industry will be sensitised to their social obligations in this respect. Our senior citizens also deserve special care. The Government will consider their problems and initiate measures that would make their lives more comfortable in their old age.

Health is an essential element in the development process and a crucial input for improving the quality of life. The Government will increase public spending on health to at least 2-3 per cent of GDP over the next five years, with the focus on primary health care. Universal immunisation programmes will be effectively implemented throughout the country to eliminate avoidable child-diseases. The Government will step up public investment in programmes to control communicable diseases. A special thrust will be given to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS in the country. A national scheme of health insurance for poor families will be introduced. The Government will take all steps to ensure the availability of life-saving drugs at reasonable prices. The Family Welfare programmes will be strengthened and revitalised.

India's greatest resource is its people. The full potential of our human resources has yet to be effectively utilised. High priority will, therefore, be accorded to education. The Government will aim at increasing public spending on education so as to ultimately reach at least 6 per cent of GDP, with half the amount earmarked for primary and secondary education. A cess will be proposed on all central taxes to finance the commitment to universalise access to quality basic education. A National Commission on Education will be set up to allocate resources and monitor programmes.

My Government is aware of the systematic erosion of autonomy of our institutions of repute in recent years. My Government will ensure that all institutions of higher learning and professional education get back the autonomy that they enjoyed earlier. At the same time, the Government will ensure that nobody is denied professional education because he or she is poor. Apart from increasing the supply of loan scholarships and refinance through banks, the Government will put in place institutional mechanisms to provide loans at affordable rates to those who can not afford the costs of college and university education in science, engineering, medicine and management studies.

Academic excellence and professional competence will be the sole criteria for all appointments to bodies such as the Indian Council for Historical Research, Indian Council for Social Science Research, University Grants Commission, National Council for Educational Research and Training etc. Steps will be taken to remove the communalisation of the school syllabus that has taken place in recent years.

It is a matter of serious concern that the forces of communalism have been able to vitiate the atmosphere in the country leading to out-break of riots, the most gruesome face of which was witnessed recently in Gujarat. My Government is determined to combat such forces. The Government will adopt all possible measures to promote and maintain communal peace and harmony so that minorities feel completely secure. My Government will enact a model law to deal with communal violence and encourage states to adopt it. The Government will examine the question of providing constitutional status to the Minorities Commission and will strive for recognition and promotion of Urdu language under Articles 345 and 347 of the Constitution.

On Ayodhya issue, my government will await the verdict of the courts while encouraging negotiations between parties to the dispute for an amicable settlement, which, in turn, must receive legal sanction. The Government is also committed to implementing the Protection of Places of Worship Act, 1992.

Steps will be taken to establish a Commission to look into issues relating to direct affiliation of minority professional institutions with central universities. Measures will also be taken to spread modern and technical education among minority communities. A National Commission will be established to make recommendations on how best to enhance the welfare of socially and economically backward sections among religious and linguistic minorities, including through reservation in education and employment.

The Government is sensitive to the issue of affirmative action including reservations in the private sector and it is committed to faster socio-economic and educational development of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes. My government will initiate a dialogue with political parties, industry and other bodies on how best the private sector can fulfil the aspirations of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

Reservation quotas in Government, including those relating to promotions, will be fulfilled in a time-bound manner. To codify all policies on reservations, appropriate legislation will be enacted. The Government will launch a comprehensive national programme for minor irrigation of lands owned by people belonging to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. Landless families will be endowed with land through implementation of land ceiling and redistribution legislation. No reversal of ceilings legislation will be permitted.

State governments will be urged to bring about a legislation conferring ownership rights in respect of minor forest produce on people from weaker sections working in forests. Eviction of tribal communities and other forest-dwelling communities from forest areas will be stopped. The Government will reconcile the objectives of environmental conservation and faster economic growth without jeopardising the ecological balance or diluting the objectives of the Forest Conservation Act, 1980. An effective system will be put in place for rehabilitating the tribal communities displaced by development projects.

My Government is concerned about the growth of Naxalite violence in various parts of the country. Rather than being an ordinary law-and-order problem, such violence is symptomatic of a much deeper socio-economic malaise, which needs to be treated systematically. My government will, therefore, look into the causes behind the growth of such senseless violence and take steps to put the Naxalite-affected areas on a higher trajectory of economic growth so that they catch up with the rest of the country.

The Government will strengthen the public distribution system particularly in the poorest and backward blocks of the country and also involve women and ex-servicemen's cooperatives in its management at the local level. Special schemes will be launched to ensure that foodgrains reach the most destitute and infirm. Grain banks in chronically food-scarce areas will be established. Antyodaya cards for all households at risk of hunger will be introduced.

The Government is firmly committed to ensuring the welfare and well-being of all workers, particularly those in the unorganised sector who constitute over 90 per cent of our workforce. Social security, health insurance and other schemes for such workers, fishermen and fisherwomen, toddy tappers, leather workers, plantation labour, beedi workers etc. will be expanded. The Government will establish a National Commission to examine the problems that the enterprises operating in the unorganised sector are facing.

My Government recognises that some changes are needed in labour laws so that the manufacturing sector grows rapidly with concomitant expansion in the employment opportunities. However, such changes must ensure that workers and their families are fully protected. The Government will pursue a dialogue with industry and trade unions on this issue before coming up with specific proposals. The Government firmly believes that labour-management relations in our country must be marked by consultations, cooperation and consensus. Tripartite consultations with trade unions and industry on all proposals concerning them will be actively pursued.

Development of infrastructure will get a high priority. Public-private partnerships will be encouraged for expansion of physical infrastructure

such as roads, ports, airports, power, railways, water supply and sanitation. Public investment in infrastructure will be enhanced and subsidies in such investments will be explicitly provided through the budget.

The railways have suffered immensely over the past few years with rail safety being a prime casualty. The Government will move purposefully to modernise the vast railway network, keeping both the economic and social dimensions of the railways in mind.

The Government will put in place policies to enhance the country's energy security with special emphasis on petroleum and natural gas. Overseas investments in the hydrocarbon industry will be actively encouraged. A special programme will be launched to ensure that each household has full access to reliable power. Public investment in the power sector will be stepped up substantially. Private sector participation in generation and distribution will be actively encouraged. Power sector reforms will be continued in such a way that all sections of society get quality power at affordable price. Energy conservation will receive priority attention of the Government.

The Government will launch a comprehensive programme of urban renewal and expansion of social housing in towns and cities, paying particular attention to the needs of slum-dwellers. Housing for the weaker sections in urban and rural areas will be expanded on a large scale. While undertaking urban renewal, forced eviction and demolition of slums will be avoided.

It is a matter of concern that regional imbalances have been accentuated not only by historical neglect but also by distortions in Plan allocations. The Government is committed to redressing growing regional imbalances both among states, as well as within states, through fiscal, administrative and other means. A structured and transparent approach to alleviate the burden of debt on states will be adopted so as to enable them to increase social sector investments. All non-statutory resource transfers from the Central Government will be weighted in favour of poor and backward states. The Government will consider establishing a Backward States Grant Fund that will be used to create productive assets in these states but with performance parameters as well. Appropriate measures will be initiated to speed up the industrialisation of the eastern and northeastern region. The Government will start a Flood-prone Area Development Programme and support the flood control works in inter-state and international rivers. A single major national programme will be launched after reviewing the existing schemes for drought-prone area development. Steps will be taken to implement expeditiously special economic packages announced in the past for different regions and States.

The Sarkaria Commission had last looked at the issue of Centre-State relations over two decades ago. The Government will set up a new

Commission for this purpose, keeping in view the sea-changes that have taken place in the polity and economy of India since then. The National Development Council (NDC) will be made a more effective instrument of cooperative federalism. The Inter-State Council will also be activated. The Government will consider the demand for the formation of a Telangana State at an appropriate time after due consultations.

The Government will respect the letter and spirit of Article 370 of the Constitution that accords a special status to Jammu and Kashmir. Dialogue with all groups and with different shades of opinion in Jammu and Kashmir will be pursued on a sustained basis, in consultation with the democratically-elected State Government. The state will be given assistance to rebuild its infrastructure quickly. The Government is determined to tackle terrorism, militancy and insurgency in the north-east as a matter of urgent national priority. The North-Eastern States will be given special assistance to upgrade and expand infrastructure.

The Government will set up a Committee to examine the question of declaring all languages included in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution as official languages. Tamil will be declared a classical language.

Our rich cultural heritage is a matter of national pride and the foundation of our unity in diversity. The Government will actively strive to preserve our national heritage in all its manifestations. In the same vein, the Government will take all possible steps to preserve the richness of our bio-diversity, with special emphasis on preserving the wild life.

The Government recognises the importance of Tourism in providing gainful employment to a wide spectrum of job-seekers from the unskilled to the specialised, even in remote parts of the country. The Government will provide appropriate incentives to promote rural, heritage, adventure and eco-tourism and establishing high quality tourist destinations. The potential of our film industry, with its universal appeal, will be realised through suitable policy initiatives.

The youth constitute a large and vibrant segment of India's population. Their energy, zeal and motivation will be harnessed through special programmes to enable them to realise their potential and achieve their ambitions in all activities, ranging from economic and social spheres to the arts and sports. We extend the very best wishes to our sportspersons participating in all forthcoming events, in particular, for the Olympic Games in Athens this August.

An Administrative Reforms Commission will be established to prepare a detailed blueprint for revamping public administration completely so as to make it more performance-oriented and accountable. While improving the quality of basic governance will be the priority, e-governance will be

promoted on a massive scale in areas of concern to the common man. The government will ensure that its agencies operate in a responsive and accountable manner. The Right to Information Act will be made more progressive, participatory and meaningful. The Government will take the leadership role to drastically cut delays in High Courts and lower levels of the judiciary. Legal aid services will be expanded. As part of its commitment to electoral reforms, the Government will consider steps to introduce State funding of elections.

The Government is determined to rid the country of the scourge of corruption. The root causes of corruption and the generation of black money will be effectively tackled. For this purpose, procedures will be streamlined and processes will be appropriately re-engineered to bring in transparency in governance.

The Government will follow policies and introduce programmes that strengthen India's vast science and technology infrastructure. Science and technology development and application missions will be launched in key areas. The Government will mobilise the skills and expertise of Indian scientists, technologists and other professionals working abroad for institution-building and other projects in the country.

Revival of industrial growth is of paramount importance. Incentives for boosting private investment will be introduced. Foreign Direct Investment will continue to be encouraged. Indian industry will be given every support to become productive and competitive. Competition, both domestic and external, will be deepened across industry with professionally run regulatory institutions in place to ensure that competition is free and fair. The Government will establish a National Manufacturing Competitiveness Council to provide a continuing forum for policy interactions to energise and sustain the growth of the manufacturing industry. Manufacturing by artisans and households will be given greater technological, marketing and investment support. A major promotional package for the SSI sector will be announced soon.

The textile industry will be enabled to meet new challenges imposed by the abolition of quotas under the WTO Agreement on Textiles and Clothing in January 2005. Given its special ecological importance world-wide and within the country, the jute industry will receive a fresh impetus in all respects.

The Government is committed to a strong and effective public sector, whose social objectives are met by its commercial functioning. But for this, there is need for selectivity and a strategic focus. My Government will devolve full managerial and commercial autonomy to successful, profit-making companies operating in a competitive environment. Privatisation will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Chronically loss-making companies

will either be sold-off, or closed, after workers get their legitimate dues and compensation. Private industry will be inducted to turn-around companies that have potential for revival.

My Government believes that privatisation should increase competition, not decrease it. We also believe that there must be a direct link between privatisation and social needs, like the use of revenues generated through privatisation for designated social sector schemes. Public sector companies and nationalised banks will be encouraged to enter the capital market to raise resources and offer new investment avenues to retail investors.

For boosting the growth rate of GDP, the rate of investment has to be pushed up by rejuvenating the capital markets. The Government is deeply committed to the orderly development and functioning of capital markets that reflect the true fundamentals of the economy. Financial markets will be deepened. Foreign Institutional Investors will continue to be encouraged. Interests of small investors will be protected and they will be given new avenues for safe investment of their savings. The Securities and Exchange Board of India will be further strengthened.

Indians abroad have not only been successful in many walks of life, but have also been a source of inspiration for their brethren back home. The new Ministry of Non-Resident Indians Affairs, which reflects our recognition of their value, will tap their potential for contributing to our economic growth.

Large scale changes in the global trade environment have been witnessed in the last decade. Our share in the global trade has been rising at a very slow pace. The Government will provide an atmosphere conducive to rapid growth of our exports. For this purpose, procedures will be further simplified, tariffs will be appropriately harmonised and efforts will be made to strengthen infrastructure and to reduce transaction costs.

The Government will undertake major tax reforms to significantly expand the base of taxpayers, to substantially increase tax compliance and to make the tax administration more citizen-friendly. Tax rates will be stable and conducive to growth, compliance and investment. Value Added Tax will be introduced in close cooperation and consultation with trade and industry.

My Government is committed to eliminating the revenue deficit of the Central Government by 2009 so as to release more resources for investment in social and physical infrastructure. Subsidies will be targeted sharply at the poor and the needy. A detailed roadmap will be prepared for this purpose. The Government will take effective steps and strong measures to control the price hike of essential commodities. Provisions to deal with speculators, hoarders and black-marketeers under the Essential Commodities Act will not be diluted in any way.

We are proud of our armed forces. They have risen to the occasion whenever called upon to defend the territorial integrity of our country and assist the civil authorities in maintaining law and order and organising relief and rescue measures. My government will eliminate all delays that hamper the modernisation of our armed forces and ensure that funds earmarked for modernisation are utilised fully for the purpose for which they are meant. The welfare of ex-servicemen will get priority and they will be involved in crucial nation-building tasks.

My Government is concerned about the misuse of POTA in the recent past. While there can be no compromise on the fight against terrorism, the Government is of the view that existing laws could adequately handle the menace of terrorism. The Government, therefore, proposes to repeal POTA.

The Government will give the highest priority to building closer political, economic and other ties with its neighbours in South Asia and to strengthening the SAARC. Particular attention will be paid to regional projects relating to water resources, power and ecological conservation. Dialogue with Pakistan on all outstanding issues will be pursued on a sustained basis within the framework of the Simla Agreement and all subsequent agreements between the two Governments, including the Joint Statement of January 6, 2004. My government will support the peace initiative in Sri Lanka that fulfills the requirements of all sections of the people of Sri Lanka for a life full of dignity and self respect and meets the legitimate aspirations of all linguistic and religious minorities, while respecting the territorial integrity and solidarity of Sri Lanka. My government shall seek to resolve outstanding issues with Bangladesh and strengthen our relations with this important neighbour. It will continue to attach great importance to our close and vibrant partnerships with Bhutan, Nepal and Maldives. Trade and investment with China will be expanded further and talks on the boundary question will be pursued purposively. India will also expand political and security exchanges with China to ensure regional security. We welcome moves for an early restoration of sovereignty to the people of Iraq. We note with satisfaction the UN involvement in this process. Our traditional friendship with Afghanistan has been revived under the Government of President Karzai. My government has developed multi-faceted cooperation with Myanmar, Iran and all the countries of Central Asia. India attaches high importance to its relations with the United States of America. We will pursue a closer strategic and economic engagement with USA, the European Union and Japan. The Russian Federation remains an important entity in India's foreign policy orientation, given the long-standing and multi-dimensional convergence of interest and the resultant strategic partnership between India and Russia. The relationship with ASEAN collectively, and with the countries of that region individually will be intensified. Traditional ties with the countries of West Asia will be given a fresh thrust. My government will continue to fully support the legitimate aspirations of the

Palestinian people. Our relations with Israel, which have developed on the basis of mutually beneficial cooperation, are important, but this in no way dilutes our principled support for the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people. India will pursue an independent foreign policy on all regional and global issues keeping in view our interests. We have to reorient the role of Non Alignment in a post-Cold War, globalizing world. My Government is committed to fostering multipolarity in the world political and economic system.

Democracy has been described by someone as a periodic redistribution of power. The people of India have spoken loud and clear. The mandate they have given to my Government is to treat power as a sacred societal trust to be used for the good of society, paying particular attention to the pressing needs of our farmers and other downtrodden sections. Our Government will stay faithful to this vision. The Government will work sincerely to build a national consensus for strengthening the secular and pluralistic foundation of our polity and to accelerate the process of social and economic development. Our people possess a vast pool of creative energies. They are eagerly waiting for the improvement in processes of governance for fuller utilisation of these energies for the task of nation building. All of us have an obligation to make the 21st century as India's century. India is destined to emerge as a major powerhouse of the evolving global economy and in the process also get rid of the chronic poverty, ignorance and disease which still affect large sections of our society. Your duty as representatives of the people is to canalise the tremendous upsurge among our people to build a new India free from the fear of want and exploitation. It is my earnest hope and wish that your deliberations will be marked by maturity and wisdom and guided by patriotic and selfless devotion to the cause of the nation.

I wish you all success in your endeavours.

Jai Hind.

ADDRESS TO PARLIAMENT—25 FEBRUARY 2005

Lok Sabha	—	Fourteenth Lok Sabha
Session	—	First Session of the Year
President of India	—	Dr. A. P. J. Abdul Kalam
Vice-President of India	—	Shri Bhairon Singh Shekhawat
Prime Minister of India	—	Dr. Manmohan Singh
Speaker, Lok Sabha	—	Shri Somnath Chatterjee

HONOURABLE MEMBERS,

I am delighted to address the first session of both Houses of Parliament in the New Year. My greetings to all of you. We entered the New Year with mixed feelings. On the one hand, there were so many reasons for us to look forward to this year with hope and optimism; on the other hand, the entire nation was deeply moved by the Tsunami tragedy. Induced by a major earthquake in the ocean bed near Sumatra on the 26th of December 2004, a tsunami wave hit the Andaman and Nicobar Islands and the coastal areas of Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Pondicherry* and Tamil Nadu. Our hearts reached out to those who saw their loved ones taken away by a killer wave that washed away the lives and livelihoods of thousands of our people. The entire Nation shared the agony of those whose lives and livelihoods were destroyed by the disaster.

Honourable Members will agree with me, however, that the silver lining to this dark cloud was the spontaneous response of our people in, coming to the aid of the victims in their hour of need. Apart from the fact that contributions to the Prime Minister's National Relief Fund have been unprecedented, millions of Indians and friends from overseas have contributed in their own way, directly and indirectly, to provide relief and facilitate rehabilitation of the affected people.

I must place on record the Nation's appreciation of the rescue, relief and rehabilitation work undertaken by State and local governments, the armed forces and Non-Governmental Organisations. Given the nature of the disaster and the fact that this part of the world had not been visited upon by a tsunami in the living memory of anyone in this region, there was an element of surprise. This was compounded by the fact that the worst affected places were in the far-flung Andaman and Nicobar Islands. Yet, our

* Now known as Puducherry.

response was quick. The Indian Navy, Air Force, Coast Guard and Central Paramilitary Forces played a heroic role in providing immediate relief not just to our people but also to the affected people in Sri Lanka, Maldives and Indonesia.

My Government very correctly took the view that external assistance was not required for the immediate rescue and relief work. This work was best done by local authorities and security forces and the resources required were available with State and Central Governments. India thanks all those who expressed their concern and generously extended their help. We are open to external assistance and advice in rebuilding and reconstructing the destroyed economies and ecologies of the coastal region. We must convert this tragedy into an opportunity by modernising the maritime economy and protecting the coastal ecology.

It is imperative that the momentum generated by our response in the relief and rehabilitation phase is sustained in the reconstruction phase. I hope that we would be able to demonstrate our reconstruction effort as a model of effective, humane and forward-looking public intervention in disaster mitigation.

The Government will shortly create a National Disaster Management Authority. A Central legislation on disaster management will soon be introduced in Parliament. I would recommend that this Authority should have a strong science and technology component built into its activities. We have to develop a long-term strategy in science and technology for dealing with natural disasters and threats to the ecology of our coastal areas. The need for such an Authority becomes even more pressing in view of the extensive loss to life and property caused by calamities such as the recent avalanches in Jammu and Kashmir resulting from heavy snowfall. The nation shares the grief of the people of Jammu and Kashmir in their hour of sorrow.

The generous response of the people of our country to the tsunami tragedy showed once again that there has been a paradigm shift in our political and social milieu. Those of us, who have been concerned about the social trend towards personal aggrandisement and a political trend towards the politics of exclusion, would have been heartened by the genuine altruism and the sense of inclusiveness that characterised the mood of the Nation in the aftermath of the tsunami.

My Government is committed to an inclusive society, a caring polity and a sharing economy. This is the essence of the National Common Minimum Programme adopted by the constituents of the United Progressive Alliance and supported by the Left and other like-minded parties. The UPA's vital contribution to the Nation has been the return of the polity to mainstream political values of pluralism, inclusiveness, secularism and economic growth

with equity and social justice. The people of India have repeatedly reaffirmed their commitment to these core values of our Nationhood.

My Government has been able to enthuse people to re-focus their energies on economic development and social progress. Not surprisingly, a sense of optimism now pervades the country and we can look forward to a year of improved economic performance, communal harmony and political stability. All major economic indicators are looking up and investors have regained their faith in our potential. I believe we must capture this mood of optimism combined with altruism to strengthen the foundations of our inclusive democracy.

Honourable Members, in the span of three quarters of a year that the United Progressive Alliance Government has been in office, considerable time and energy has already been devoted to the implementation of the National Common Minimum Programme. More importantly, an environment of social and political stability based on a commitment to the welfare of weaker sections, especially the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Other Backward Classes and minorities has been created. The Government has sustained the process of economic growth with due regard for equity and social justice. It has ensured communal harmony and imparted a new sense of hope to the minorities and the weaker sections of society. My Government has infused a new sense of belonging among various disaffected groups, especially in the North-Eastern States and among the tribal communities across the country. The handing over of the historic Kangla Fort to the people of Manipur was not just a glorious moment in the history of the Manipuri people; it also symbolized my Government's commitment to all segments of our society that they have a right to live a life of dignity and self-respect. It is with this same message that the Prime Minister visited the State of Jammu and Kashmir, to empathise with the people living in the Kashmir Valley, and migrant Kashmiri pandits in Jammu.

My Government has constituted a Commission for the welfare of socially and economically backward sections among religious and linguistic minorities. This Commission will examine the social and economic status of these deprived groups and suggest mechanisms for enhancing their educational, employment and economic opportunities. We will also prepare a White Paper on the status of minority communities in India. Subsequently, the Government will recast the 15-point programme for the welfare of the minorities with a view to incorporating programme specific interventions.

Adivasis in this country have been leading a life of insecurity in many areas since their property rights have remained unsettled. It is necessary to recognize their need for assured property and land rights in areas they have been residing in for several generations. It is an irony that tribals who have been living in "forest villages" and have been practicing agriculture

on these lands for several generations, have not been given due recognition of their rights. Their problems are engaging the attention of the Government and we will try to settle the issue of land rights of tribals. The outcome will be beneficial both to tribals and to the goal of forest conservation.

My Government believes that it is its responsibility to ensure that the deprived sections of society are given a fair deal. We are committed to taking steps for their educational and economic empowerment. We should also take simultaneous action to protect their human rights and also free them from age-old prejudices. The Government will take legal action to ban the degrading practice of manual scavenging, and States would be given time up to August 2005 to enforce it. My Government is equally committed to the upliftment and empowerment of physically and mentally challenged persons.

It is absolutely essential that the deprived sections of our society benefit from the growth processes we have unleashed. The Government has constituted a Group of Ministers to engage in a dialogue with industry to explore mechanisms for increasing employment opportunities for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in the private sector. The Government has introduced the Reservation Bill in Parliament codifying all provisions on reservation in Government. In addition, a Committee of Ministers on Dalit Affairs has been formed to give focused attention to all issues related to the welfare of Dalits.

Honourable Members, an important commitment of the National Common Minimum Programme that the Government has fulfilled has been to hold the price line. Owing to the impact of a weak monsoon as well as the steep increase in international energy prices, the rate of inflation had gone up in the middle of last year. However, despite continued pressure on the oil price front, a judicious mix of economic policies and administrative intervention has helped bring the rate of inflation down. After rising above 8.0 per cent in August 2004, the rate of inflation, as measured by the wholesale price index, has come down to 5.0 per cent. The rate of inflation as measured by the consumer price index has declined and is significantly lower than the wholesale price index. My Government is committed to reining in the rate of inflation as it hurts the poor the most. The Government's success in bringing the rate of inflation down has been the most important of the many pro-poor interventions, it has been able to make in the past nine months. The Government will remain steadfast in its resolve to hold the price line and protect the real incomes of the poor.

The control of inflation forms a reassuring backdrop to the revival of investment and business activity in the economy. All macro-economic indicators are looking up. On top of a year of record growth in 2003-04, which was based largely on a recovery from the previous year's poor growth,

the economy is once again poised to record close to 7.0 per cent growth in 2004-05, despite a weaker monsoon and higher oil prices. The revival of investment activity and an increase in the rate of capital formation, have contributed to an annual growth in 2004-05 of 8.9 per cent in manufacturing output and 8.9 per cent in services sector incomes. Despite a modest 1.1 per cent growth in agricultural production on account of a weak monsoon, food prices have been under check.

Foreign trade has been growing at a rapid pace with exports rising by 25.6 per cent and imports by 34.7 per cent in US dollar terms in the period April-January 2004-05. Investment, both domestic and foreign, has been rising and is a measure of the confidence of investors in our economy. In order to accelerate investment activity further by removing policy and operational constraints, the Government has constituted an Investment Commission. While foreign exchange reserves continue to remain at record levels, the revival of investment activity and the consequent increase in import demand has stabilized the rate of accumulation. Overall, all macro-economic indicators are robust and positive and there is an air of optimism in the economy and the markets. My Government will pursue policies that will sustain this recovery and accelerate growth, moving forward on the twin roads of efficiency and equity, while maintaining a high degree of fiscal and financial discipline.

Honourable Members, the core commitments of the National Common Minimum Programme are the seven priority areas of Agriculture, Education, Employment, Healthcare, Infrastructure, Urban Renewal and Water.

My Government is committed to giving a "New Deal To Rural India". This "new deal" involves, among other things: reversing the declining trend in investment in agriculture; stepping up credit flow to farmers; enhancing public investment in irrigation and wasteland development; increasing funds for agricultural research and extension; creating a 'single market' for agricultural produce; investing in rural healthcare and education; promoting rural electrification and rural roads; setting up commodities futures markets and insuring against risk in farming and rural business.

One of the first steps that my Government took in office last year was to effect a steep increase in credit flow to agriculture. The entire country was deeply distressed by the misfortune of several farmers' in parts of the country, some of whom were driven to desperation and suicide. My Government took several measures to address the distress of the affected families and undertook many initiatives to ease the flow of credit to farmers. A special package for doubling the agricultural credit flow in the next three years and for providing credit-related relief to farmers was announced in June 2004. As against the targeted agricultural credit flow of Rs. 1,05,000 crores for the year, as much as Rs. 99,240 crore had already been provided

by the end of January 2005, amounting to nearly 95 per cent of the target. To protect farmers from the vagaries of nature and the uncertainties of the market, the Government has taken several initiatives to provide farm and farm income insurance. The Farm Income Insurance Scheme that was being implemented for *Rabi* crops has since been extended to *Kharif* crops also. The modernization of the meteorological forecasting system will also contribute to improvement in our agricultural performance by providing more accurate forecasts of weather patterns.

Horticulture is one of the areas identified for priority attention, for which a National Horticulture Mission is proposed to be launched. This initiative, the details of which will be outlined by the Finance Minister in his Budget Speech, has the potential of transforming the rural landscape and also our export profile of agricultural products.

The problem of water availability and utilization has received special attention in the National Common Minimum Programme. Water is a national resource, and we have to take an integrated view of our country's water resources, our needs, our policies and our water utilization practices. We need to ensure the equitable use of scarce water resources. I urge you and all our political leaders to take a national and a holistic view of the challenge of managing our water resources.

We need mass action for the conservation of water. People have demonstrated their capacity to take leadership in this area. My Government proposes to promote water conservation and water harvesting in a major way, through a people's movement. Current programmes for dry land farming and artificial recharge would provide technical support for such a Mission, while the investment that is proposed under the wage employment programmes would provide the funds for a citizen and community-led movement for water conservation. Existing programmes of watershed management would complement this effort, which would also be on a watershed basis. This would address the issue of increasing water availability, especially in our arid and semi-arid regions.

The Government has proposed to launch a new scheme to promote micro irrigation, including drip and sprinkler irrigation in rain-deficient areas. Public-Private Partnership is also crucial for the development of the agriculture sector, especially in rural infrastructure.

The problem of seasonal flooding in the Brahmaputra Valley and in the Gangetic plains is engaging the attention of the Government. To identify long-term solutions and to harness the Brahmaputra and Barak rivers, the Government has set up a Committee to examine the feasibility of setting up a North East Valley Authority. Financial allocations for the Accelerated Irrigation Benefit Programme (AIBP) have been increased. The Union Budget 2004-05 has taken steps to support water-harvesting schemes for SC/ST

farmers. Water management in all its aspects, both for irrigation and drinking purposes, will receive urgent attention. The Government is also pursuing all water-related issues with neighbouring countries in a spirit of cooperation.

Agricultural research and extension will be another area of priority for my Government. Funding for agricultural research is being stepped up. New centers of excellence will be promoted to increase the number of agricultural scientists and graduates to enable the further modernization of agriculture. A "New Deal For Rural India" also requires revitalization of the institutions of rural development. My Government's commitment to grassroots democracy is reflected in the creation of a new Ministry of Panchayati Raj. In consultation with Chief Ministers, the Ministry has drawn up a 150-point Action Plan covering 18 aspects of Panchayati Raj. The Government will actively involve Panchayati Raj Institutions in the implementation of development programmes. The cooperative sector has also been an important instrument of agricultural development in our country. The Government is committed to strengthening cooperatives by infusing a professional management culture and restoring their democratic character. A scheme for the revitalization of the cooperative credit structure has been prepared by NABARD.

A National Committee on Rural Infrastructure has been constituted under the chairmanship of the Prime Minister to ensure that urban amenities and infrastructural facilities are made available in rural areas. A Rural Electrification Strategy has been drawn up to create a rural Electricity Distribution Backbone and Village Electricity Infrastructure. My Government is committed to the objective of providing electricity to all villages in the country by the year 2009. The infrastructure gap between urban and rural areas has to be closed and employment, livelihood and investment opportunities have to be made available in rural areas. This will also discourage distress migration to towns that has imposed enormous pressure on urban infrastructure. We must improve rural roads, schools and healthcare facilities and public services in a planned manner.

There are many other initiatives that my Government has taken that will greatly benefit the agrarian economy and people living in rural areas. These include programmes and policies aimed at strengthening and modernizing rural infrastructure and improving rural health and education. Taken together, all these initiatives constitute a major developmental thrust for our agrarian economy. That India lives in its villages may be a worn out cliché, but it is a reality that we must constantly remember. Until our citizens living in rural India, especially the farmers and the weaker sections are economically and socially empowered, India cannot shine. My Government wants India to shine, but it must shine for all!

Honourable Members, a second area of special attention for my Government, is employment. It is a priority for a country in which the share of the youth in our population is rising and will continue to rise for

some decades to come. The policies aimed at increasing investment and stepping up the growth rate of agriculture, manufacturing, infrastructure and the services sector will undoubtedly generate new employment opportunities. To take care of those who are likely to be left behind by development processes and to ensure that there is a safety net, especially in some of the more backward regions of the country, my Government has come forward with a National Employment Guarantee Bill. This bill before Parliament, will provide legal guarantee for at least 100 days of employment to at least one person in every poor household initially in some of the most backward districts of the country. This programme is to be gradually expanded to cover all rural areas. In the interim, the Government has also launched a National Food-for-Work Programme in 150 backward districts. The programme was launched from a backward district of Andhra Pradesh on the birth anniversary of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. Fifty lakh additional families have been issued Antyodaya Cards, taking the total up to 2 crore families.

Ours has been a knowledge-based civilization for millennia and yet we remain a country with an unacceptably high rate of illiteracy. Today our best and brightest are at the forefront of the global knowledge economy and yet many of our schools and colleges are unable to meet the aspirations of all those who seek the light of knowledge. This must change. India needs a new knowledge revolution, a new wave of investment in education at all levels of the knowledge pyramid, from elementary schools in villages to world-class research institutions. My Government will give priority to issues of both access and excellence in education.

Resources for elementary education have been augmented through the Education Cess, which will form the Prarambhik Shiksha Kosh. This will enable better funding of the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya, the Mid-day Meal Scheme, and Nutrition Programme for Adolescent Girls. The National Mission for Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan has been constituted for the first time. The launch of EDUSAT, an educational satellite, and of Doordarshan's Direct-To-Home television facility will enable us to use modern technology in spreading literacy. My Government has also given special attention to the educational development of Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and minorities. A National Commission for Minority Educational Institutions has been established to safeguard the interests of institutes of higher learning set up by minorities.

The Universities of Allahabad and Manipur are being given the status of Central Universities and a special grant has been given to Jamia Millia Islamia. The Government has also sanctioned an Indian Institute of Management for the North-East and has agreed to aid faculty development at Kashmir University.

These are some of the first steps taken by my Government to improve the educational system. Much more needs to be done and will be done. We need a modern educational system that promotes secular values and creates concerned, committed and competent citizens capable of meeting the challenges of the 21st Century. We must inculcate in our people greater curiosity about the world around us and promote a scientific temper. The future of our great nation depends on the quality and content of our educational system. The Government has already announced its intent to set up a National Knowledge Commission to give India the knowledge edge in the 21st Century. This Knowledge Commission would have five prongs: increasing access to knowledge for public benefit, nurturing knowledge concepts in Universities, knowledge creation in S&T laboratories, promoting application of knowledge in our business and industry and using knowledge to improve service delivery in Government. The development of basic science and of science and technology will receive the Government's highest priority. The Government is committed to the promotion of public-private partnerships in R&D, especially in bio-technology, space and defence technologies and to increase funding for frontier areas of scientific and technological research.

Another priority area for policy action is health care. A major commitment of the Government is to increase the spending on public health from the present level of 0.9 per cent of GDP to 2.0 per cent over the next five years, and to improve the delivery of primary health services, especially in rural areas for poor people. My Government proposes to launch a National Rural Health Mission, which will be based on a district-based planning and management model, of health care delivery, with the involvement of Panchayati Raj Institutions. This decentralized model of health management will, for the first time, enable localized solutions to health problems, and hopefully will lead to the goal of 'Health for All'.

Honourable Members, my Government will also pay special attention to the development of urban infrastructure and to making our towns and cities more livable. For a country where more than a third of the population lives in urban areas, it is time to focus on the task of providing world-class infrastructure and access to basic amenities in towns and cities. This will enable our cities to play the role of magnets of economic growth effectively. A proposed Mission on Urban Renewal will address this need.

A key priority area for my Government is infrastructure. If the Government's objective of enabling the economy to log 7 per cent to 8 per cent growth over the next decade has to be realized, the country will require massive investment in infrastructure. There is urgent need to increase public and private investment in power, roads, railways, ports and inland waterways, civil aviation and housing. A Committee on Infrastructure has been constituted under the chairmanship of the Prime Minister. Our economy requires at least upto \$150 billion worth of investment in the infrastructure sector over the next decade to catch up with our East Asian neighbours.

The Committee on Infrastructure has already laid down a road map for a new Civil Aviation Policy that will improve aviation services, promote domestic airlines, modernize civil aviation infrastructure and offer consumers wider choice. The adhocism and lack of transparency that characterized civil aviation policy in the past, has been replaced by a transparent, forward-looking policy framework that will encourage new investment in this sector. The Government has decided to grant greater autonomy to the National Highways Authority of India, while taking steps to make it more professional and efficient. The rate of completion of road construction under the national highways programme, especially the Golden Quadrilateral and the North-South and East-West corridors, has been speeded up. The Government will encourage public-private partnership in all infrastructure projects. Special focus will be given to improving rail and road connectivity in the North-Eastern region. My Government is in the process of setting up appropriate mechanisms for this purpose. Road and rail development in Jammu and Kashmir will also be accorded higher priority with the upgradation of several historic links such as the Mughal Road.

The success of our telecom policy over the past decade has demonstrated the benefits of pursuing a liberal policy in the infrastructure sector. The beneficiary of such a policy will, in the final analysis, be the consumer. My Government plans to increase India's teledensity from a lowly 8.4 per cent today to more than 20 per cent by 2008. The priority will be to provide both voice and data transmission connectivity in rural areas. The broadband policy announced recently would enhance Internet connectivity with increased speed. This, in turn, would help our rural areas to take advantage of the benefits of e-governance, e-education and e-health. The digital divide between rural and urban areas must be bridged expeditiously, since it is possible for us to leapfrog into next generation information technology.

The National Electricity Policy adopted by my Government will encourage new investment in the sector, while ensuring that the interests of consumers, including rural consumers, are also served. The success of the Inter Institutional Group in facilitating financial closure of 11 private power projects with an aggregate capacity of over 4000 MW, envisaging a funds commitment of over Rs. 13,000 crores, augurs well for future investment in this sector. The initiatives of my Government have significantly boosted the confidence of private promoters and financing institutions in reiterating their commitment to fund viable private power projects. The public response to the sale of Government equity in the National Thermal Power Corporation along with the issue of fresh equity by it through an Initial Public Offer in November 2004 bears great promise for policy initiatives in this area.

To sustain the anticipated increase in our economic growth rate, we have to ensure access to energy. Energy security is, therefore, a key national priority. My Government has taken several steps, both economic and

diplomatic, to enhance India's energy security. Public sector undertakings have a key role to play in facing competitive challenges, both domestically and internationally. There is a need for the oil PSUs to leverage their strengths in their respective areas of core competence to optimally fulfil the key role envisaged for them in promoting the national objectives of energy security, accelerated growth rate and sustained economic development. With this in view, an advisory committee on Synergy in Energy has been constituted. My Government launched the 5th Round of New Exploration Licensing Policy on 4th January 2005, providing attractive investment opportunities for companies to explore oil and gas. In addition, my Government will give the highest priority to developing strategies to enhance our capabilities in harnessing alternative sources of energy for our long-term energy requirements.

Honourable Members, while these seven areas of concern to our people, will receive the priority attention of the Government, emphasis will also be placed on other important sectors, especially the modernization and development of our manufacturing and services sectors. The decline in the share of manufacturing in national income in recent years is a matter of concern. My Government has set up a National Manufacturing Competitiveness Council to increase the productivity of our manufacturing sector, which is vital for maintaining its competitive position in a world where trade barriers are being removed. My Government will give high priority to the acceleration of industrial development at home. There are immense opportunities in a wide range of manufacturing industries, including textiles and garments, automobiles and auto-components, leather and pharmaceuticals that will be tapped. This will receive the special attention of my Government.

The end of the Multi-Fibre Agreement opens up new opportunities for external trade in the textiles sector that Indian industry must tap. The Government will take all necessary steps and reforms to encourage investment in this sector. India has enormous advantages in the textiles sector, both traditional and modern, and must regain its pre-eminent position in the world market. The revamping of the Khadi and Village Industries Commission should also help in encouraging the growth of the much neglected handloom sector. My Government will encourage the modernization of handlooms and promote their design and marketing capabilities. The plight of weavers has been engaging public attention for quite sometime, but not enough has been done in this regard. My Government proposes to focus on improving the situation of weavers through a time-bound programme spanning the next two years, to be called "Two Years For The Weavers". Under this programme, traditional looms would be replaced, design capability would be improved for value addition and weavers given access to new technology, credit and markets. Professionals would be incentivised to connect Indian weavers to premium markets where Indian handloom still commands upmarket attention. The biggest challenge in promoting the growth of the manufacturing sector is to promote Brand India, the "Made in India" label.

Over 90 per cent of our labour force is in the informal sector. My Government will set up an appropriate institutional and regulatory mechanism to ensure their welfare. While striving for improved social protection, we must also not lose sight of the need to augment employment opportunities through a judicious mix of incentives and regulation. A National Commission has been appointed to examine the problems of enterprises in the unorganized, informal sector and to make recommendations on providing technical, marketing and credit support to small and tiny enterprises and to self-employed persons in this sector. Based on the recommendations of this Commission, we will design appropriate programmes to ensure that the informal sector blossoms, not only in economic performance but also as a provider of employment opportunities. A Board for Reconstruction of Public Sector Enterprises has been set up to devolve full managerial and commercial autonomy to successful public sector companies while at the same time working out solutions to the problems of loss making ones.

Honourable Members, economic development, and the welfare and socio-economic empowerment of our people are my Government's top most priorities. There are, however, forces at work that are inimical to the realization of these objectives. My Government is determined to deal with all such threats to peace and national security. My Government is fully alive to the internal and external challenges to our national security. It will not hesitate in taking any steps required to deal with the threat of terrorism or attempts to spread disaffection and disturb law and order. The overall internal security situation in the country remained under control in 2004. The three main areas of challenge to our national security, have been identified as cross-border terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir, insurgency in the North East region and naxalite violence in some states. We need a multi-faceted approach to meet this challenge. The machinery for the enforcement of law and order has to be made more effective. At the same time, we must also deal with the underlying causes that give rise to a feeling of alienation among a section of the people, the large majority of whom wish to live in peace and security. Administration at all levels must become more focused on equitable and people-centred development. My Government would pay equal attention to the development dimension and human rights concerns.

In dealing with these threats, my Government was of the view that the Prevention of Terrorism Act, 2002, had been misused and that this Act was in fact not required since existing laws could adequately handle the menace of terrorism. The Government therefore repealed POTA and amended the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967, to put in place a legal regime to deal with the various facets of terrorism. This does not in any way imply a weakening of our resolve to deal with elements inimical to our national security. The Government will invest in the welfare of our security forces and in the modernization of their equipment.

My Government is committed to paying equal attention to the genuine concerns of the people and redressing their grievances. It will take steps to accelerate the tempo of social and economic development so that young people in Jammu and Kashmir, have ample opportunity to live a life of dignity, self-respect and prosperity. In pursuit of peace and normalcy, my Government has repeatedly expressed its willingness to talk to any group provided they abjure the path of violence. Cross-border terrorism remains a potential threat both in our West and East, even though there has been a decline in the number of terrorist attacks in Jammu and Kashmir in recent months. The infrastructure of terrorism has not been dismantled across the border. The Government has accorded top most priority to the erection of fencing on the India-Bangladesh border to contain infiltration, smuggling and other anti-India activities from across the border.

Activities of underground groups and ethnic tensions, have continued to vitiate the atmosphere in some parts of the North Eastern States. We are committed to restoring normalcy, so that people of the North-Eastern region, can live normal lives and prosper economically. My Government is willing to engage any group abjuring violence in a meaningful dialogue. It is with this spirit that the Government is engaged in a dialogue with various groups in the North Eastern States. Our government will pay adequate attention to accelerating the pace of development in the North Eastern region and to ensure that this development takes into account their legitimate aspirations.

The economic development of Jammu and Kashmir and of the North-Eastern States, will receive the special attention of my Government. The Government has prepared a plan for the reconstruction and development of the State of Jammu and Kashmir. The infrastructural components of the plan would revitalize the State's ailing tourism industry, create new capabilities and generate employment opportunities. The successful implementation of the proposed projects would require improved governance, transparent and corruption free administration, peace, security, the rule of law, fiscal responsibility and the economic pricing of public utilities.

To guide the economic development of the North Eastern States, the North Eastern Council is being rejuvenated and expanded. My Government is pleased by the favourable response of the people of Manipur to its decision to constitute an independent group to examine the provisions of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act. This Group will recommend whether to modify the existing Act or replace it with a more humane law to address the requirements of national security while respecting the human rights of our people. The region needs a new agenda of hope. The doors of the Government are always open to all groups who are committed to the economic upliftment and the social and political empowerment of the region. There is no issue, no grievance that is so intractable that it cannot

be resolved through a patient, constructive dialogue. This is the only possible way forward. Our democratic system is open enough, and flexible enough to welcome the participation of all shades of opinion. In the final analysis, power in India can only flow from the ballot box; never from the barrel of a gun.

My Government also remains firmly committed to ensuring communal harmony. The National Integration Council has been reconstituted. A Model Comprehensive Law to deal with communal violence is on the anvil. My Government will deal resolutely with any attempts to spread communalism, disturb law and order and deny a life of peace and security to any citizen. The menace of Naxalism is posing a threat to peace and security in many parts of the country. Each State Government will have to devise means to deal with this threat by distinguishing between the genuine demands of the downtrodden and the nefarious designs of anti-national elements. My Government is committed to the welfare of all weaker sections, and will encourage a dialogue with all political forces interested in promoting the welfare of the people in a peaceful manner. However, it will deal effectively with any group challenging the Constitutional authority of a democratically elected Government and resorting to the use of arms.

Honourable Members, modernization of our Armed Forces is one of the priority areas of the Government included in the National Common Minimum Programme. There has been an increase in the allocation of funds for modernization of the Armed Forces. Modernization projects of the Army, Navy and Air Force are well in hand. A number of new projects for induction of various equipment and weapon systems are in progress. In the Department of Defence Research and Development, three prototypes of the Light Combat Aircraft 'Tejas' are undergoing flight-testing and have completed 307 test flights including super-sonic flights. The Integrated Electronic Warfare System 'Samyukta' has been successfully evaluated and accepted by the Army. 'Sangraha', an electronic warfare system for the Navy, has been accepted and production orders placed. The 'Nag' third generation anti-tank missile and 'Akash' surface to air missile have undergone successful flight tests. The supersonic cruise missile BrahMos, a joint venture programme with Russia, has been successfully tested for the antiship role and is ready for induction. The Main Battle Tank 'Arjun' has been successfully inducted into the Army.

As announced in the Common Minimum Programme, a separate Department of Ex-servicemen's Welfare has been created in the Ministry of Defence. This department would give a special focus and thrust to ex-servicemen's welfare. A Ministry for Overseas Indian Affairs has been created to give focused attention to issues related to the large diaspora of persons of Indian origin in different parts of the world.

My Government is committed to the reform of Government and to making it more transparent, responsive and efficient. A Model Code of Good Governance for public servants, is being drawn up as part of a comprehensive reform of administration and administrative procedures. The Government will set up an Administrative Reforms Commission to prepare a blueprint for revamping the public administration system. The enactment of the Right to Information Act will empower citizens and oblige authorities to be more transparent. As part of the Government's efforts to enhance the quality of governance, a number of new initiatives are proposed to be taken to ensure that government functionaries, at all levels, are properly trained to discharge their responsibilities and citizens have an effective mechanism for grievance redressal.

Honourable Members, my Government's foreign policy is based on the centrality of national interests in the conduct of our external relations and the pursuit of our economic interests. The Government has taken important initiatives, keeping in mind the imperative of retaining our freedom of options, remaining alive to our concerns. The Government's efforts have contributed to making the international environment for India's development more secure. We have articulated our positions and views clearly so that India's foreign partners have a better appreciation of the logic of our position on issues of importance to us.

My Government has accorded primary attention to relations with our neighbours and strengthening SAARC. It is my Government's earnest desire to work with all our neighbours to create a neighbourhood of shared prosperity and peace. We will reaffirm the importance we attach to realizing the potential inherent in SAARC at its forthcoming Summit meeting. Our approach to our neighbours is founded on the conviction that the peoples of our region have a desire for enhanced cooperation, overcoming perceived barriers and inhibitions. Our effort will be to consolidate and expand traditional friendship while we work to nurture newer partnerships. We value our specially close relationship with Bhutan and we will strive to build on this. We have had the privilege of a special and warm relationship with Bangladesh. India was among the earliest to rush relief and assistance to both Sri Lanka and Maldives, which suffered the impact of the tsunami. This even while we ourselves were coping with the effects of the tsunami in our coastal areas, and assessing the extent of our damage, demonstrates the importance, we attach to these relationships and our commitment to good neighbourly ties. The Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement with Sri Lanka will further deepen our economic cooperation. President Karzai's recent visit will strengthen our participation in Afghanistan's reconstruction efforts.

Our relations with Pakistan are of utmost importance in our endeavour to create a neighbourhood of peace, stability and prosperity. We are engaged in a serious dialogue with Pakistan and have taken several initiatives in

furtherance of that. In proposing a range of steps, including Confidence Building Measures that may be taken in the near term, leading up to longer term economic cooperation, we are responding to the felt desire of our peoples. However, the process of normalisation is critically dependent on Pakistan fulfilling its assurance that it would end its support to terrorist activities.

The India-Pakistan process was recently taken significantly forward. An agreement was reached to start a bus service between Srinagar and Muzaffarabad. It was also agreed in principle to start bus services between Lahore and Amritsar, including to religious places such as Nankana Sahib. Pakistan also agreed to work towards early restoration of the Khokrapar–Munabao rail link. These measures would enhance people to people contacts, which have also provided palpable support to the present process.

Our relationship with Nepal will continue to receive high priority and it remains our view that the problems that Nepal faces today can only be addressed by a constitutional Monarchy and multi-party democracy working together harmoniously on the basis of a national consensus. India has expressed grave concern following the dissolution of the multi-party Government, declaration of emergency and arrest of political leaders by His Majesty, the King of Nepal on February 1, 2005.

We greatly value our relations with our major economic partners. India-US relations are on a steady course as they draw on the enduring affinity between our two countries as democracies and as strategic partners. We will continue to build upon the convergences in this relationship, strengthening our bilateral economic interface and the vibrant people-to-people contacts. Our ties with the European Union and its 25 member states have expanded steadily, and on our part, we will work to add momentum to the strategic partnership on which we have embarked, including at the next India-EU Summit in New Delhi this year. We value our time tested and strategic partnership with Russia which was strengthened by the recent visit of the President of the Russian Federation. The depth of our cooperation illustrates the priority we attach to deepening and consolidating this important relationship. My government has sought to accelerate our dialogue and engagement with China and we look forward to the visit of its Premier as an important bilateral landmark.

The “Look East Policy” has substantially strengthened our linkages with Japan, the member countries of ASEAN and the Republic of Korea. We expect the forthcoming visit of the Prime Minister of Japan to be a significant event in our bilateral ties. Our relationship with ASEAN has taken on new dimensions and we hope to realise its huge potential. India’s effective presence at the ASEAN Summit in November 2004 and the success of the first BIMSTEC Summit in July 2004, helped us forge closer links with our eastern neighbours.

The convergence of our foreign policy and our domestic needs is striking in the context of our energy security. My Government will give full importance to synchronising our diplomatic activity with our need for energy to fuel our developmental needs. Our established and traditional interests in West Asia, the Gulf and proximate regions, including the substantial presence there of our citizens, shall continue to be reflected in our interactions. We remain committed to the efforts of the international community in finding a just and durable solution to the problems that have faced the Palestinian people, so that they may achieve a State of their own. At the same time, we attach high importance to our friendly relations with Israel, which we hope to strengthen and diversify.

The forthcoming 50th anniversary of the Bandung Conference, will be an important occasion to recall an historic initiative taken at a time when the process of decolonisation was starting to gather strength and which prefigured the values of the Non-Aligned Movement. In this spirit, we will continue to pursue the comprehensive exercise to broaden the range of our relations with countries in Africa and Latin America, on which we have embarked. We will also reaffirm our commitment to the values of the Commonwealth at its Summit meeting in November this year.

This year, we also mark the 60th anniversary of the end of the Second World War and the founding of the United Nations Organization. It is our firm belief that the problems that confront the world today are truly global and are problems without borders, which call for collective approaches. We will play an active and constructive role in all deliberations of global concern. There is growing recognition of India's legitimate aspiration to play a larger role in the UN, consistent with our status and strength. We attach importance to the process of reform of the United Nations as part of the necessary renewal of the Organisation and we intend to articulate forcefully our aspiration to permanent membership of the UN Security Council.

Honourable Members, this is a year of many anniversaries. This year we celebrate the Platinum Jubilee of the Dandi March and the Salt Satyagraha launched by the Father of our Nation, Mahatma Gandhi. I hope the entire Nation will recall the spirit of idealism and self-sacrifice that characterized this High Noon of our freedom struggle. With nothing more than the salt of our own land, Gandhiji made colonial rule unacceptable in a non-violent manner that captured the imagination of the entire world.

In commemorating the Salt Satyagraha, every Indian must rediscover pride in our quest for freedom and self-respect and recapture the confidence shown by our forefathers who won us liberation from colonial rule. We have come a long way in these 75 years. Today India stands tall in the comity of Nations, as an independent Republic committed to the principles of freedom, secularism, pluralism and the welfare of all.

This year is also the Centenary Year of the great national upheaval against the designs of the British Raj on the issue of partition of Bengal in 1905. My Government salutes the contributions of Gurudev Rabindra Nath Tagore and other leaders of the national movement who opposed the heinous attempt of Lord Curzon to divide Bengal. We acknowledge with gratitude the leadership and commitment of national leaders and Gurudev Tagore in uniting people, strengthening communal harmony and protesting against this partition, which was later on withdrawn by the British Raj due to the massive mobilization of people.

Recently, the country celebrated the 150th anniversary of India Post. In a fitting tribute to India Post, the Government recently took initiatives to market the '.in' domain. I hope Honourable Members who have their own websites will now switch to the '.in' domain! This year marks the 125th birth anniversary of the renowned writer Prem Chand. He not only introduced to Hindi and Urdu prose a new genre of writing that endeared him to generations of Indians, but through his prose, placed the plight of the ordinary Indian, the aam admi, at the core of our concerns. I hope Prem Chand will be rediscovered in every school by every child across the length and breadth of our vast Republic.

The year 2005, marks the 50th anniversary of the death of Albert Einstein and the 100th anniversary of what is often called his "*annus mirabilis*". That was the year when a 26-year-old patent clerk published three of his four greatest works, including the theory of relativity. My Government will celebrate Einstein's anniversary by paying special attention to basic sciences in our schools and colleges, modernizing and reforming our institutions of science and, above all, rededicating itself to the spread of scientific temper.

I am sure Honourable Members will join me in expressing our admiration for the energy and enthusiasm with which our young women and men are participating in an increasing range of sports and winning laurels for the country at home and abroad. I believe this augurs well as we prepare to host the 2010 Commonwealth Games and stake our claim to host the 2018 Olympics.

This Government had promised a "New Deal to Rural India". In my address to the nation on the eve of the Republic Day, I had outlined a vision for rural development. The vision envisages total eradication of poverty, excellent and affordable opportunities for education and skill development for all citizens, health care for all and sanitation coverage and generation of higher income levels for all Indians. In addition, Indian agriculture, manufacturing and services sectors will not only cater to domestic needs but also acquire leadership positions in the global economy. My Government will promote rural development by providing urban amenities in rural areas (PURA). Physical connectivity, electronic connectivity and knowledge connectivity will achieve economic connectivity.

Rural India should be seen as a growth engine and public investment is required in the area of rural infrastructure to unleash its growth potential. My Government proposes to undertake a major plan for rebuilding rural India called “Bharat Nirman”. This will be a time-bound business plan for building rural infrastructure in the areas of irrigation, roads, housing, water supply, electrification and telecommunication connectivity. The Government will indicate specific targets to be achieved under each of these goals. It is the Government’s firm resolve to make rural India realize its inherent potential. Bharat Nirman would be the platform on which my Government will construct its ‘New Deal for Rural India’. The details of this programme will be outlined by the Union Finance Minister in his Budget Speech.

Honourable Members, you have the heavy burden of legislative work pending before you. This session will discuss the Union Budget and other Legislative business. There are several important bills at various stages of deliberation awaiting your consideration. The people of India anxiously await your views and your decisions on these crucial economic and social legislation. I urge you, Honourable Members, to repay the trust and confidence that the people have reposed in you by dedicating yourselves to the orderly consideration of these Bills. Every minute of Parliament’s time is precious and every citizen and taxpayer values it greatly. I sincerely hope you will make the most effective use of the time at your disposal and meet the citizens’ expectations and fulfill their aspirations.

I wish you all success in your deliberations.

Jai Hind.

ADDRESS TO PARLIAMENT—16 FEBRUARY 2006

Lok Sabha	—	Fourteenth Lok Sabha
Session	—	First Session of the year
President of India	—	Dr. A. P. J. Abdul Kalam
Vice-President of India	—	Shri Bhairon Singh Shekhawat
Prime Minister of India	—	Dr. Manmohan Singh
Speaker, Lok Sabha	—	Shri Somnath Chatterjee

HONOURABLE MEMBERS,

My greetings to you all. It is with a sense of optimism that we look forward to the New Year. A nation of a billion people rising to its potential is an exciting feeling. The feeling is palpable. It is not merely the statistics of economic growth or the enthusiasm that the world outside has shown for the Indian opportunity that makes these times so exciting. It is the fact that as a nation we have collectively decided to sink the differences of the past; that we have restored to our polity a sense of healing; that we have restored to our society a sense of inclusiveness; and that we have given our economy a sense of purpose.

Our economy is on the move and our people are on the march. After a period of none too exciting growth of around 5.0 per cent per annum during 1999-2003, the economy has bounced back, recording 7.5 per cent growth in 2004-05 and likely to cross 8.0 per cent in 2005-06. This is probably a precursor to better times to come in the future. Equally importantly, the rate of inflation has remained at modest levels despite a sharp increase in global energy prices. For the common man, for each of our families, the most important economic variable is the price of commodities. So it is a matter of immense satisfaction that even in the face of an unprecedented rise in global oil prices, the Indian economy has performed exceedingly well. My Government's prudent and judicious management of the economy has greatly helped in this. The renewed optimism of the people, whose creative energies are being unleashed, has also played its part. The optimism is visible in the savings rate which is now over 29 per cent and the investment rate which is near 31 per cent.

Confidence in India, in our democracy and in our economy, has never been higher. We have been able to restore the pluralistic ethos that is the

essence of India. We have been able to reverse a dangerous trend of intolerance that had begun to eat into the vitals of our nation and restore pluralism, tolerance and compassion. We have been able to replace debates that sought to divide the nation with debates that matter to everyday living of the people, debates on issues of concern to the aam aadmi. It is heartening to see that there is active discussion in government, media and civil society about options for growth, poverty reduction, education, health, employment, basic facilities, infrastructure, empowering people and helping marginalized and weaker sections catch up. Such debates are the life-blood of our democracy. This Government was voted to office to effect this precise change. This has been accomplished. To inspire a new generation of Indians to celebrate the fruits of our freedom struggle, my Government is drawing up impressive plans to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the First War of Indian Independence next year.

My government has been able to create a new architecture of inclusive development built on the foundation of five pillars. These are the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, a historic piece of legislation to provide income security to the poor and bridge the rural poverty gap; Bharat Nirman, a time-bound plan to create better rural infrastructure; the National Rural Health Mission, to address gaps in basic health; the Jawaharlal Nehru Mission for Urban Renewal, to ensure a dynamic, visionary, inclusive and caring process of urbanization; and, a strengthened Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan with a universal mid-day meal programme.

The National Rural Employment Guarantee Act marks a new beginning in our country towards guaranteeing the right to work. The Act, initially covering 200 less developed districts, holds revolutionary potential to alter the rural economy by providing a safety net to the poor. It will also enable creation of assets. It is for the first time in the world that a major employment programme is being undertaken on such a scale and its progress would be keenly watched by observers of development all over the world. The Union, State and local governments and Panchayati Raj Institutions need to work together for the success of this programme. A major people's programme for water conservation will be linked to this programme.

Bharat Nirman is a time-bound plan for providing basic infrastructure in our rural areas. This flagship programme of my Government will, by the year 2009, seek to:—

- * Provide electricity connection to every village in the country;
- * Provide an all-weather road to every habitation of over 1000 population and above, or 500 in hilly and tribal areas;
- * Provide every habitation a safe source of drinking water;
- * Provide every village a telephone connection;
- * Create 1 crore hectares of additional irrigation capacity;
- * Construct 60 lakh houses for the rural poor.

Building on the on-going schemes and large additional investments that are being channelised to this effort, Bharat Nirman will impart a sense of urgency to these goals by making the programme time-bound, transparent and accountable. These integrated investments in rural infrastructure will unlock the growth potential of rural India and Provide Urban Amenities in Rural Areas (PURA).

A National Rural Health Mission has been launched with the intention of providing universal basic health care to our people. The Mission, based on contextual, district level plans based on local priorities, will enable health care delivery in a manner which meets local needs. It will also link action in health care with complementary efforts in areas such as safe drinking water, sanitation and nutrition. In addition to upgradation of all Primary Health Centres, two community health centers in each district will be improved in the first phase to a level as defined through Indian Public Health Standards.

The Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission is the single largest initiative since independence for the development of our cities. The Mission, covering 63 cities, will enable their comprehensive development in the areas of urban infrastructure and basic services to the urban poor, linking new investment to governance reform. The successful implementation of the Delhi Metro project has generated demands for improved urban transport in many other cities. Plans for a Mumbai Metro and a Bangalore* Metro are in the final stages of consideration.

Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan has been strengthened and combined with a programme for universalisation of the Mid-Day Meal programme, which now covers 12 crore children. These initiatives should have a positive impact on the enrolment and attendance at school and on the nutritional status of our children.

My Government has taken several other steps in the realm of education to widen access and ensure excellence. The liberal funding of scholarships for students hailing from Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe families, families of ex-servicemen and minorities will help improve the educational status of these disadvantaged groups. My Government has sanctioned creation of over 1000 Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas in educationally backward blocks of 21 States to provide free residential education to underprivileged girls at the upper primary level.

My Government has given the highest priority to the welfare of our farmers and to the development of our rural economy. There has been a 60 per cent increase in credit to the agricultural sector. Long term measures for the revival of cooperative credit institutions, as recommended by the Vaidyanathan Committee, are being implemented. The Central and State Governments have arrived at a consensus on a revival package for the Short

* Now known as Bengaluru.

Term Rural Cooperative Credit Structure involving a financial package of about Rs.14,000 crore, and linked to reforms in the cooperative sector. A revival package for the Long Term Cooperative Credit Structure is also being studied. My Government is committed to having a common market for agricultural produce so that farmers get better farmgate prices. This is being done by making warehouse receipts negotiable instruments; amending the Essential Commodities Act; working with states to amend local Agriculture Produce Marketing Acts and expanding the food supply and storage chain.

With a view to cover the risks involved in agricultural operations, the scope and coverage of the National Agricultural Insurance Scheme has been expanded. My Government is committed to doing all that is possible to protect the livelihoods of small and marginal farmers. Considering the agro-climatic variation and consequent advantage for production of different types of fruits and vegetables in the country, the Government is paying special attention towards the development of horticulture. With this objective, the Government has launched the National Horticulture Mission during 2005-06 with a total outlay of Rs. 2300 crore for the remaining period of the Tenth Five Year Plan.

Better water management holds the key to agricultural growth in the country. Water use efficiency can be greatly improved through the installation of drip, sprinkler and fertigation systems. There is also a need to address the needs of regions which are still dependent on rainfall. A National Rainfed Area Authority is being established which will look into all the dimensions of managing water resources in these areas. In addition to the one crore hectares being brought under irrigation under Bharat Nirman, my government has also begun work on elements of the interlinking of peninsular rivers, beginning with work on two such links.

My Government is in the process of setting up of a National Biotechnology Regulatory Authority which will be the nodal authority for release, import and post-release monitoring of GM crops and seeds. The quality control of GM seeds is an important issue and it is proposed to strengthen the State Seed Testing Laboratories. To promote bio-fuel, a National Bio-Diesel Programme is proposed to be launched in 2006-07.

In order to accelerate economic growth, investment in infrastructure is a necessity. Government is committed to developing world-class infrastructure to make our economy more competitive and to make every citizen feel proud. While the public sector will continue to play an important role, it is necessary to create a policy and regulatory environment that attracts long term private investment in infrastructure. The Committee on Infrastructure under the chairmanship of the Prime Minister, is vigorously pursuing this objective.

My Government has set up a Special Purpose Vehicle called the India Infrastructure Finance Corporation Limited to provide long term debt funds to commercially viable projects in infrastructure sectors. This will ensure that infrastructure projects which may be rendered unviable due to long gestation periods, are not ignored due to lack of long term debt in the financial markets.

The National Highways Development Project is being implemented as a national priority. The work of four-laning of the Golden Quadrilateral is nearing completion. An Action Plan for further development of the national highways network involving a total investment of Rs. 1,75,000 crore over the next seven years has been finalised. This includes four laning of an additional 10,000 kilometers of national highways carrying high volume of traffic, and six-laning of the Golden Quadrilateral. A new Model Concession Agreement has been approved by Government to facilitate public-private partnership in roads.

My Government intends to create world class airports in India. A comprehensive Civil Aviation Policy is on the anvil. The process of modernisation and expansion of the Delhi and Mumbai airports through public-private partnership has already commenced. Greenfield International Airports at Bangalore* and Hyderabad have been approved. Plans are being made for the modernization and development of Kolkata and Chennai airports. A comprehensive plan for the planned development of other regional airports is under finalisation.

Port infrastructure is critical to economic growth. It is essential to attract massive private investment for upgradation and modernisation of ports. The programme for allocation of berths at major Indian ports for construction through the public-private partnership route is being expanded. A Model Concession Agreement is being formulated for this purpose.

Our Railways have once again become a source of great pride with a perceptible improvement in their performance. Government has decided to build two dedicated high capacity freight corridors—the Eastern Corridor from Ludhiana to Sonnagar and the Western Corridor from Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust to Dadri—with an investment of over Rs. 20,000 crores. Preliminary work will commence on these projects within one year. Keeping in view the increasing demand for movement of cargo through containers, it has been decided that this sector, which was the monopoly of the public sector, will be thrown open to competition and the private sector would be eligible for running container trains.

My Government places special emphasis on improving the power situation in the country. The Dabhol Power Project is being revived and is expected

* Now known as Bengaluru.

to start generating power this year. The Ministry of Power is facilitating the setting up of five Ultra Mega Power Projects with a capacity of 4000 MW each through tariff based competitive bidding, three plants at coastal sites based on imported coal and the remaining two at pit head sites. More such power projects will be taken up to bridge the demand-supply gap.

The telecommunications and information technology revolution is one of the success stories in our reform programme. Owing to the effect of competition, telecom tariffs have continuously come down, and today we have among the lowest tariffs in the world. A milestone in this has been the announcement of the One India Plan by the public sector telecom service providers BSNL and MTNL recently. Keeping in view the problem of inadequate availability of spectrum for commercial use, Government proposes to put in place a mechanism for vacation of spectrum by existing users in Government to make it available for commercial use in a time bound manner. My Government will ensure that manufacturing of electronic and telecom hardware in the country is given a big thrust. New initiatives are being taken to bring semi-conductor manufacturing to India and build a manufacturing hub.

The Special Economic Zones Act was notified in June, 2005. My government will ensure creation of required infrastructure and an appropriate framework to facilitate rapid development of export oriented manufacturing and services in the country. Drawing on the ideas put forward by a group of dedicated Non-Resident Indians, Government has constituted a Task Force on Petroleum, Chemicals and Petrochemicals Investment Regions. This Task Force will evolve a policy framework for development of sector specific investment regions involving world class developers which can attract investment upto \$10 billion in each location.

To attain rapid economic growth, it is essential that we step up investment in various sectors of the economy. My Government intends launching a Ten Year National Manufacturing Initiative to make the manufacturing sector the prime driving force for employment and economic growth. Emphasis will be placed on labour-intensive sectors such as textiles & garments, leather & leather goods, food processing, IT hardware & electronics and auto components. Focused attention will be given to the growth of our dynamic services sector including software, outsourcing, tourism, education and healthcare so as to create large employment opportunities. We will also create a policy framework that attracts Foreign Direct Investment keeping in view our overall national interest. My government has taken appropriate decisions to rationalize the FDI policy with a view to removing unnecessary hurdles and outdated restrictions.

To ensure that every citizen of our Republic is empowered to know how Government programmes are being implemented, we brought forward a path-breaking legislation to increase transparency in the functioning of

Government at all levels. The Right to Information Act, 2005, is a historic piece of legislation. By ensuring greater transparency in the functioning of Government, it will help reduce corruption.

Reforming the instruments and processes of governance is an important element of my Government's reform agenda. We have taken several steps to begin this process from the very top. A new system of Performance Appraisal Reports and appraisal by an Eminent Persons Group has been put in place of the existing system of Annual Confidential Reports. My Government is introducing mid-career training systems, with promotions based on a new criteria and an accelerated empanelment procedure for senior civil servants. A voluntary retirement non-promotion system on the basis of mid-career screening will be put in place for the All India Services to ensure that the best and the brightest are rewarded for their performance and commitment to good governance. My Government has instituted the Prime Minister's Awards for Excellence in Public Administration to encourage initiative, efficiency, honesty and commitment to good governance among civil servants. Steps have been initiated for setting up the Sixth Pay Commission for Government employees.

My Government has set up an Administrative Reforms Commission to undertake a comprehensive review of governmental machinery at all levels and to end bureaucratism, thus fulfilling a commitment of the National Common Minimum Programme. The National Disaster Management Authority has been operationalised and is expected to play a fruitful role in coordinating and planning disaster mitigation and management efforts.

There is a need to pursue reform of our judicial system. There is a need to bring down pendency of cases in courts at all levels and reducing the time taken for deciding cases. There is also a pressing need to make justice accessible in an easy and comprehensible manner to all citizens. My Government is working on proposals to address these issues through more courts, the use of technology and computerisation, improved procedures, and introduction of local courts.

Our electoral system has had an impeccable record and is the pride of our nation. However, there is always scope for improvement, particularly in decriminalizing the electoral process, reducing frivolous candidates and providing more teeth to electoral officers. My Government is working on proposals in all these areas.

A National e-Governance Plan, with 25 Mission Mode Projects, has been prepared. A National Institute of Smart Governance is being set up and a State-wide Area Network will be created in all States by 2007. A scheme for computerizing 13,348 District and Subordinate Courts has been separately launched under the overall directions of a Committee chaired by the Chief Justice of India. To make Indian firms globally competitive and enable easy

compliance with Company law requirements, a pathbreaking e-governance programme known as MCA-21 is being launched this year.

My Government has recently amended the Constitution to facilitate reservations in private unaided educational institutions for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and other socially and educationally backward classes of citizens. Parliament is also considering several bills brought forward by my Government to socially and economically empower Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Other Backward Classes and religious minorities. My Government has introduced a landmark legislation for providing rights to tribal people on the land that has been historically under their possession. The backlog of unfilled reserved posts in Government is being reduced speedily under a crash programme. To prepare Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe candidates for selection to academic positions and for doctoral studies, my Government has launched the Rajiv Gandhi National Fellowship Scheme under which 2000 fellowships will be funded annually.

The National Rural Employment Guarantee Act provides for improvement of private farm lands of Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes. The Ministry of Tribal Affairs has initiated a special programme to provide assistance to states for taking up minor irrigation schemes for land belonging to Scheduled Tribes.

My Government has created a new Ministry of Minority Affairs to focus concentrated attention on the problems of all minorities, including religious minorities. A National Commission for Minority Educational Institutions has been established. A Bill for providing Constitutional status to the Minorities Commission has been introduced in Parliament. A Committee under Justice Rajinder Sachar is studying in-depth the condition of minorities and is expected to recommend steps for their economic and social development and empowerment.

A New 15-point Programme for Minorities is under preparation. This programme will aim at enhancing the social development of minorities, especially the poor, modernize Madrasa education, and provide financial support for entrepreneurship development and self-employment. My Government intends to propose statutory measures to prevent and deal effectively with communal violence and communal offences and to enable rehabilitation of victims of communal riots.

My Government has taken a number of steps to ensure that the National Common Minimum Programme commitments regarding full equality to women is honoured. Amendments have been carried out in the Hindu Succession Act, 1956 to give equal inheritance rights to women in property. Government is also contemplating amendments to the Guardians and Wards Act, 1890, the Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Act, 1956 and the Hindu Minority and Guardianship Act, 1956 to remove discriminatory provisions contained in

them. A Bill for the compulsory registration of marriages is also under active consideration. My Government will make every effort to see that 33 per cent reservation for women in Parliament and State Legislatures is made possible in the near future.

A new Ministry of Women and Child Development has been created to have focused attention on the problems of women and children. A National Plan of Action for Children has been approved and a National Commission for the Protection of Child Rights is being established. Our goal is to ensure that all children have a secure, healthy and happy childhood with access to education and healthcare. The Rajiv Gandhi National Creche Scheme for children of working mothers has been approved recently. This envisages establishment of nearly 30,000 creches for children. The Integrated Child Development Services Scheme is being universalized with nearly 1.88 lakh additional anganwadis being sanctioned. With a comprehensive range of pre-natal and post-natal care services, immunization, nutrition and early childhood education services, the universalisation of this programme will be a great step forward in reducing infant and maternal mortality. We also need to take immediate steps to eliminate female foeticide and improve the juvenile sex ratio.

You have passed a comprehensive Bill to protect women from domestic violence. A Bill on protection against sexual harassment is shortly to be finalized. Suitable amendments to the Sati (Prevention) Act will also be shortly made. The Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act is proposed to be amended to strengthen provisions against trafficking in women and children.

The Criminal Procedure Code has been amended to ensure greater protection to women. These include the prohibition of arrest of women after sunset and before sunrise except in unavoidable circumstances, a provision to ensure immediate medical examination of rape victims within 24 hours, DNA profiling, and investigation by a judicial or Metropolitan Magistrate of incidents of rape in custody.

Honourable Members are aware of my views on the importance of investing in the knowledge economy. Since ancient times, our society has greatly valued knowledge. Our democracy has enabled us to spread the benefits of knowledge more widely. Today we live in a knowledge era in which every social and economic activity is driven by knowledge.

My Government had constituted the National Knowledge Commission to seek expert advice on how we can empower our people with skills and capabilities relevant to the knowledge era. The Commission is also expected to examine how we can modernize our educational system in keeping with the emerging requirements of the future. The Commission's report is shortly awaited. My Government has in the meanwhile, decided to create new centers of excellence in basic sciences, on the lines of the Indian Institute

of Science, in Kolkata, Pune and in Punjab. My Government is investing substantially in the Science and Technology field to promote domestic research and development, both public and private, so that India can emerge as a significant player in the knowledge era. We will work with partners across the world to promote the development and utilization of knowledge through collaborative efforts.

Last year Cartosat-1, the high resolution cartographic mapping satellite with along track stereo imaging capability, the first of its kind in the world, was launched, along with HAMSAT, re-affirming India's excellence in remote sensing and amateur radio operation. The PSLV-C6 was itself launched from the recently established state-of-the-art Second Launch Pad at Sriharikota. INSAT-4A, launched in December, will revolutionise the broadcasting infrastructure in our country, including DTH services. Our space scientists and telecommunications engineers have played a major role empowering our teachers, media personnel and creative professionals with the requisite technological means. This synergy has enabled India to emerge as a major knowledge, media and entertainment power. My Government will further strengthen our capabilities in this area of cultural and scientific development. The entertainment industry is getting linked to information technology. To explore ways and means of expanding our opportunities in this area, a Task Force on Information, Communication and Entertainment has recently been constituted. Given adequate attention, I am confident that our entertainment sector has the potential to be world class and compete with the best. My Government will take steps to strengthen the Indian entertainment industry so that it can achieve global scale and realize its potential.

Our space programme has been beneficial beyond our borders. During the current financial year, we have begun work on creating a pan-African e-Network Project that will be bridging the digital divide in that continent. Indian expertise in IT, education and healthcare will eventually be available to 53 countries in Africa.

My Government is deeply committed to the protection and preservation of our environment, including all species of flora and fauna. A strategic programme to increase forest cover is proposed to be undertaken. The Tiger is our national animal and an endangered species. A Tiger Task Force was established last year on whose suggestions action is being taken. My Government proposes to create a National Tiger Conservation Authority for more effective management of our Tiger Reserves. Steps are also being taken to reduce poaching of these magnificent animals. For the first time, a draft National Environment Policy has been formulated to harmonize environmental, social and economic imperatives.

My Government has taken a number of measures for the welfare of the people in the North-East. Almost Rs. 10,000 crores of investment is being made at Bongaigaon, Dibrugarh and in Tripura in thermal power projects

using local coal and gas. Particular emphasis will be given to the border areas in this region, specially Arunachal Pradesh, for infrastructure and road development. The accelerated North-East Road Development project is under consideration, which will provide connectivity to State capitals and district headquarters in the North-East, and include upgradation of such other stretches of national and State highways which are critical for the economic development of the region.

My Government is actively engaged in reviewing and streamlining of procedures under the Non-lapsable Central Pool of Resources for the North-East. A new industrial policy for the North-East will be announced shortly. A North-East health package is also being developed and will be put in place at the earliest. In order to address problems faced by students and working women from the North-East while living in the national capital, a 500-bed girls' hostel in the Delhi University and a 500-bed hostel for working women have been approved. My Government will set up a National Institute of Technology in Tripura, a Central Institute of Technology at Kokrajhar, and an Indian Institute of Management in the North-East. The proposed North-Eastern Water Resources Authority is expected to ensure effective utilization of hydro-power generation capacity in the region, especially in Arunachal Pradesh. The North-Eastern Council has been revitalized and work on fencing along the India- Bangladesh border is being speeded up.

I am happy to inform you that the Rs. 24,000 crore package for Jammu and Kashmir has been successfully launched and substantial progress has been made in several sectors. The response of the Central and State Government agencies and civil society at large to the unfortunate earthquake in the State was commendable. The Government's courageous decision to disburse financial assistance for rehabilitation directly to the affected persons has been appreciated by the people. According to the latest reports, most of the restoration work is nearly complete. Substantial help was received from other State Governments, public sector organizations and NGOs from all over the country. The Srinagar-Muzzafarabad bus service is operating normally and my Government's initiative in this regard has been universally acclaimed, most importantly by the people of Jammu and Kashmir. I pay tribute to the commitment of the people of the State to peace which has given an impetus to the peace process and normalization of the situation at the ground level.

My Government has remained deeply committed to national security and pursued a two-pronged approach of reaching out to disaffected sections of our society while dealing firmly with terrorists and other anti-national forces. There has been an improvement in the law and order situation across the country, especially in Jammu and Kashmir and the North-Eastern States. The number of incidents of civilians killed and persons kidnapped in both Jammu and Kashmir and the North-East have registered a decline

in the last year. Government is engaged in talks, including at the highest level, with a large number of political groups in both regions. These talks have progressed in a constructive manner and have contributed to relieving the sense of alienation among some of our people.

My Government has also expressed its willingness to talk to all political groups to address their grievances, real or imaginary. At the same time, my Government is steadfast in its resolve to combat terrorism, militancy and extremism and to uphold the rule of law. We acted swiftly to deal with terrorist attacks in various parts of the country, including in our national capital and in Bangalore*, at the temple of learning, the Indian Institute of Science. I was deeply distressed and pained by the senseless killing of so many innocent citizens, including a distinguished scientist. Government will act without fear or favour in bringing the guilty to book and will wage a relentless war against terrorism. We will work with all those committed to this battle from across the world.

The Nation is proud of our Armed Forces. My Government has paid renewed attention to the requirements of our national defence and the welfare of ex-servicemen. A Department of ex-servicemen's Welfare has been created to focus on their issues and assist the families of our brave jawans. We have approved an improved pension scheme for our ex-servicemen who retired before 1996, particularly our jawans which will benefit over a million ex-servicemen. By pursuing defence modernization in a systematic manner, Government has strengthened our military capability. This approach, taking account of our strategic environment and drawing on our technological prowess will guide us in the coming years.

The foreign policy of my Government is, as has always been the case, guided by enlightened national interest. It has been oriented to enlarge our policy choice. My Government has made vigorous efforts to build friendly and cooperative ties with our neighbours and to strengthen SAARC. India regards SAARC as an important forum for regional cooperation and we look forward to Afghanistan joining SAARC as its eighth member. The entry into force of SAFTA on January 1, 2006 was a landmark. India will have the privilege of hosting the next SAARC Summit and in that context the several initiatives we have proposed shall be pursued.

My Government has taken several steps to improve our relations with all our neighbours. The landmark visit of the Prime Minister to Afghanistan in August 2005 has reinforced our commitment to help in the reconstruction of Afghanistan. There has also been good progress in increased people to people contacts and bilateral trade with all our neighbours, including Pakistan. The spontaneous outpouring of sympathy and assistance from the people of India for the victims of the earthquake in Pakistan underlines the goodwill among the peoples of the two countries. While we remain concerned over infiltration and cross-border terrorism and expect Pakistan to fulfil its

* Now known as Bengaluru.

commitments in this regard, we reiterate our commitment to the composite dialogue process with Pakistan. The opening of new bus links between Amritsar and Lahore and Amritsar and Nankana Sahib and the opening up of the Khokrapar-Munabao rail link are further steps in promoting people to people contacts between our two countries.

We attach high importance to strengthening our relations with our global economic partners. Our relations with the United States underwent a substantial transformation in 2005 and we carry forward our strategic partnership based on the July 18 Joint Statement of the Prime Minister and the US President. Government expects that the country may gain access to international cooperation for enlargement of our civilian nuclear energy sector based on the reciprocal commitments of India and the US in the Joint Statement. Parliament will be apprised of the on-going discussions on this subject in this session. The India-US relationship also encompasses many more important issues. Major initiatives are underway to encourage the expansion of investment, trade and technology transfers, accelerate cooperation in agriculture, health and human resource development, in cooperation for energy security, a framework for defence cooperation and expanding cooperation on key global challenges.

My Government has continued to pursue the objective of a comprehensive re-engagement with Russia. Our time-tested friendship with Russia has led to the growth and development of extensive ties of cooperation in the fields of oil and gas, trade and investment, nuclear energy, space, high technology and defence. My state visit to Russia, the annual Summit level meeting between the Prime Minister and the Russian President and a large number of cabinet level exchanges will give impetus to this. Government hopes to further strengthen our relationship, specially in areas of strategic importance in the days to come.

We are working to build our relationship with China on the basis of our strategic and cooperative partnership, forged during the visit of Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao in April 2005. A positive start has been made in the second phase of discussions between the Special Representatives on the Boundary Question based on the Agreement on the Political Parameters and Guiding Principles signed in April 2005, and we are looking forward to this process gaining further momentum.

Our ties with the European Union and its 25 member states have expanded considerably. India maintains strategic partnerships with France, Germany and the UK, with regular interactions at the highest level. Prime Minister Blair had a fruitful visit last year which strengthened the relationship between our two countries. The forthcoming visit of the President of France is expected to give a new thrust to our relationship with this important and influential friend.

Our “Look East” policy was further strengthened with India’s participation in the historic East Asia Summit held in Kuala Lumpur which has the potential of defining the future regional architecture. The Prime Minister of Singapore H.E. Mr. Lee Hsien Loong paid a State Visit to India in June 2005 during which Singapore and India signed a Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement which has become a benchmark. Our interaction with this region is active; we hosted the President of Indonesia and the Prime Minister of Thailand. Recently, I myself paid State Visits to Singapore, Philippines and the Republic of Korea which have strengthened our relationship with them.

Our relations with Japan have been reinforced by high level interaction and dialogue. The global partnership established between India and Japan acquired a fresh orientation during the visit in April 2005 of the Prime Minister of Japan and we look forward to a close and cooperative engagement on bilateral and global issues.

My Government is paying close attention to our ties with the countries of the Gulf region that has become home to over 4 million Indians and a major source of supplies of our oil and gas. We were privileged to receive His Majesty the King of Saudi Arabia, the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, as the Chief Guest at the Republic Day 2006. This visit has opened a new vista and enlarged our traditional ties. The Emir of Qatar visited India in April 2005 followed by the First Lady recently. We attach very high importance to West Asian issues and remain supportive of the efforts of the international community in finding a just and durable solution to the problems faced by the Palestinian people so that they may achieve a State of their own. At the same time we attach high importance to our friendly relations with Israel which we hope to strengthen and diversify.

This last year saw a marked change in the global perception of India as an influential actor on the international stage. This was a recognition of our emergence as a strong economy; of our ability to adjust to change—economic and social; and, of our capability to shoulder responsibilities—global and regional. Overseas Indians have contributed in a major way to this changed perception and my Government has recognized their contribution by launching the Overseas Citizenship Scheme for Persons of Indian Origin. We are also planning to grant voting rights to Non-Resident Indians. By hosting the 2010 Commonwealth Games and bidding for the 2012 Asian Games, we hope to enhance our global stature further.

In conclusion, I return to the theme I began with. Our country is destined to regain its due place in the comity of nations in the 21st century. However, there is much we must do at home to realize this potential and fulfill the aspirations of our people. My Government is committed to doing so through the National Common Minimum Programme.

Today the economy is poised for better performance. My Government believes that our people will respond handsomely if we pursue policies that invest in their capabilities and liberate their creativity and enterprise. This requires good governance. Good governance today implies more efficient use of public finances in sectors in which Government must invest, and less Government intervention in areas where individual initiative can achieve more. No country has prospered by printing money or incurring excessive debt. Only through hard work, higher productivity and prudent management of resources—human, natural and financial—can prosperity be achieved. My Government is committed to the judicious management of public finances, to the efficient management of public utilities and enterprises and to the pursuit of reform, in all its dimensions. At the same time, there is a need for maintaining communal harmony and promoting an inclusive society in which every section of society feels secure, empowered and confident about their future. My Government is committed towards creating such an environment so that the latent potential of our people can blossom and create a new India of our dreams.

This is an important session of Parliament. The people of our country, who have sent you here as their representatives, sincerely hope that you will make the best use of the time available to represent their interests. I urge you to devote your energies to a mature consideration of the business of both Houses of Parliament and act in the best interests of the country and our citizens. Time is precious, please do not waste it. You have my best wishes in all your noble endeavours in the service of our people.

Jai Hind.

ADDRESS TO PARLIAMENT—23 FEBRUARY 2007

Lok Sabha	—	Fourteenth Lok Sabha
Session	—	First Session of the year
President of India	—	Dr. A. P. J. Abdul Kalam
Vice-President of India	—	Shri Bhairon Singh Shekhawat
Prime Minister of India	—	Dr. Manmohan Singh
Speaker, Lok Sabha	—	Shri Somnath Chatterjee

HONOURABLE MEMBERS,

This is a very special year for our country. We are celebrating the 60th anniversary of our Independence. This year, we also observe the 150th anniversary of the First War of Indian Independence and the Centenary of Satyagraha. These are occasions for us to renew our commitment to building a strong, modern, inclusive, secular and dynamic India.

I would like to begin by expressing my sincere condolences for the innocent victims of the dastardly and cynical terrorist attack on Samjhauta Express. Our hearts go out to the families of these innocent people. We should not allow this tragic event to affect our common quest for normalization of relations between India and Pakistan.

We meet here today at a time of great optimism about our economic performance and prospects. The last three years have recorded an average annual rate of growth of national income of over 8 per cent. By all estimates, we will grow by close to 9 per cent in the current year. This augurs well for the launch of the Eleventh Five Year Plan. My Government has set a target of attaining an annual growth rate of 9 per cent during the Eleventh Plan. Given current trends and the general policy direction, this is a feasible proposition. However, economic growth is not an end in itself. It is a means by which we hope to generate more employment, distribute incomes more equitably, across social groups and regions, and liberate the poorest of the poor from the scourge of poverty, ignorance and disease.

My Government recognizes that keeping a check on inflation is an essential element of any strategy for inclusive growth. During the first half of 2006, my Government took a number of steps to insulate our people from the fallout of the steep increase in global oil prices and resurgence

in global commodity prices. However, in recent months, the rate of inflation has shown an upward trend. As growth and investment accelerate rapidly and incomes rise, there is bound to be a rising demand for all products, particularly products of day-to-day consumption. This rise in demand has to be met by a rise in supply which takes some time to materialize. During the last eight weeks, my Government has taken a number of fiscal and monetary steps to moderate inflation. Besides, a number of steps have been taken to improve supplies of essential commodities. My Government will continue to take all necessary steps to ensure that the poor are not adversely affected by inflation. This is our solemn commitment.

To sustain the growth process and to fiscally empower the Government to address its commitment to inclusive growth, it is essential that our public finances are managed with prudence and wisdom. Fiscal responsibility is not an academic obsession. It is a prudent course of action aimed at ensuring the sustainability of our growth process, ensuring equity and keeping inflation under check.

My Government has decided that the goal of the Eleventh Plan would be to ensure that economic growth is not just faster, but also more inclusive and equitable. The Eleventh Plan strategy will aim at putting the economy on a sustainable, accelerated, growth trajectory and creating productive employment opportunities across the country in all sectors of the economy. The Approach Paper of the Eleventh Five Year Plan has identified nine major challenges facing the economy. These are: (1) regaining agricultural dynamism; (2) changing employment patterns and generating new jobs; (3) providing essential public services to the poor; (4) increasing manufacturing competitiveness; (5) developing human resources; (6) building world class infrastructure; (7) protecting the environment; (8) improving rehabilitation and resettlement practices; and (9) improving governance. By addressing these challenges, we will address the larger challenge of inclusive growth.

My Government is building a new architecture of inclusive growth. This architecture consists of Bharat Nirman, the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, the National Rural Health Mission, the strengthened and expanded Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, the universalisation of the Mid-day Meal and ICDS Programmes and the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission. Considerable progress has been made under each of these flagship programmes of the Government. Most of the yearly targets have been met for projects undertaken through Bharat Nirman, except in a few States. Programmes for rural roads, rural electrification, rural telephony, rural housing and rural drinking water supply are on track. States that are lagging behind, especially the less developed parts of the country, have been urged to pay greater attention to implementation issues.

The National Rural Health Mission aims to improve the health status of people through a partnership between the Central and State Governments, Panchayati Raj Institutions and the community in the management of primary health facilities. The Mission is focused on improving public health indicators through decentralised district level planning. About 3.2 lakh village-based accredited women social health activists (ASHA) have so far been inducted in 18 demographically weaker states.

The Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission is under implementation in 63 cities. City Development Plans have already been prepared for 61 cities, charting out their vision and goals in urban governance and development. These plans also include investment plans with a focus on provision of city-wide urban infrastructure services such as water supply, sanitation, drainage, basic services and social housing to the urban poor. So far, 102 projects for slum improvement and development have been sanctioned. Our cities desperately need major reform of urban governance and improved and democratic functioning of our municipalities. This is being encouraged and a new draft law to facilitate street vendors is being finalized in consultation with all stakeholders.

Each of these programmes will generate additional employment, a major focus area of my Government. A sustained increase in the rate of investment, which has touched a record level of 34 per cent of GDP, will generate additional employment. The National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) passed by my Government has emerged as a very major programme both for providing a social safety net to the poor as well as for building rural infrastructure. Over 1.4 crore households have benefited under the scheme operational in 200 districts. Over 500,000 works are under operation under the NREGA in different parts of the country of which over half is in the area of water conservation and drought proofing, contributing to rebuilding of the natural resource base. A social safety net of this dimension has never been undertaken in the world. Therefore it is being observed with great interest. My Government is committed to covering the whole country under the NREGA in five years from the coming into force of it and more districts will be taken up in the next year.

Mahatma Gandhi's vision of Gram Swaraj was given a legal framework through the efforts of late Shri Rajiv Gandhi. My Government is committed to deepening Panchayati Raj and therefore has taken up the task of strengthening decentralized district planning through an integrated plan for removal of backwardness in 250 districts. The Backward Regions Grant Fund is designed to fill gaps in critical development interventions based on local assessments.

My Government attaches the highest importance to education. As a nation of young people, India will be able to gain from a demographic dividend only if we invest in the capabilities and the intellectual and

emotional development of our children. There has been a quantum leap in the funds allocated for primary and secondary education during the last three years. The strengthened Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan and Mid-day Meal Programme reaffirm our commitment to the empowerment of our children through education. Under the Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya Scheme, over 2000 new residential schools at upper primary level have been sanctioned in the last 3 years for girls belonging predominantly to SC, ST, OBC and minority communities.

The rights of women and children and their aspirations are of paramount importance in our march towards an inclusive and equitable society. Keeping in view the Constitutional provisions and in order to give greater focus to issues relating to women and children, an independent Ministry of Women & Child Development has been created. This emphasizes the importance being given to women as equal partners in development. Landmark legislations that ensure women's safety and protecting them from domestic violence have been enacted. Investment in the well-being of children is an investment in the future of the country. Eradication of malnutrition is receiving topmost priority, including through a rapid expansion of anganwadis whose numbers will reach one million soon. At the same time issues relating to child protection are high on my Government's agenda.

The focus of our efforts in higher education is to revitalise the system, expand access and build new institutions of excellence. My Government attaches great importance to increasing access to education for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Other Backward Classes and the socially and educationally backward sections among Minorities. It is also committed to rewarding hard work and merit among all students. The National Knowledge Commission has submitted its first report placing emphasis on the need to invest in education at all levels of the knowledge pyramid. My Government is committed to revitalizing vocational and technical education. Several new Indian Institutes of Science Education and Research, Indian Institutes of Technology and Indian Institutes of Information Technology are proposed to be set up in various parts of the country. New Central Universities are being set up in the North-Eastern region.

My Government is committed to providing food security to the poor and is taking further steps to strengthen the public distribution system. Wheat production has been low but wheat stocks have been replenished in order to control the rise in prices. At the same time, the minimum support prices for wheat and coarse cereals have been suitably enhanced as an incentive for higher production. Timely and appropriate decisions have improved the lot of sugarcane farmers, reducing sugarcane arrears to an all time low. For coordinated and focussed attention on the issues of dryland and rainfed farming, the National Rainfed Area Authority has been set up to guide policy in this regard. The National Fisheries Development Board has been

set up to enhance the productivity of our marine and inland fisheries. The National Horticulture Mission is helping farmers diversify into more income generating crops.

Honourable members are already aware of the steep increase in credit availability for agriculture. The target of doubling credit flow to agriculture and allied activities has been met. A Rs. 13,000 crore package for the revival of the cooperative credit structure has also been worked out and is under implementation. To give a thrust to agricultural research and transfer new technologies to the field, a National Agriculture Innovation Project (NAIP) has been approved. Efforts are also on for improving productivity of plantation crops like Coconut, Tea and Coffee and several new schemes have been formulated.

A special package amounting to more than Rs. 16,000 crores is being implemented in 31 districts worst affected by farmers' suicides. The interventions cover short-term as well as long-term measures and address issues of credit, irrigation facilities, agriculture inputs and alternative sources of income. An expert group is looking into the problem of agricultural indebtedness and will suggest measures to provide relief to farmers in distress.

Taken together, all these initiatives of my Government will increase the rate of investment in agriculture, enhance production and productivity growth, increase farmers' incomes and welfare and unleash the Second Green Revolution. It is heartening that agricultural growth in 2005-06 was 6 per cent. However, this needs to be sustained through credible measures which maintain a high rate of investment bring new technologies and farming systems into use, improve marketing channels, provide better risk management facilities and generate better returns to our farmers. This, my Government is committed to doing.

Acquisition of agricultural land for industrial development and related purposes and the terms of compensation have become issues of major public concern in our country. On the one hand there are genuine concerns of farmers regarding acquisition of agricultural land and on the other hand, there is a need to use land to generate employment through industry and related activities. Therefore, issues of humane rehabilitation and the need for fair pricing of agricultural land need to be addressed both in policy and in law. My Government is committed to bringing in a new rehabilitation policy which will be backed by amendments in the Land Acquisition Act wherever necessary.

My Government recognizes the serious nature of the problem of water availability and water use, both in agriculture and in the urban economy. We need a social consensus on water management practices, including participatory irrigation management; regulated use and conservation of

water; timely completion of irrigation projects and maintenance of existing projects to ensure water availability to farmers; improved ground water recharge and rain water harvesting. My Government is committed to developing both the irrigation potential of the country and its hydro-power potential.

Taking care of our environment and ensuring ecological sustainability of our growth process is a major challenge, nationally as well as globally. The threat of climate change and global warming will have adverse consequences for life on our planet and for our development prospects. We need economically affordable, technologically feasible and socially equitable policies to deal with the challenge of sustainable development. Drawing on the wisdom of Mahatma Gandhi who said, “the Earth provides enough to satisfy every man’s need, but not every man’s greed”, the international community must evolve a framework for sustainable development that takes into account the growth aspirations of the developing world. India is committed to promote environmentally sustainable development strategies. A major programme for massive afforestation of degraded forest lands, “Green India”, is under active consideration of my Government.

Our Wild Life is our invaluable heritage. My Government took several corrective steps for sanctuaries on the basis of the recommendations of the Tiger Task Force. A Tiger Conservation Authority has been constituted as well as a Wildlife Crime Control Bureau. The Government proposes to strengthen activities for environment education and respect for wildlife through the school curriculum.

My Government recognizes the vital importance of the food processing sector in improving the incomes of the farming community and generating employment in rural areas. The Government’s Vision-2015 for the sector aims to triple the size of the food sector in the next decade. A National Institute of Food Technology, Entrepreneurship & Management is proposed to be set up. With a view to ensuring that our food sector matches up to the best global standards, my Government enacted an integrated food law called the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006, and a Food Safety Authority is being established shortly. This autonomous Authority will set standards and license the manufacture of food products which are healthy and safe.

The focus on “inclusive growth” has also meant giving special attention to the needs of the weaker sections of our society. My Government attaches great importance to social justice and to the social, educational and economic empowerment of Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, OBCs, Minorities, women and children. Education empowers by creating capabilities. Hence, my Government has extended scholarships to SC and ST students and widened access to higher education for OBCs. To empower the most deprived among the Scheduled Castes, my Government has launched a new “Self Employment Scheme for Rehabilitation of Manual Scavengers Scheme”.

My Government has made considerable progress in filling the backlog of unfilled reserved posts for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and is committed to filling up the rest.

At its last session, the Parliament enacted a historic bill to provide rights over land to Scheduled Tribes and forest dwellers on land historically in their occupation but classified as forests. This is a path-breaking legislation which will provide security to these sections, prevent their harassment and enhance their livelihoods. We have formulated a National Tribal Policy addressing important concerns of the tribal community.

My Government is committed to the welfare of the minorities, especially the most backward among them. A separate Ministry of Minority Affairs has been created to ensure focused attention on the welfare of all our minorities. A High Level Committee chaired by Justice Rajindar Sachar was appointed to report on the social, economic and educational status of the Muslim community of India. The report was tabled in Parliament on 30th November 2006 and will be discussed in this Session. We will take all measures necessary to ensure that the fruits of development are shared equitably and backward minority groups become active participants and beneficiaries of our growth processes. My Government is considering the formulation of a programme for those districts and towns that have the highest concentration of minority populations.

The Prime Minister's New 15-Point Programme for the Welfare of Minorities was adopted last year. The programme has identified certain important developmental schemes and created a mechanism to ensure that the benefits of these schemes flow equitably to the minority communities also. Certain minority communities continue to remain relatively backward, with a large number of out-of-school children, high dropout rates and low educational attainments. These require focused intervention. In addition to the existing schemes, my Government proposes to introduce comprehensive scholarship schemes from primary to post-graduate levels for eligible students belonging to the minorities. My Government firmly commits itself to equity and welfare of all sections of society.

To sustain the growth process we have to ensure energy security. Accelerated economic development and growing demand for commercial energy require a new paradigm of energy security for India. There is urgent need for a national consensus on energy pricing and distribution policies. My Government is conscious of the need to augment energy supplies from both conventional and renewable sources. The coal sector will continue to remain the mainstay of energy security for the country. Therefore, it is imperative that coal production is substantially increased in the coming years. A number of steps have been taken to achieve this objective. Simultaneously, my Government will encourage new investment in power generation. Competitive tariff bids have already been approved for setting

up of two Ultra Mega Power Projects and further efforts in this direction will continue. The tremendous hydropower potential in the country will also be harnessed with the cooperation and willing support of the State Governments concerned. My Government has taken important steps to help develop the full potential of civilian nuclear energy and of all sources of renewable energy, both for meeting energy needs and to address concerns on environment.

My Government has placed great emphasis on building world class infrastructure in our country. The National Highway Development Programme has been greatly expanded with an investment target of Rs. 227,000 crores. The Golden Quadrilateral is nearing completion. Work for construction of the North-South and East-West corridors has also been awarded. The Government has also approved 4-laning of around 4000 km of national highways and 6-laning of 6500 km of national highways, including the Golden Quadrilateral. My Government is implementing the Special Accelerated Road Development Programme for the North-East, keeping in view the urgent need to improve connectivity to the region.

My Government has succeeded in ensuring a turnaround of Indian Railways. Over the last 30 months, railway freight volumes have grown by 8-10 per cent and growth in passenger volumes has doubled. Container business has been opened up to private businesses. As a result of improved supply and demand management, rational utilization of capacity and a market-driven pricing policy, Indian Railways are once again on track. It is necessary that this momentum is maintained. For this, modernization and creation of additional infrastructure would be vital. Infrastructure development through public private partnerships will be promoted. There has been an encouraging response to the offer to allow private container trains. Preliminary work on the proposed Dedicated Rail Freight Corridor has begun. The project will provide the necessary infrastructure support for growth in container, coal and other mineral traffic. This project is proceeding on a fast track basis and a Special Purpose Vehicle called the Dedicated Freight Corridor Corporation of India Limited has been formed to implement the project.

The civil aviation sector has witnessed unprecedented growth in recent years. My Government has initiated the modernization of major airports in the country and liberalization of air services to cope with rapidly growing air traffic demand. Investment in airport development is on an upswing.

In order to keep pace with our fast increasing share of global trade, my Government has taken up a programme for massive capacity expansion of port infrastructure. An Indian maritime University is proposed to be set up in Chennai with regional campuses at Kolkata, Mumbai and Visakhapatnam. Stretches of Godavari and Mahanadi are also proposed to be declared as inland waterways.

My Government has made serious attempts to promote Public Private Partnerships as a strategy for building infrastructure such as roads, ports, airports and power generation. Such a strategy brings in additional investment which adds to limited public sector resources. Further, private sector efficiency results in lower costs, quicker completion of projects and better delivery of services. Substantial improvements can be seen in these sectors as a result of these efforts.

Honourable Members will be happy to learn that in 2006-07 the rate of growth of manufacturing sector output was estimated at close to 11 per cent. The performance of key sectors, like the automotive industry, textiles, pharmaceuticals, steel, petrochemicals, cement and so on has been impressive. We have clearly succeeded in re-energising domestic enterprise. The National Strategy for Manufacturing prepared by the National Manufacturing Competitiveness Council provides a basis for accelerated industrial and employment growth. An Automotive Mission Plan 2006–2016 has been prepared to provide the framework for the growth of the auto sector in India. The industrial sector has also benefited from increased inflows of foreign direct investment. Here too, FDI inflows have exceeded US \$ 10 billion this year and also exceeded FII inflows for the first time ever.

It is a matter of satisfaction that our textile industry has been able to generate considerable employment and promote exports and improve its performance in the post- Multi Fibre Agreement regime. A focused approach to helping weavers is in place with an increase in the number of cluster development centers, more yarn depots, support to technology upgradation, health and life insurance programmes for weavers and a new “Handloom Mark” for branding handloom products.

My Government has restructured the Kendriya Khadi and Village Industries Commission. The Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Rural Industries has been set up at Wardha to further promote rural industries which provide gainful employment to a very large section of our rural population. The Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises Development Act, 2006 has become operational. This will facilitate the promotion, development and enhancement of competitiveness of these enterprises. My Government is committed to providing a minimum social safety net for workers in the unorganized sector and a draft law for this purpose is under consideration. My Government will launch a massive skill development programme to improve the skills and capabilities of our work force through a Mission on Vocational Education and other initiatives. This is essential if we have to take advantage of the demographic dividend that we are going to have through an increasingly youthful workforce.

Our Information Technology sector continues to develop and remain globally competitive. The year 2007 will be the Year of Broadband. We are committed to bridging the digital divide by providing broadband coverage

throughout the country. My Government is encouraging the growth of the electronic hardware industry and the semiconductor industry. My Government will take forward the National Identity Card Project under the National e-Governance Plan for nationwide roll-out in a phased manner so as to ensure better delivery of services to our citizens.

Tourism has enormous potential and we are already seeing its benefits. In recent months, there has been an impressive growth in foreign tourist arrivals, foreign exchange earnings and employment generation. However, given the potential of tourism and India's rich heritage and diversity, we can do much more to increase the number of domestic as well as foreign tourists. Apart from improving the quality of tourism infrastructure, my Government is encouraging public private partnerships in tourism across the country.

To sustain our efforts in the advanced fields of modern science and technology we must increase the number of scientists and improve the quality of Indian science. My Government is deeply concerned about the inadequate enrolment of students in basic sciences and that Indian science is lagging behind other newly industrializing economies. India needs a new thrust in the field of science and technology. There is also a need to energise our university system and enable it to respond to the pressures of the market so that it can retain and attract talent.

A Vision for the development of an empowered S&T base by 2015 has been prepared. Steps will be taken to attract talent, rejuvenate university research, enable women scientists to re-enter careers in science, strengthen technology business incubation processes, promote excellence in research, engage private sector in R&D and create greater science awareness and a scientific temper among our people. My Government intends to increase the financial allocation for science and technology from less than 1 per cent of GDP to 2 per cent of GDP.

Our scientists have distinguished themselves in the fields of nuclear energy, space, bio-technology, genetics and pharmaceuticals. This year has witnessed impressive achievements in our space programme. The recent ninth consecutive successful launch of PSLV, placing four satellites precisely in predetermined orbit, and the Space Capsule Recovery Experiment as also the progress being made in preparation for the Chandrayaan Mission testify to the well-deserved reputation for excellence that ISRO and our space programme enjoy. The Department of Atomic Energy, which is engaged in harnessing nuclear technology to produce safe, economic and eco-friendly energy using indigenous resources, has brought on stream the indigenously developed 540 MWe Units 3 & 4 at Tarapur. We are committed to the development of our indigenous three stage nuclear programme.

My Government is paying special attention to the modernization of the police forces, security forces and intelligence agencies. A focused and

holistic attempt to deal with the challenges of internal security in the North-Eastern Region, in Jammu and Kashmir and in regions affected by naxalite activity is yielding dividends. My Government recognizes the challenge posed by terrorism and extremism and has been resolute in dealing with it. While our security and intelligence agencies have successfully foiled many attempts by terrorist groups to strike terror, there have been tragic, dastardly and cowardly acts of terrorism, as in Mumbai and Assam and, most recently, in the attack on Samjhauta Express. My Government is dealing firmly with the challenge posed.

While ensuring law and order and internal security in the North-East, Jammu and Kashmir and naxalite affected regions, my Government will remain focused on the overall social, economic and cultural development of these parts of our country, aimed at ensuring the active participation of all sections of our society in the national mainstream. My Government will continue to impart a healing touch both in Jammu and Kashmir and in the North-East, while maintaining utmost vigil against terrorist and extremist forces. My Government attaches the highest importance to ensuring that all agencies respect basic human rights, even in the most trying circumstances.

There is growing public concern about urban crime and violence, especially involving children and women. My Government is committed to making our police forces more sensitive to the concerns and needs of our citizens, and more efficient and humane in responding to them.

My Government is committed to judicial reforms aimed at speeding up the justice delivery system and ensuring greater efficiency, transparency and integrity in our judicial system, especially where it impacts on the welfare of our citizens. A Bill for setting up the National Judicial Council for greater accountability and transparency in the judiciary has already been tabled in Parliament. The Grameen Nyayalay Bill for setting up people-friendly local courts with flexibility of procedures for speedier disposal of petty cases, is on the anvil.

The Defence of the country is an unshakeable commitment of my Government. At a time when new and unconventional threats to national security are increasingly visible, even while the strategic environment continues to be fragile, the Government shall maintain focus on strengthening the Defence of the country. We shall provide our Armed Forces with the best possible means to do so. My Government is investing in the modernization of our Armed Forces and of our indigenous Defence industry, to make them fully capable of dealing with existing and emerging challenges. Our Armed Forces have also been engaged in cooperative exercises with many partner countries, and their performance has invariably come in for praise. The nation is grateful to them for their contribution. The welfare of our ex-servicemen is a priority of my Government.

My Government's foreign policy has been shaped by the desire to create an external environment conducive to peace and stability in the region, ensuring our accelerated economic development and the safeguarding of our national security. In pursuit of this enlightened national interest, my Government has undertaken a comprehensive engagement with the world—with all major powers, with our extended neighbourhood and with our partners in the developing world and the Non-Aligned Movement.

Recently in February, we signed a new India-Bhutan Friendship Treaty in place of the earlier one of 1949. The new Treaty updates the legal basis of our bilateral relations to reflect the contemporary reality. It would enable us to further strengthen and enhance our relationship to a higher level to meet the aspirations of our two peoples. We have reiterated our full support to the restoration of multi-party democracy in Nepal and the success of the peace process. As a friend and neighbour, India is interested in a democratic, stable and prosperous Bangladesh. We have conveyed at high political levels to Sri Lankan leaders the need for a negotiated, political settlement to the ethnic issue that is acceptable to all sections of Sri Lankan society. It is a matter of satisfaction that the dialogue process with Pakistan is progressing steadily. The Composite Dialogue, the Joint Commission and the Anti-terrorism Institutional Mechanism have provided a structural framework within which all major issues are being discussed. We remain concerned over infiltration and cross-border terrorism, and the success of the dialogue process is predicated on Pakistan fulfilling its commitment not to permit any territory under its control to be used to support terrorism in any manner.

In April this year, India will host the 14th SAARC Summit. As the SAARC Chair, India will work for ensuring that SAARC becomes a vehicle for peace and progress in our region. The people of South Asia have a shared heritage and a shared destiny. We are particularly happy that Afghanistan will join as SAARC's eighth Member at the forthcoming Summit. The importance of India-Afghanistan relations was underlined at the second Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan in November 2006 co-hosted by India and Afghanistan.

The transformation in the India-US bilateral relationship has resulted in wide-ranging engagement across many fields including Defence and security issues, counter-terrorism, science and technology, health, trade, space, energy—including nuclear energy, agriculture, maritime cooperation and environment. Members are aware of our efforts to arrive at an agreement with the US on civil nuclear energy cooperation within the parameters laid out in the July 18, 2005 India-US Joint Statement and the March 2, 2006 Separation Plan. India shares a strategic partnership with the European Union, which covers a wide range of areas including trade and investment, culture, science and technology. Negotiations are to be launched on a broad-based India-EU trade and investment agreement.

The recent landmark visit of President Putin as the Chief Guest at our Republic Day highlighted the broad-based cooperation that marks India's long-standing relationship with Russia. The development of the Brahmos missile through a joint venture between our countries demonstrates the mutual benefits of our cooperation. The agreements reached during the visit will significantly expand our cooperation in the fields of energy, high technology, Defence and space. The strategic partnership between India and Russia is poised to deepen even further.

The visit of Chinese President Hu Jintao to India in November 2006 strengthened the process of sustained and comprehensive development of India-China relations. The two countries agreed on a 10-pronged strategy to add greater content to our strategic partnership and to develop an action oriented agenda for the future.

India's "Look East Policy" has contributed to increasing engagement with ASEAN and our East Asian neighbourhood. India's participation in the East Asian and India-ASEAN Summits has rejuvenated our ancient links with the region and strengthened economic ties. Singapore, China, Japan, Korea and other countries have shown great interest in the "Nalanda Project" which seeks to create an Asian centre for inter-civilizational dialogue in India.

India's relations with Japan have entered a new era with the launch of a Global and Strategic Partnership last year. A Special Economic Partnership Initiative will promote investment, especially in infrastructure, power generation and setting up of an industrial corridor. Negotiations for a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement are underway. We look forward to the visit of Prime Minister Abe later this year.

At the Non-Aligned Summit last year, India worked with the other members to bring development to the center of the international agenda. My Government is actively pursuing strengthened relations with countries of West Asia and the Persian Gulf region. We would like to see durable peace and stability in the region. We have called on all parties in West Asia to renounce violence and seek a comprehensive solution through peaceful negotiations taking into account the legitimate interest of all concerned. My Government has also reiterated its desire to see a stable, peaceful, prosperous, united and democratic Iraq. The visits to India of the Emir of Kuwait and the King of Jordan following that of HM the King of Saudi Arabia last year, and the recent visit of the External Affairs Minister to Iran highlight the importance attached to our enduring interests in this region, vital for energy security and employment opportunities for Indians. India has also been working to further deepen and diversify its relations with countries in Africa and Latin America. India's relations with South Africa and Brazil received a fillip last year. The historic India-Brazil-South Africa Summit brought together the largest democracies of Asia, Africa and Latin America revitalizing our commitment to South-South cooperation. The Pan

African e-Network which is being implemented with our support has provided a unique platform to promote high tech collaboration between Africa and India.

My Government has paid special attention to the protection and welfare of overseas Indian workers, especially those in West Asia and the Gulf. We admire their spirit of enterprise and would like to see them more actively engaged in India's development. The Overseas Citizen of India Card scheme has addressed a long-standing demand of persons of Indian origin. We are now working on a proposal to establish a PIO University in India. My Government will take steps to encourage a "reverse brain drain" so that some of the brightest and talented children of India return to their Motherland.

India has welcomed the resumption of negotiations across all areas of the Doha Round in the World Trade Organization (WTO) with a view to reaching an early positive conclusion. In order to break the impasse, developed countries must make meaningful offers to reduce the large trade-distorting subsidies provided to their agriculture sector. At the same time, the role of agriculture as a major source of livelihood in developing countries makes it imperative that governments are enabled to mitigate risks associated with price declines, price volatility and predatory competition facing their low-income and vulnerable farmers through appropriate policy flexibilities. Equally important is increased market access for products and services of export interest to developing countries to ensure that the Doha Round is indeed a Development Round.

Honourable Members, our country is on the threshold of a new era of development. The sense of confidence of our working people, our professionals and entrepreneurs and their dynamism give us reasons to be hopeful. However, my Government recognizes that for development to be meaningful it must be inclusive. To this end, it is necessary to revitalise our rural economy and address issues of widening rural-urban disparities. The reform of Government, making it more transparent and responsive, and the elimination of the cancer of corruption are necessary elements of any strategy of inclusive growth. The Right to Information Act is one means of empowering our citizens. The more powerful instrument in their hands is their right to have their voice heard and their grievances redressed in these august premises of our Parliament. Eternal vigilance, as it has been said, is the price of democracy. You, Honourable Members, are here as the representatives of our people. It is incumbent upon you to ensure through the great institutions of our democracy that the people of our country are the recipients of better governance. I hope you will put to good use the power at your disposal in the interests of our people and our nation. I convey my best wishes for the purposeful conduct of the proceedings of Parliament this year.

Jai Hind.

Smt. PRATIBHA DEVISINGH PATIL



ADDRESS TO PARLIAMENT—25 FEBRUARY 2008

Lok Sabha	—	Fourteenth Lok Sabha
Session	—	First Session of the year
President of India	—	Smt. Pratibha Devisingh Patil
Vice-President of India	—	Mohammad Hamid Ansari
Prime Minister of India	—	Dr. Manmohan Singh
Speaker, Lok Sabha	—	Shri Somnath Chatterjee

HONOURABLE MEMBERS,

I convey my best wishes to all of you and to our people. The Parliament convenes at a time when the economy is on the move. My Government remains firmly committed to ensuring that the economic growth process is socially inclusive, regionally balanced and environmentally sustainable. The measures taken by my Government have created the necessary architecture of inclusive growth.

Several programmes have been launched to make the growth process socially inclusive and regionally balanced. These include Bharat Nirman, aimed at bridging the rural-urban gap in development; the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act to soften the sharp edges of poverty and offer basic livelihood security; Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, for giving equal opportunity to our children in realizing their potential, further strengthened through a universal mid day meal programme; the National Rural Health Mission, offering the rural poor access to basic health care; and, the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission, promoting socially inclusive and economically manageable urban development. To make the growth process more participatory, responsive and accountable, Government has sought to strengthen panchayati raj institutions and has enshrined in law a Right to Information Act.

My Government's strategy of "inclusive growth" has been enabled by, and has in turn contributed to, the acceleration of economic growth. For the first time in history, the Indian economy has grown at close to 9.0 per cent per annum for four years in a row. The historically high investment rate, of over 35 per cent of GDP, and savings rate, of over 34 per cent of GDP, symbolize a new dynamism in our economy. I am confident that the creativity, enterprise and hard work of our young people will be able to sustain these high rates in the years to come.

This performance is all the more creditable against the background of high international oil prices and rising commodity prices, including for food. It will continue to be the endeavour of my Government to sustain growth while keeping prices under check. My Government has endeavoured to insulate the Indian consumer from these global inflationary trends. World crude oil prices have almost doubled in the past two years to reach an all-time high of US \$ 100 per barrel, yet my Government has managed to moderate the impact on the domestic consumer.

The architecture of inclusive growth is further consolidated through the Eleventh Five Year Plan. The Plan has set a target of 9 per cent GDP growth for the country as a whole to be achieved in a manner that would provide equality of opportunity for quality education, for employment and for enterprise, free people from the burden of ill-health and eliminate discrimination.

The share of the Central Gross Budgetary Support allocation to key sectors is being substantially increased. The outlay on education goes up from 7.68 per cent of the Central Gross Budgetary Support in the 10th Plan to over 19 per cent in the 11th Plan. The outlays on agriculture, health and rural development have been tripled. Taken together with education, these sectors account for more than half of the Central Gross Budgetary Support as compared to less than 1/3rd in the 10th Plan. This is a major structural shift in plan priorities, aimed at reducing disparities and empowering people.

The Plan hopes to raise the total annual investment in infrastructure from 5 per cent of GDP to 9 per cent. Public sector investment will continue to play an important role in infrastructure development supplemented by private investment wherever feasible. My Government will augment the skills and resources needed for enabling marginalized groups and regions to benefit from the processes of growth.

My Government has been paying special attention to the welfare of our farmers and has reversed the decline in public investment in agriculture. The target set in the National Common Minimum Programme of doubling agricultural credit in three years has been substantially exceeded. The target set for 2007-08, of Rs. 2,25,000 crore, has already been achieved by December 2007. Government has taken up the revival of the Rural Cooperative Credit structure. Government had appointed an Expert Group on Agricultural Indebtedness under the chairmanship of Prof R. Radhakrishna and its report has since been received. The recommendations of the Group are under Government's active consideration.

To bring the "financially excluded" population within the formal banking system, banks have been directed to utilize the services of self-help groups (SHGs), micro finance institutions and other civil society organizations to this end. Over 5 lakh self-help groups are being assisted under the

Swarna Jayanti Gram Swarojgar Yojana and 52 per cent of the swarojgaris are women. Government has also introduced the Micro Financial Sector (Development and Regulation) Bill in Parliament. The Swarna Jayanti Shehari Rozgar Yojana is providing opportunities for skill development and employment for the urban poor, especially women.

My Government has taken two major initiatives for the agriculture sector in recent times: the National Food Security Mission and the Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana. The National Food Security Mission has been set up to enhance the production of rice, wheat and pulses by 10, 8 and 2 million tonnes respectively during the 11th Plan period. The *Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana*, with an outlay of Rs. 25,000 crore for farm revival, aims at stepping up agricultural growth to 4 per cent in the 11th Plan by incentivising States to invest more in the sector.

With the efforts of my Government, there has been a substantial increase in agricultural production. The combined resources for Agriculture, Irrigation and Water Resources including a major Flood Management Programme will go up from Rs. 46,131 crores in the 10th Plan to Rs. 1,38,548 crore in the 11th Plan. My Government effected an unprecedented steep hike of over 50 per cent in the Minimum Support Price (MSP) for wheat and about 33 per cent for paddy in the last four years.

My Government aims at tripling the size of the processed food sector by 2015, and doubling its share in global trade. To achieve these objectives, 30 Mega Food Parks and an Integrated Cold Chain will be established. A National Institute of Food Technology Entrepreneurship and Management is being set up at Kundli as a knowledge institution for the sector.

My Government has placed great emphasis on the empowerment of Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Classes through increased access to education. Close to Rs. 900 crore have been provided for scholarships for about 30 lakh children belonging to the Scheduled Castes and an amount of over Rs. 225 crore has been provided for more than 10 lakh tribal children. The Rajiv Gandhi National Fellowship and schemes for special coaching for Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe students are being actively implemented. The Indira Gandhi National Tribal University will be founded at Amarkantak in Madhya Pradesh to promote studies and research in art, culture, tradition, languages, customs and medicinal systems of our tribal communities, besides promoting educational opportunities for tribal students.

The Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act is a landmark legislation aimed at correcting the historical deprivations of the tribal and traditional forest dwellers and restoring to them their rights on land. State Governments have been requested to implement the provisions of this Act expeditiously.

With a view to provide social security to workers in the unorganized sector, who constitute a majority of our workforce, my Government has introduced the Unorganised Sector Social Security Bill, 2007. The Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana to provide health cover of Rs. 30,000 for every unorganized sector worker living below poverty line and for the family, the Aam Aadmi Bima Yojana to provide relief to about 1 crore families of rural landless labour in the first year itself and the Indira Gandhi National Old Age Pension Scheme, entitling those below poverty line and above 65 years to a monthly pension of Rs. 200, have been launched. Government has also enhanced the National Floor Level Minimum Wage from Rs. 66 to Rs. 80 per day. The eligibility limit for payment of bonus to workers has been raised from Rs. 3,500 to Rs. 10,000 per month. Workers employed by building contractors have also been made eligible for payment of bonus.

My Government has put in place a National Rehabilitation and Resettlement Policy with effect from October 2007 to address the long standing grievances of people displaced from their land by development projects. The policy provides for basic minimum requirements to be fulfilled in all the projects leading to involuntary displacement. In order to give statutory backing to the policy, a Rehabilitation and Resettlement Bill, 2007 and a Land Acquisition (Amendment) Bill, 2007 have also been introduced in Parliament.

Inclusive growth demands inclusive governance. The key instrument for this is panchayati raj. Government has strengthened panchayati raj through untied funds to support local area development planning in addition to re-orienting delivery systems to work through panchayats. To address the problem of regional imbalances, my Government is helping less developed regions through the Backward Regions Grant Fund.

To provide access to justice, both civil and criminal, to our less privileged citizens at their doorstep, my Government has brought forward a legislation to establish Gram Nyayalayas.

The Prime Minister's New 15 Point Programme launched by my Government aims at ensuring that benefits of the development programmes flow equitably to the minorities. Certain proportion of development projects will be located in minority concentration areas and, wherever possible, 15 per cent of targets and outlays under various schemes would be earmarked for the minorities. To improve the economic and educational status of the minorities, several programmes have been launched based on the recommendations of the Sachar Committee Report. The 11th Plan provides Rs. 800 crore for Merit-cum-Means based scholarship for professional courses, nearly Rs. 3300 crore for post and pre-matric scholarship programmes for minority students and Rs. 3780 crore for the development of 90 minority concentration districts. The proportion of priority sector lending going to

the minority communities will be stepped up from the present 9 per cent to 15 per cent. These initiatives are important pillars of the architecture of inclusive growth.

“Women hold up half the sky”, it is said. Empowerment of women through female literacy is our single biggest challenge in the social sector. The National Literacy Mission will make acceleration of female literacy its key goal. We have moved closer to complete Legal Equality for Women in all spheres by removing discriminatory legislation, amending existing legislation and by enacting new legislation that gives women equal rights of ownership of assets like houses and land. Amendments are being considered to the Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act, 1986, the Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961, and the Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act, 1971. Laws pertaining to bonded labour, plantation labour, factory and migrant labour will also be made gender sensitive. Removal of age-old prejudices, particularly bias against women in society is the biggest challenge to achieve equality. My Government is committed to strictly enforce laws relating to dowry, female infanticide, female foeticide and human trafficking and to realize a gender-neutral India.

To ensure proper enforcement of children’s rights, a National Commission for Protection of Child Rights has been set up. Government proposes to launch a series of measures designed to address the serious issue of malnutrition among a large number of our children.

Our sportspersons are increasingly making their mark in a range of games. Preparations for the Commonwealth Games 2010 are in full swing. My Government will also launch the “Panchayat Yuva Khel aur Krida Abhiyan” to promote sports and nurture talents at the block and village levels.

Hon’ble Members, as I mentioned earlier, the architecture of inclusive governance is defined by my Government’s “flagship programmes”. To strengthen the safety net provided by Government for those seeking employment in rural areas, it has been decided to expand the coverage of the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act from 330 districts to cover all rural districts of the country from April 2008.

Under this Act, 2.7 crore people were provided employment till the middle of January 2008 during the current financial year. Transparency has been made critical to programme implementation through social audit and for the first time even muster rolls are put up on the Internet. The programme has been courting public scrutiny to ensure that benefits flow to those for whom they are intended. We are confident that with the active support of State Governments, Panchayati Raj Institutions and civil society collaboration, the NREGA will achieve its ambitious goal.

The Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan for elementary education is being strengthened with expansion of the mid day meal programme for children to the Upper Primary level in 3479 educationally backward blocks of the

country. My Government seeks to provide universal access to secondary education by supporting 6000 new high quality model schools, with one school in each block in the country to set standards of excellence that can be emulated. Higher education will receive massive investment in the 11th Plan with 30 new Central Universities, 370 new colleges in educationally backward districts, and expansion in the number of technical institutions with 8 new Indian Institutes of Technology, 20 new Indian Institutes of Information Technology, 7 new Indian Institutes of Management, and 2 more Indian Institutes of Science Education and Research in addition to the three started at Pune, Kolkata and Mohali. The National Skill Development Mission will ensure employability of our youth and address the skill deficit presently felt in some sectors of our economy.

The National Rural Health Mission has been expanding the public health infrastructure and services in the rural areas of our country. So far 1.38 lakh sub centres, 22,669 primary health centres, 3,947 community health centres and 540 district hospitals have been supported with resources under this Mission. Nearly 5 lakh ASHAs (Accredited Social Health Activists) and Link Health Workers are now in position in our villages. Rural sanitation coverage has improved significantly from 22 per cent of rural households in 2001 to about 50 per cent today through enhanced peoples' participation incentivised by the Nirmal Gram Puraskar.

Bharat Nirman has sought to connect rural India to growth opportunities through connectivity to roads, electricity and telephones. From 2005 till the end of 2007, 17,000 habitations have been connected by all weather roads, over 44,000 villages have been connected to electricity, 40 lakh houses have been constructed for the rural poor, 2 lakh habitations have been provided drinking water supply and more than 36 lakh hectares have been provided irrigation. During this period the target for telephone connectivity to all villages has almost been met, with only 14,000 villages remaining to be connected as of December 2007. Rural tele-density has improved dramatically.

The Jawaharlal Nehru Urban Renewal Mission has been widely welcomed by States and cities covered by it. Projects worth Rs. 25,287 crore are under implementation in 51 cities across 26 States. Under its Basic Services component, more than 8 lakh houses have been sanctioned for the urban poor. The Central Government will promote affordable Housing through the National Housing and Habitat Policy.

Rapid modernization and development of our infrastructure have been a priority for my Government. Various measures, including the allotment of coal blocks with the capacity to support 68,000 MW of power generation have been taken already. Nine sites have been identified in nine States for setting up coal-based Ultra Mega Power Projects (UMPP) with capacity of 4000 MW each, and work has started on the Sasan and Mundhra projects.

Modern and environment friendly technology will be used in these plants. Units 3 and 4 of the Tarapur Atomic Power Station, India's first 540 MWe nuclear power plant, were dedicated to the Nation in 2007, constituting a major milestone in our indigenous nuclear power programme.

Required policy initiatives are being taken to promote investment for the development of all sources of energy including hydro-power, other renewable energy and nuclear energy. National Policies on bio-fuels and renewable energy are being finalized. The Chief Ministers' Conference on Power Sector endorsed various initiatives aimed at capacity addition, economic pricing and power sector reform.

My Government has placed great emphasis on enhancing energy security through rapid exploration of domestic oil and gas reserves, combined with acquisitions abroad. Significant oil and gas reserves have been discovered in 15 blocks. The first commercial production of Coal Bed Methane began recently, and the first deepwater natural gas production will also commence in this year. Another 57 blocks are being offered through international competitive bidding under NELP-VII. Our oil companies are actively acquiring blocks overseas. The Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulatory Authority has been made operational. The Rajiv Gandhi Institute of Petroleum Technology has been set up to meet the shortfall of trained technical manpower in the petroleum sector.

A new Coal Distribution Policy has been notified to meet the full requirements of the defence, railway, power and fertilizer sectors. The increase of over 20 per cent in the royalty on coal and lignite will benefit the producing States. A new Mineral Policy, which will greatly expand the investment and employment opportunities in mining, is under finalisation.

The six-laning of 6,500 kms of existing National Highways has been approved. Under NHDP Phase VI, 1000 kms of fully access controlled expressways will be constructed. Government has also approved widening and improvement of National and State highways in the North-Eastern region to ensure better connectivity to all the 85 district headquarters in the region. The traffic handled by the major ports has increased by over 13 per cent in the current year. With the approval of the new Model Concession Agreement for private sector participation in the major ports and revised guidelines for tariff setting for projects under the Public-Private Participation (PPP) model, investment in this sector is expected to get a fillip during the coming year.

My Government has achieved a major turnaround in the financial and technical performance of the Indian Railways. To further improve rail connectivity and infrastructure development, 22 stations located at metropolitan centres and major tourist centres will be developed through the Public-Private-Partnership route. The Mumbai-Delhi-Kolkata Dedicated

Freight Corridor will be a landmark in railway infrastructure, and will also support massive industrialization alongside.

The civil aviation sector is witnessing an unprecedented boom with both passenger and cargo traffic increasing at an exponential rate. Government has given priority to upgradation and modernization of Airport infrastructure and to increase availability of skilled personnel in the sector. New international airports at Bangalore* and Hyderabad will be inaugurated this year. Construction of new terminals at New Delhi and other Metros is underway. Air connectivity to different parts of the country, including North-East has been increased.

The Indian telecom sector has emerged as the fastest growing in the world with the addition of over 7 million subscribers per month. A scheme has been launched to provide support for setting up and managing telecom infrastructure in rural areas to affordably and quickly expand mobile telecom services.

My Government has identified growth of electronics and IT hardware manufacturing as a thrust area. A special scheme has been announced to encourage semiconductor fabrication and other micro and nano technology manufacturing industries. The National e-Governance Plan, to make Government transparent and citizen-friendly, is at an advanced stage of implementation all over the country. Use of information technology in about 13,000 district and subordinate courts across the country has been initiated. An Integrated National Knowledge Network to provide gigabit broadband connectivity will be set up to connect all institutions of higher learning and research in the country.

The climate for industrial development in our country continues to improve. To ensure that Indian industry generates more employment and becomes more globally competitive, Government has tasked the National Manufacturing Competitiveness Council to suggest appropriate policies. The competitive position of Indian industry, especially in sectors like steel and metallurgy, textiles, automobiles and auto components, pharmaceuticals and bio-technology, petrochemicals and cement, is stronger than ever before. India's merchandise exports have shown a healthy annual growth at the rate of over 25 per cent from US \$ 84 billion in 2004-05 to US \$ 126.4 billion in 2006-07. A stable policy framework and continuous effort by the Government to reduce trade barriers and transaction costs have created a favourable environment for international trade.

My Government has placed great emphasis on ensuring a turnaround in the performance of our Public Sector Undertakings. Revival packages have been approved for more than 25 sick and loss making companies. The Net

* Now known as Bengaluru.

Profit of Central PSUs has shown a healthy growth of over 17 per cent last year. Profitability of public sector steel companies has gone up substantially from Rs. 5,373 crore in 2003-04 to Rs. 15,567 crore in 2006-07, energizing companies like Steel Authority of India Limited to go in for major expansion plans.

The Special Economic Zones promoted by Government have already provided direct employment to about 100,000 persons, with indirect employment estimated at twice as much. They have attracted investment of over Rs. 50,000 crores, and are expected to generate exports of Rs. 67,000 crores this year.

My Government is committed to the promotion of our Textile Industry. A technology mission on textiles will be implemented during the 11th Five Year Plan. Four Centres of excellence will be set up in key segments like Meditech, Geotech, Agritech and Buildtech. The Technology Upgradation Fund Scheme has been extended for the 11th Plan.

My Government has taken various measures to promote Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises. This sector is vital to employment generation, entrepreneurship development and balanced regional development, and Government will continue to provide financial, infrastructural and marketing support to it.

Government has placed great emphasis on science and technology development, substantially increasing financial support to S&T in the 11th Plan. A Nano Technology Mission has been launched.

The Indian space programme continued its march towards achieving self-reliance in space technology. The indigenously developed cryogenic upper stage of the GSLV was successfully tested on November 15, 2007. The INSAT-4CR, using our own Geo-synchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle and INSAT-4B were both launched in 2007. Our space programme has enabled us to extend tele-medicine, tele-education, tele-communications and other services both at home and abroad. A new Indian Institute of Space Technology has been established to build upon these successes. India's first unmanned Lunar Mission 'Chandrayan-I' is scheduled for launch later this year.

My Government acted with urgency on the issue of climate change and set up a Prime Minister's Council on Climate Change to plan and implement appropriate strategies for mitigating and adapting to climate change. A comprehensive National Action Plan on Climate Change is under preparation. India is willing to ensure that its per capita emissions shall at no time exceed the average per capita emissions of developed countries. At the Bali Conference on Climate Change, India constructively engaged with the international community to launch a comprehensive process on long-term cooperative action to deal with this issue in accordance with the provisions

and principles of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. The River Conservation Programme will be revamped to focus on cleaning of major rivers. An Earth Science Organisation Council has been created to guide policies of the newly created Ministry of Earth Sciences. A state-of-the-art Tsunami Warning System has been commissioned.

On the occasion of the 150th anniversary of the First War of Indian Independence, the Red Fort was added to UNESCO's list of World Heritage Sites. I am happy to note that the sacred "*Rigveda*" was included in the "Memory of the World" Register last year.

Government has focused on strengthening All India Radio and Doordarshan services in J&K and the North-East. The Urdu Channel of Doordarshan has commenced 24x7 services. Frequency Modulated Radio Channels have seen a huge expansion with 152 channels already operating and expected to grow to 266 soon. Community radio has been given a major boost through a new policy. The Indian Entertainment and Media industry including sectors like Print, Television, Radio, Film and Entertainment, is witnessing huge growth, contributing to large employment generation.

Tourism has high potential for generating both income and employment across the country. The "Incredible India" campaign has given a thrust to tourism in India, with foreign tourist arrivals touching 5 million for the first time. Foreign exchange earnings from tourism have touched US \$ 12 billion in 2007.

The overall internal security situation remains under control. My Government is fully alive to the threat of terrorism and Left-wing extremism. The entire nation stood as one in condemning inhuman acts of terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir, Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh and Assam. Government has been resolute in trying to stamp out Left-wing extremism. The Conference of Chief Ministers on Internal Security underscored the importance of Centre and the States working together to fight the menace of extremism and terrorism. Government is helping States affected by Left-wing extremism both on the internal security and the development and social empowerment fronts. Modernization of the police and security forces and of intelligence gathering systems is receiving high attention of Government.

In the face of extreme acts of violence against innocent people, including those near religious places, the people of India have stood as one in rejecting the politics of hatred. Their refusal to be provoked demonstrates once again the innate humanism of our people and their commitment to the unity and integrity of our nation, to our constitutional values of pluralism and secularism. It is largely due to this that an environment of communal harmony and amity prevails across the nation. My Government will remain ever vigilant against the machinations of any anti-social and anti-national

groups seeking to disrupt law and order, communal harmony and the unity and integrity of our Republic.

My government, working with the State Governments, is pursuing a multi-pronged strategy to ensure peace, normalcy and development in Jammu and Kashmir. The Prime Minister's Reconstruction Plan is being implemented vigorously with focus on improving connectivity and infrastructure, including power, and generating employment. As part of this Plan a Housing Project for Kashmiri Migrants is under implementation in the State.

You are aware that my Government had held a series of Round Table Conferences with all segments of population in Jammu and Kashmir. These deliberations reflect a wide-ranging civic and political consensus on political and developmental issues. Government is working on a holistic approach aimed at confidence building amongst all sections of society, easier travel across the Line of Control, better governance and closer attention to the aspirations of the people of Jammu and Kashmir.

Improving connectivity, expanding infrastructure and generating employment have been the focus of my Government's initiatives in the North-Eastern Region. The North-Eastern Council has been collaborating with the Airports Authority of India to upgrade 18 airports in the North-Eastern Region. Greenfield Airports will be built in Assam and Arunachal Pradesh. The North-Eastern Council has taken the initiative to establish a dedicated airline for the region. Special Accelerated Roads Development Programme in North-East (SARDP-NE), with a funding of Rs. 43,000 crore, has been formulated to construct, improve and widen roads in the region. A Trans-Arunachal Pradesh Highway will be constructed across the length of the State. A comprehensive plan for improving availability of power in the region is in the making. Broadband and wireless connectivity is being further enhanced to improve communications networks. New initiatives in education include setting up of new universities and other institutions of national importance. Industrial development is being promoted through the North-East Industrial and Investment Promotion Policy. Work on the Assam Gas Cracker Project, which will further contribute to the industrial development of the region, has started.

Government attaches great importance to the achievements of the People of Indian Origin in different parts of the world, and their contributions to the Nation. In recognition of their contributions, several initiatives have been taken up. The first People of Indian Origin University is on the anvil. To tap the resources of the Indian diaspora it has been decided to establish the Prime Minister's Global Advisory Council of People of Indian Origin. To facilitate potential migrant workers and help those overseas workers who are in distress, an "Overseas Workers Resource Centre" and the "Council for Promotion of Overseas Employment" are being set up.

My Government has taken several steps to promote the modernization and welfare of our armed forces and ensure defence preparedness of the country. Our armed forces safeguard our frontiers, help in maintaining peace and security in insurgency affected areas and provide valuable aid to the civil authority in disaster management and in providing required relief and rehabilitation. The Armed Forces Tribunal Act, 2007, would provide a meaningful opportunity to service personnel for judicial review of Court Martial decisions and grievances relating to service matters. The successful launch of Agni-III Missile and the induction of BrahMos Missile System into our armed forces constitute major milestones in the upgradation of our defence technology.

The foreign policy of my Government seeks to promote an environment of peace and stability in our region and in the world to facilitate accelerated socio-economic development and safeguard our national security. Government has made vigorous efforts to develop friendly and cooperative relations with all our neighbours and to strengthen engagement with major powers. Since the 14th SAARC summit in New Delhi in April 2007, India has made every effort to strengthen SAARC, moving it from a declaratory to an implementation phase. Progress has been registered towards the establishment of the SAARC Development Fund, the South Asia University and the SAARC Food Bank.

Our goal remains a peaceful, stable and prosperous neighbourhood. India is committed to extending full support to Nepal's development during its political transition. India also stands ready to assist the Nepalese people's choices in the transition to a democratic, stable and prosperous State. As a close and friendly neighbour, India would prefer to see a peaceful, stable and liberal democratic Bangladesh. It is our hope that the people of Bangladesh will be able to exercise their will through free and fair elections for restoration of full democracy. There has been an unfortunate increase in violence in Sri Lanka. We are clear that there can be no military solution to the ethnic issue. It is necessary to find a negotiated political settlement within the framework of a united Sri Lanka that is acceptable to all sections of society. We will continue to help Afghanistan in whatever manner we can in its reconstruction and in building a pluralistic and prosperous society. We are committed to peace, friendship and good neighbourly relations with Pakistan. A stable and prosperous Pakistan, at peace with itself, is in the interests of our entire region. When conditions permit we will resume our dialogue process with Pakistan, aimed at building mutual confidence and resolving outstanding issues, premised on an atmosphere free from terror and violence. We hope that Myanmar's on-going national reconciliation and political reform process and the recognition of the need to expedite the process will make it more inclusive so as to ensure peaceful and stable democratization.

India attaches high importance to its bilateral relations with the People's Republic of China, with which we have a Strategic and Cooperative Partnership for Peace and Prosperity. This partnership has been further enhanced and given a global dimension with the signing of a Shared Vision for the 21st Century during the visit of the Prime Minister to China last month. Peace and tranquility have been maintained on our border with China and both countries are determined that this should continue.

My Government has made rapid improvements in our relationships with the major powers of the world. Our relations with the United States of America have improved in the past few years, and now span a wide spectrum including high technology, space, agriculture, education and trade and other linkages. It is our hope that civil nuclear cooperation with the USA and other friendly countries will become possible. Government has been working to further develop the time-tested friendship with Russia. The visit of Prime Minister to Moscow in November 2007 contributed to further strengthening our strategic partnership with Russia. We attach importance to our relations with the member states of the EU individually as well as collectively. The 8th India-EU Summit was held in New Delhi in November 2007. Most recently Prime Minister of UK visited India and the President of France was the Chief Guest at our Republic Day.

Government has achieved significant progress in the implementation of its "Look East Policy" through participation in the ASEAN-India and the East Asia Summits in Singapore in November 2007. India continues to work with Japan to strengthen its partnership. India's increasing engagement with countries of Africa and Latin America received further impetus with the visit of the Prime Minister to Nigeria in October 2007 and the visits of the Presidents of Brazil and Mexico to India in 2007. Prime Minister led the Indian delegation to the 2nd IBSA Summit held in Pretoria in October 2007. India will host the first India-Africa Forum Summit in April this year.

We have considerably enhanced our interactions with countries of the Gulf region that is home to over 4.5 million Indians and is an important economic partner and a major source for our oil and gas imports. The countries of West Asia have age-old links with India culturally and economically and are part of our extended neighbourhood. Developments in this vital region impact directly on our interests and security. India is keen on cooperating with these countries to promote peace and stability in the region. Government has been closely following events in Iraq and hopes that peace and stability would soon return in Iraq. Government has also supported a rejuvenated Israeli-Palestinian dialogue and looks forward to a peaceful resolution of issues leading to an independent state of Palestine living side by side at peace with its neighbours. Sadly, recent events in Gaza and the West Bank have caused deplorable misery and hardship to the people of Palestine. India will extend additional assistance to the Palestinian people and stands ready to help the peace process to move forward.

India has also been engaged with Central Asian countries in our extended neighbourhood to widen cooperation with them. As an Observer State, India participated in the Heads of State and Heads of Government meetings of Shanghai Cooperation Organisation in August and November 2007 respectively. The India-Russia-China trilateral Foreign Ministers dialogue also continues to be productive.

India remains committed to universal, non-discriminatory and comprehensive nuclear disarmament as reflected in the Action Plan presented by the late Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and has called for renewed efforts for general and complete disarmament, particularly nuclear disarmament.

To commemorate Mahatma Gandhi's birthday every year as the International Day of Non-Violence, India piloted a resolution in the UN General Assembly which was adopted by consensus. The First International Day of Non-Violence was observed at the UN on 2nd October 2007.

Government has played a constructive role in the Doha Development Round of WTO trade negotiations and carried forward negotiations for establishing trade and economic partnership agreements with important trading partners and regional groupings to create a better external economic environment for our growth. The negotiations on the India-ASEAN Free Trade Agreement are scheduled to be completed soon. India worked with the international community to address key global challenges such as terrorism, energy security, sustainable development and reform of the United Nations.

Hon'ble Members, India is on the move. There is an air of optimism among our youth and of expectation among the less-privileged sections of society. The challenge before us is to sustain the development process in the face of external and internal threats. The people of India have the potential to fuel the engine of global growth. My Government has been able to sustain historically high rates of growth through prudent and sound economic management. This has contributed to the stability of the growth process, and to predictability and transparency in policy. This is reflected in the rising investment rate and in the buoyancy of tax revenues for both Central and State governments. Your leadership can unleash the full potential of our people and ensure the stability and sustainability of our growth process. I sincerely hope, therefore, that the proceedings of Parliament this year will be purposeful, peaceful and productive.

Today, more than ever before, the world watches this great hall of democracy with hope and expectation. Our ability to liberate millions of our people from poverty, ignorance and disease within the framework of an open society and an open economy has always had global significance. At a time when the democratic way of life has come under renewed pressure from the forces of intolerance, India's success as a plural, secular and

inclusive democracy gives renewed hope to millions who are concerned about the rise of chauvinism, extremism and the ideologies of exclusion and hatred.

Hon'ble Members, each one of you must remember that as elected representatives of the people what you do gives new hope not just to your own voters, but to all our people, and to all peace and freedom loving people in our region and around the world. Therefore, what you say and do in these hallowed portals of democracy will have a bearing not just on the destiny of our people but also on the future of democracy and free societies around the world. With these thoughts, I once again wish you well.

Jai Hind.

ADDRESS TO PARLIAMENT—12 FEBRUARY 2009

Lok Sabha	—	Fourteenth Lok Sabha
Session	—	First Session of the year
President of India	—	Smt. Pratibha Devisingh Patil
Vice-President of India	—	Mohammad Hamid Ansari
Prime Minister of India	—	Dr. Manmohan Singh
Speaker, Lok Sabha	—	Shri Somnath Chatterjee

HONOURABLE MEMBERS,

I convey my good wishes to you and to all our people. On behalf of all of us, let me greet Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh. We are happy that he is recuperating fast. We wish him a speedy recovery for continuing with his onerous responsibilities. I also convey my special greetings to members of our security forces keeping vigil to protect us. We have been through an eventful year—a year that challenged our open society and our open economy. A year that tested by fire the principles that our country has always lived by—communal amity, tolerance, compassion, justice and peaceful coexistence.

Looking back, we see hope. We have not only withstood the challenges but also emerged stronger. The spirit of ordinary people rising together as one overcame the challenge to our nation from terrorist violence. The calibrated and prudent economic reform pursued by our Government is helping us to weather the extreme adversities of the global economic meltdown.

In both these disruptive events, it was our abiding commitment to the principles of democracy that has been our strength. Our economic reform was catalyzed through our deliberative democracy. Challenges to our nationhood were again thwarted by our functioning democracy. The record turnout of people in Jammu and Kashmir to cast their votes in the elections to the State Assembly in a peaceful atmosphere was a resounding affirmation of their faith in democracy and a rejection of terrorism and violence. The elections have brought new hope to the people of that state.

Our functioning democracy has set for my government exacting standards to judge its performance. People measure government not on the basis of what it says but on the basis of what it does. In a democracy, government

is measured on a simple maxim—*aam admi ko kya mila?* When democratic, secular, progressive forces came together in this government it sought to make itself accountable to the people through a National Common Minimum Programme. Today, after close to five years in office, my government believes that it has acted on nearly all the commitments made to the people through the National Common Minimum Programme.

The commitment to inclusive development articulated in the NCMP has been translated into laws, policies and programmes by my government. A right to work for people in our rural areas was guaranteed through the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act. The Unorganised Workers' Social Security Act, 2008, will facilitate provision of social security to 43 crore unorganized workers. Through the Act on Right to Information, government has been held accountable to citizens for governance. Through the Scheduled Tribes and Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, historical injustice to tribes and traditional forest dwellers was corrected to confer land rights. A Central Educational Institutions (Reservation in Admission) Act ensured reservation to students of Other Backward Classes in educational institutions. A Bill on Right to Education, a Bill for amending the Land Acquisition Act along with a new Bill for Rehabilitation and Resettlement and a Constitution Amendment Bill providing for Reservation for Women in Lok Sabha and State Legislatures stand introduced in Parliament.

The National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, which now covers the whole country, is the first such intervention anywhere in the world where a country has guaranteed employment for a specified number of days to any category of citizens. In 2007-08, nearly 3.4 crore rural households were provided employment under this programme. Out of those provided work, 55 per cent belonged to Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes and 49 per cent was women. Over 46 lakh works have been taken up under the programme so far of which 19 lakh have been completed. Water conservation, irrigation and land development account for 83 per cent of the work in 2008-09 contributing to agricultural productivity. It has consolidated grassroots democracy working through panchayats. Payments under the programme are being effected through post offices and bank accounts which now hold nearly 6 crore account holders making it a remarkable case of financial inclusion. This programme is keenly watched all over the world as an Indian innovation in combining the twin objectives of providing for consumption expenditure of the poor as well as improving rural productivity and income. Results of the programme in the last three years show increased agricultural productivity, reduced migration and increase in wage rates for agricultural employment across the country. As India is entering the sixtieth year of the republic, the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act is moving India towards a Republic of Work.

Along with the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, the social security framework has been further strengthened through introduction of the Aam Admi Bima Yojana, the Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana and the revamped Indira Gandhi National Old Age Pension Scheme now extended to all old persons below the poverty line.

My government promised a new deal to rural India through the revival of agriculture on which nearly 60 per cent of our population is dependent. Through carefully crafted policies in the agricultural sector we have been able to revive our agricultural economy from the trap of low investment, low productivity and rural indebtedness. My government increased by three-fold the credit to agriculture from Rs. 87,000 crore in 2003-2004 to Rs. 243,000 crore in 2007-2008. Short-term agricultural credit was made affordable at 7 per cent through an interest subvention. My Government waived around Rs. 65,000 crore of outstanding credit owed by 3.7 crore farmers who had fallen on bad times to revive their credit cycle. Remunerative prices were given to farmers through unprecedented enhancements in the Minimum Support Price which was raised from Rs. 630 in 2004 to Rs. 1080 per quintal in 2009 for wheat and from Rs. 550 per quintal in 2004 to Rs. 900 including bonus in 2008 for paddy. The efforts to create a unified national market through changes in the Agricultural Produce Marketing Committee Acts bore fruit. Investment in agriculture has increased from 10.2 per cent to 12.5 per cent of the GDP.

Agricultural diversification was promoted through the National Horticulture Mission and a National Rain-fed Area Authority was set up to provide technical assistance to increase production from drylands. A Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana with an allocation of Rs. 25,000 crore and a National Food Security Mission with an outlay of Rs. 4,822 crore have been put in place to increase production and crop productivity. Special attention was given to distress-affected districts through a special package. A special package was also extended to farmers growing plantation crops. My government ensured that the interests of our farmers were fully protected in the protracted negotiations in the World Trade Organisation.

Fertilizer is a very crucial input for our farmers. Owing to the unprecedented increase in prices of crude oil and chemicals in the international market, the prices of fertilizers had increased manifold. My Government however did not increase the prices of fertilizers even once in the last five years. At the same time steps are being taken to secure supply of fertilizers from abroad at reasonable prices through investment by Indian companies in fertilizer units abroad. A special purpose vehicle called Urvarak Videsh Ltd. has been incorporated for this purpose.

As a result of concerted efforts, this year the agriculture sector has grown by 4.5 per cent. Production has increased in almost all crops between 2004 and 2008. In the case of wheat it has gone up from 68 million tonnes

in 2004 to 78 million tonnes in 2008, in the case of paddy from 83 million tonnes in 2004 to 96 million tonnes in 2008, in the case of cotton from 164 lakh bales in 2004 to 258 lakh bales in 2008 and in the case of soyabean from 68 lakh tonnes in 2004 to 99 lakh tonnes in 2008. Through the farmer-first policy, the country has been able to achieve record production of food grains of 230.67 million tonnes in 2007-08 and ensure food security.

The gaps in rural infrastructure that denied opportunities for farm and rural non-farm employment have been systematically addressed through Bharat Nirman, our time-bound plan for rural infrastructure. Under Bharat Nirman, 5.6 million hectares have been brought under irrigation. The Accelerated Irrigation Benefit Programme has been assisting States to complete ongoing irrigation projects. My Government initiated a major programme for Repair, Renovation and Restoration of water bodies to augment community level water security. At the same time 14 major irrigation projects have been taken up as National Projects and are being assisted with 90 per cent grant from Government of India. Through consensus created with States, the river inter-linking projects like Ken-Betwa, Par-Tapi-Narmada and Damam Ganga-Pinjal have moved ahead.

Under the Rural Roads programme, work on 25,000 villages has been completed to provide market connectivity to farmers. Over 50,000 villages have been provided electricity under the Rajiv Gandhi Gramin Vidyutikaran Yojana. Today 98 per cent of our villages have telephone connectivity and mobile telephony is spreading fast in rural India. Under the Indira Awas Yojana component of Bharat Nirman 60 lakh houses were to be built and this target has already been achieved with another 16 lakh under construction. Rural water supply coverage and funding under the programme have considerably increased. Bharat Nirman has served to integrate rural India more centrally into the growth process and unlock its potential.

Lack of adequate health care has been a major cause for rural poverty. My Government initiated a National Rural Health Mission, which is now radically transforming health care provisioning in our villages. A major network of over 6 lakh Accredited Social Health Activists or ASHAs has been created to attend to basic health needs of rural households. Rural public health infrastructure of Sub-Health Centres, Primary Health Centres and Community Health Centres has also been considerably strengthened. The success of these efforts is evident from the fact that institutional delivery has gone up seven-fold since the mission commenced thereby reducing maternal and infant mortality. There is still a long way to go. The campaign for total sanitation in rural areas, vitally important for health has seen unprecedented success increasing coverage from 27 per cent in 2004 to 60 per cent by January this year. The sanitation campaign received a boost through the Nirmal Gram Puraskar which has been awarded to 17,969 panchayats and Sikkim has become the first Nirmal State in the country.

Separate Departments have been set up for Medical Research and Aids Control and a Food Safety and Standards Authority has become functional to ensure consumer protection. Government is considering setting up a National Urban Health Mission to focus on the health needs of the urban poor commencing with selected major cities.

Drugs and pharmaceuticals play an important role in healthcare. My Government has set up an independent Department of Pharmaceuticals, and has taken effective steps to keep the prices of essential and life saving drugs in check. Public Sector Undertakings which had been set up to manufacture critical bulk drug formulations and antibiotics have been revived. In order to promote education and research in pharmaceuticals, the Government has set up National Institutes of Pharmaceutical Education and Research at six places.

The gaps in educational facilities in elementary education stand substantially met through the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan. There is near universal coverage of primary education. The focus is now on enhancing quality. Enrolment has increased from 15.6 crore children in 2004 to 18.5 crore in 2008. The number of children out of school has come down from 320 lakh in 2004 to 76 lakh in 2008. The Mid-Day Meal programme implemented by my Government as an incentive for retention of children in schools covered 15 crore children last year. Over 8 lakh teachers have been recruited with the support provided to States through the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan. To meet the demand generated through near universalization of elementary education, my Government has announced an equally ambitious programme for secondary education through the Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan and 6000 model schools as exemplars of quality are also being set up throughout the country.

Government has been focussing on empowering women through micro finance. Under the Swarnajayanti Gram Swarajgar Yojana, self-employment of women is promoted. About 31 lakh self-help groups have been set up of whose membership, two-thirds are women. My Government is considering the recommendations of the Committee of Governors for speedy socio-economic development and empowerment of women.

Infants and children below six need special attention. Universalisation of Integrated Child Development Services programme has been given a very high priority and nearly eleven lakh habitations have now been covered. The coverage of children has doubled over the last four years and nearly 8 crore children and mothers are now receiving supplementary nutrition. While steps are being taken to further expand and strengthen this important programme, my Government has also established a National Commission for the Protection of Children's Rights.

Social inclusion has been strengthened by my Government through programmes targeted at specific categories like Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Other Backward Classes and minorities. Education is the key to empowerment of these sections. Ongoing scholarship programmes have been significantly expanded with revision of norms. Each year about 6.5 lakh students, mainly from families of Safai Karmacharis will be given pre-matric scholarships. Nearly 10.50 lakh students belonging to Scheduled Tribes and 35 lakh students belonging to Scheduled Castes will be given post-matric scholarships. Pre and post-matric scholarships will be given to 25 lakh students from Other Backward Classes. Several new scholarship schemes have also been instituted for these categories. The Rajiv Gandhi Fellowship programme assists students belonging to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes for pursuing research studies at M.Phil and doctoral levels. On an average 8 lakh students from minority communities will be covered each year under three new scholarship schemes. To promote girls' education around 11 lakh scholarships would be given each year. Under the Scheme for Early Attraction of Talents for Science, each year 2 lakh scholarships will be given. Another scholarship scheme for College and University students will benefit 82,000 students every year. Over a crore of students will now begin to get scholarships each year through all these schemes. For the first time, reservation in educational institutions was extended to Other Backward Classes by my Government.

To further strengthen social and economic inclusion of minority communities, my Government set up the new Ministry of Minority Affairs and announced the Prime Minister's new 15-point programme for the Welfare of Minorities. The Sachar Committee set up by Government examined the status of Muslims in a comprehensive manner to enable the Government to respond to relative gaps in development attainments.

Through the initiatives of Government, close to 8 lakh students belonging to minority communities would be provided scholarships this year itself. The coverage will go up to nearly 40 lakh students over the next four years. More than 10000 new Primary Schools and Upper Primary Schools have been constructed in areas that have substantial minority concentration. Entrepreneurs from minority communities have been provided assistance under the Swarna Jayanti Grameen Swarozgar Yojana. Under Indira Awas Yojana, 2.39 lakh houses have been allotted to minorities during 2008-09. The flow of credit to minorities has increased sharply and is expected to go up to 15 per cent. Public Sector Banks have opened more than 500 bank branches in minority concentration districts. With a view to bridging the development gaps in socio-economically backward districts with minority concentration a Multi-Sectoral Development Programme has been launched to cover 90 minority concentration districts of the country. The representation of minorities in public services, para-military forces, Railways, Banks and financial institutions has considerably improved in the last two years.

Needs of the disabled in society should become a central concern for any caring Government. Mindful of the challenges faced by this category of people, my Government has framed a national policy for persons with disabilities which is now being implemented. In addition to special schools for the disabled, schools under the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan will provide for addressing the special needs of disabled children. Employment provision in public services to the disabled was made applicable to All India Services.

When my Government came into office the plight of weavers was alarming in many parts of the country. A comprehensive package consisting of provision of technology, credit and marketing support together with health insurance was extended to weavers. Cluster-based development plans are in operation. Under the Textile Upgradation Fund Scheme textile industry has been modernized to benefit from the post-quota regime.

Rapid growth in industry, and services, is essential to provide the avenues for employment required by our youth. My Government has put in place appropriate policies which have promoted growth and employment opportunities. In particular, my Government enacted the Special Economic Zones Act, which has already facilitated incremental investment of ₹ 90,000 crore, and generated direct and indirect employment for over 7 lakh persons. My Government has constituted the Delhi-Mumbai Industrial Corridor Development Corporation (DMICDC) for developing an industrial corridor along the Dedicated Railway Freight Corridor between Delhi and Mumbai. The proposed industrial corridor will pass through six States of the country and infrastructure facilities will be developed at identified locations in consultation with the States concerned. My Government has come out with a new policy for promoting investment in Petroleum, Chemicals and Petro-chemicals sector through development of Investment Regions. Significant progress has been made towards setting up Petroleum, Chemicals and Petro-chemical Investment Regions in Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat and West Bengal.

India is a nation of young people. India's demographic dividends can be realized only if the country invests in developing skills to make our youth employable. Through a planned investment in skill development the country holds the potential to account for a fourth of the global work force by 2022 when India will mark 75 years of its independence. My Government has made skill development a major national priority and has put in place coordinated action for skill development through a National Council for Skill Development chaired by the Prime Minister. A National Skill Development Coordination Board to synergize public and private streams for skill development and a National Skill Development Corporation to promote private sector led action have also been set up.

India realizing its potential in the new knowledge economy is critically dependent on building institutions that nurture creativity and innovation. It is a tribute to the Nehruvian vision that the Indian Institutes of Technology

set up in the early decades of our independence led to India's emergence as global power in software development by the end of the century. My Government has undertaken a second wave of investment in higher education through the creation of 8 new Indian Institutes of Technology, 7 Indian Institutes of Management, 5 Indian Institutes of Science Education and Research, and 15 new Central Universities. The core of the Eleventh Plan is knowledge-investment with allocations growing four-fold. India sees knowledge as the strategic resource that will give it leadership and this investment will serve that purpose. To attract and retain talent in institutions of higher learning, my Government has radically restructured the pay scales of teachers in universities.

The National Knowledge Commission set up by my Government has been giving useful inputs for developing and sharing knowledge resources. Acting on its recommendations a National Knowledge Network connecting major national knowledge institutions is being set up and its first phase will become operational shortly.

My Government has taken several steps to promote science and technology. Creation of a new Ministry of Earth Sciences, promulgation of a new map policy, establishment of a National Spatial Data Infrastructure and introduction of the INSPIRE programme to promote science education have been some of the highlights. Biotechnology, a sunrise sector has seen an unprecedented growth of over 35 per cent and research has supported development of vaccines for health and new seeds for agriculture vitally important to the common man. While pursuing frontier areas of science and technology like nanotechnology, robotics or genomics, the Government has also launched special efforts targeted for the disadvantaged through initiatives like the Open Source Drug Discovery programme and CSIR project 800.

Our scientists have demonstrated time and again that they have the capacity to be the best in the world. The successful placing into the lunar orbit of the Chandrayan-1 spacecraft in November 2008 is a tribute to our talent pool in science and technology and heralded India's entry into a select group of countries that have successfully undertaken lunar missions. India has also successfully accomplished eighteen missions which included eight launch vehicle missions and eight satellites launched by the PSLV and GSLV. Data from our satellites is being extensively used for land and water resource management, monitoring of the environment and the management of natural disasters. India's space technology has earned international acclaim and is being successfully marketed abroad on a commercial basis.

The Right to Information Act has had a positive impact in making Government more accountable and has been widely welcomed by the people. Information technology offers opportunities to transform our democracy through electronic governance. My Government has taken up a programme

for setting up one lakh Common Service Centres providing services in the villages and 25,000 of these have become functional. The Unique Identification Authority of India has been set up in order to generate and assign unique identification numbers for residents. This is important from the security perspective, as also to improve the delivery of development and welfare schemes.

My Government believes that decentralized governance through Panchayati Raj and Urban Local Bodies is the surest way to improving delivery of services and fostering inclusive development. The Ministry of Panchayati Raj set up for the first time at the Central level accelerated the process of devolution of funds, functions and functionaries to panchayat institutions. Through constant engagement with States and Central Ministries, the architecture of decentralized governance has been strengthened. The Backward Regions Grant Fund has been used to institutionalise district planning. Panchayat representatives are leading development activities at the local level. The second Administrative Reforms Commission set up by my Government has given elaborate recommendations for governance reform, many of which have a bearing on decentralisation.

Streamlining the functioning of judiciary is essential for ensuring our people quick and affordable justice. My Government has introduced a Bill to establish a National Judicial Council to ensure accountability and transparency in the judicial system. It has already approved the proposal to increase the strength of High Court Judges by 20 per cent. The maximum number of judges in the Supreme Court, excluding the Chief Justice, has been increased from 25 to 30. District and Subordinate Courts are being computerized to improve their functioning. My Government enacted the Gram Nyayalayas Act to take justice closer to people.

Recognizing that India's cities and small towns while being engines of economic growth were seriously deficient in civic infrastructure and services, my Government launched the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission. This Mission is the first major effort for a renewal of our urban areas. In 61 out of the 63 cities covered under the Mission, projects costing over Rs. 40,000 crore are under implementation based on City Development Plans. Under its basic services programme, 11.7 lakh houses are being constructed to make housing affordable to the poor. Interest subsidy of 5 per cent is also extended on home loans for promotion of housing for low income groups in urban areas. My Government initiated an Urban Transport policy under which public transport is being promoted. The Metro in Delhi is being expanded to Gurgaon and Noida and urban rail systems have been promoted in major cities like Kolkata, Mumbai, Bengaluru, Chennai and Hyderabad. States have also been provided with funds to purchase buses for their urban transport systems.

My Government has, for the first time, announced an Integrated Energy Policy which lays down a roadmap to meet the demand for energy in all sectors of the economy in an efficient, economically viable and environmentally sustainable manner using different fuels and forms of energy. The policy not only meets the requirement of energy security but also provides an overall framework which is consistent with achieving the objective of inclusive growth.

Coal is the main source of energy in the country. Besides expanding production in the public sector, my Government has allocated 158 coal blocks with reserves of almost 40 billion tonnes to various Government and private power, cement and sponge iron companies for captive use. A new Coal Distribution Policy has been put in place and e-auction introduced to make coal accessible to all. Coal India Limited has been conferred Navratna status for speedy project implementation. A bill has been introduced in the Parliament to amend the Mines and Minerals (Regulation and Development) Act to enable transparent allocation of coal blocks through competitive bidding. Coal to Liquid project is being initiated to meet the rapidly growing need of liquid fuel in the country. Rates of royalty for coal and lignite have been significantly enhanced to ensure better revenue to resource-bearing States.

My Government has formulated a new National Mineral Policy in order to attract large investments and the latest technologies for prospecting and mining, with due regard to the needs and sensitivities of the mineral bearing States.

During the last four years, 112 oil and gas discoveries have been made, significant amongst them being the discovery of gas for the first time in the ultra deepwater areas. The refining capacity has significantly increased and our exports of petroleum products have quadrupled from US \$ 6.6 billion in 2004-05 to US \$ 26.8 billion in 2007-08. Over 300 lakh new customers have been provided with LPG connections, thus covering about 52 per cent of the population and 5 kg cylinders have been introduced for low-income customers. Government has constituted the Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulatory Board to protect the interests of customers and petroleum entities. Rajiv Gandhi Institute of Petroleum Technology has been established for studies and research in petroleum and energy sectors.

A major initiative has been taken for the development of coal-based Ultra Mega Power Projects (UMPPs) each with a capacity of 4,000 MW with environment-friendly super critical technology. Three projects, *i.e.* Sasan in Madhya Pradesh in 2007, Mundra in Gujarat in 2007 and Krishnapatnam in Andhra Pradesh in 2008 have already been handed over to the successful bidders and are at the implementation stage.

The New Hydro Power Policy 2008 which has been put in place aims at providing a level playing field to private developers. The scheme envisages, in addition to the existing 12 per cent free power for the host State, 1 per cent free power for local area development in the project area. For a period of 10 years from the date of commissioning of the project, 100 units of electricity per month would be provided by the project developer to each Project Affected Family through the relevant distribution company.

The Accelerated Power Development and Reforms Programme (APDRP) has been restructured for implementation during the 11th Five Year Plan with revised terms and conditions and a total outlay of Rs. 51,577 crore. The focus of the programme is on actual, demonstrable performance in terms of loss reduction in selected urban areas.

My Government has accorded importance to increasing the share of nuclear energy in our overall energy mix. Three nuclear power units with a total capacity of 1300 MWe have been brought online. Six more nuclear power units with a total capacity of 3160 MWe are in advanced stages of construction. We are committed to the three-stage nuclear development programme ultimately leading to large-scale utilization of thorium for energy production. A number of new technologies involving Advanced Heavy Water Reactors, High Temperature Reactors and Accelerator Driven Systems are under development as a part of our long-term programme for development of nuclear energy.

The 11th Five Year Plan aims at raising the total annual investment in infrastructure from 5 per cent of GDP to 9 per cent. This will greatly enhance infrastructure development in our country. A country's industrial progress greatly depends on the volume of steel it produces. India is now the fifth largest producer of crude steel in the world and hopes to be the second largest steel producing nation by 2015. The States of Orissa, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Chhattisgarh and West Bengal are getting major investments to develop their steel industry.

My Government has expanded the network of roads in our country and improved the national highways. It has drawn up an ambitious plan for investing Rs. 2,36,000 crore for upgradation of National Highways involving a total length of about 34,000 kms. The Golden Quadrilateral connecting the four metropolitan cities is near completion. The north-south and east-west corridors are expected to be completed during the next year.

The Indian Railways has achieved record profits continuously over the last four years while maintaining efficiency and service standards. The new technologies adopted by the Railways have increased safety and security of passengers. The Railway Protection Force has been constituted as an Armed Force of the Union to augment the efforts of the States to protect and secure railway property and passengers. Construction of a Dedicated Freight

Corridor between Kolkata and Ludhiana on the eastern route, and Mumbai and Dadri on the western route, to augment the capacity of carrying freight traffic has been taken up. A Special Purpose Vehicle namely the Dedicated Freight Corridor Corporation of India Limited has already initiated preparatory work on this project. This project will use state-of-the-art technology and cover 2700 kilometres at an estimated cost of Rs. 28,000 crore.

The expansion of the Civil Aviation Sector and the growing air traffic is indicative of the modernization of India's economy. The number of people who travelled by air nearly doubled, from around 5.7 crore in 2004 to around 11 crore in 2008. Airport infrastructure is being modernized and world class airports have come up in Hyderabad and Bengaluru while work is in progress in Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata and Chennai. At the same time 35 non-metro airports are being upgraded through the Airports Authority of India. The Airport Economic Regulatory Authority Act has been passed by Parliament.

My Government has taken a number of steps to ensure that the reach of affordable telecom services is greatly enhanced. Through amendments to the law initiated by my Government faster expansion of mobile services in rural areas has been made possible through use of Universal Service Obligation Fund for such services. Today, there is a phone connection for every three persons and the target is to provide 50 crore connections by 2010. The Broadband Policy launched by my Government in 2004 has seen the number of broadband connections grow from a very low level to over 53 lakh.

While pursuing policies of economic development, my Government has sought to ensure that there is no adverse impact on the environment. A new environment policy and a biodiversity action plan have been put in place to judiciously balance concerns of environment and development. Our flora and fauna need protection and my Government has taken several steps to protect the Indian Tiger as well as all other species of wild life. Our great rivers are also our national assets. My government has formulated a Green India mission to reforest 6 million hectares of degraded forests making it one of the world's largest afforestation efforts. A Compensatory Afforestation Fund Bill locating resources for the programme is under consideration of Parliament. River Ganga has a special place in the hearts of all Indians. Over the years it has been felt necessary to look at the river as a totality and move from city-specific pollution abatement activities to a comprehensive development plan for the basin. My Government has initiated steps to set up a Ganga River Basin Authority chaired by the Prime Minister with Chief Ministers of Ganga basin States to comprehensively plan for reviving the Ganga and its bounty.

My Government has taken measures to face the challenges posed by climate change. India firmly believes in upholding the position articulated in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change that the

principle of common but differentiated responsibilities must determine responses of individual countries. India has already voluntarily expressed a commitment that its per capita emissions will never exceed the average of developed countries. A National Action Plan for Climate Change has been developed by my Government under which action will be taken forward through eight National Missions. These Missions will collectively move the country on a path of sustainable development. The National Solar Mission to harness solar energy is one of these eight Missions. A Mission on Sustainable Habitat will set green standards to guide future construction. These important Missions are under finalization now. A National Institute on Abiotic Stress Management is being set up in Baramati in Maharashtra to address impact of climate change on agriculture.

My Government is committed to promote renewable energy technologies and increase its share in the energy mix. India has achieved grid-connected renewable power capacity of 13,740 megawatts and a capacity addition of 14,000 megawatts has been targeted for the 11th Plan.

The world looks up to India for its cultural resources. The large number of cultural institutions in the country requires financial support as well as professional leadership. My Government has decided to alter the procedure of recruitment to ensure that professionals from the fields of art and culture get chosen to head the cultural institutions. Government has declared Kannada and Telugu as Classical languages along with Tamil and Sanskrit declared earlier and will extend support for activities related to their development. India successfully moved a Resolution, which was unanimously adopted by the United Nations General Assembly, to observe 2nd October as the "International Day of Non-Violence". During the last four years the country commemorated the 300th anniversary of the consecration of Shri Guru Granth Sahib, the 75th anniversary of Dandi March led by Mahatma Gandhi, Centenary of the Satyagraha, the hundred and fiftieth anniversary celebrations of the First War of Independence and the 2550th birth anniversary of Lord Buddha. These have been events recalling the wellsprings of our composite culture that upholds plurality of thought, tolerance, compassion and quest for truth and freedom. The bedrock of our culture is a celebration of freedom of thought and expression and any attempt to force a closing of the Indian mind goes against the very ethos of being Indian. Such elements need to be fought and defeated.

Economic resurgence has resulted in increased tourism opportunities for India. The Incredible India and the Athithi Devo Bhava campaigns along with concerted efforts at improving accommodation, air travel and travel facilitation have been successful in attracting more tourists. Foreign tourist arrivals rose from 3.46 million in 2004 to 5.37 million in 2008 while foreign exchange earnings in the same period went up from US \$ 6.17 billion to US \$ 11.75 billion.

India will host the Commonwealth Games in 2010. My government would spare no efforts to ensure its success. Under a Rs. 678 crore scheme, comprehensive and intensive sports training and exposure will be provided at national and international levels to Indian sportspersons. A National Programme called Panchayat Yuvak Krida and Khel Abhiyan has also been launched to create basic sports infrastructure in village and block Panchayats in a phased manner.

My Government has taken a number of steps for devolution of managerial and financial autonomy to the profit making Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSEs). As a result, the turnover and profits of the CPSEs have increased by about 45 per cent and 22 per cent, respectively in the last three years. A Board for Reconstruction of Public Sector Enterprises was established to advise on the revival and restructuring of sick and loss making CPSEs. Government has approved the revival package for 34 sick and loss making CPSEs involving an amount of more than Rs. 14000 crore based on the recommendations of the Board. My Government has also issued guidelines for the revision of pay scales of executives of CPSEs after considering the recommendations of the Second Pay Revision Committee.

The economic policies of my Government have resulted in an unprecedented growth rate of over 8.9 per cent in the last four years, with the growth rate in the last 3 years exceeding 9 per cent. Such growth has never been achieved before. This enabled my government to locate adequate resources to undertake development investment of an unprecedented scale, not only at the central government level, but also through increased assistance to state governments, which increased from Rs. 186 thousand crore in 2003-04 to Rs. 240 thousand crore in 2007-08. It also helped to implement the much-awaited Sixth Pay Commission recommendations for government employees, including Defence personnel.

My Government's policies have ensured that even as India faces an economic slowdown along with the rest of the world, our fundamentals are much better. India's domestic demand can inject fresh momentum to our economy. India's banks are well capitalized and face no threat that many banks face in other parts of the world. My Government has taken a series of measures to stimulate our economy at this juncture. These have been expeditiously announced after discussion with stakeholders to address the problem of slow down in industrial growth, exports and the services sector. These measures include increasing availability of liquidity and credit, reduction in taxes and duties, boost to infrastructure, and special support to the worst affected sectors such as exports, micro, medium and small industries, housing and automobiles. My Government has relaxed the constraints imposed by the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management Act to increase capital expenditure by the state governments. These measures will drive the demand for goods and services reviving production

activities in the manufacturing as well as services sectors. Even in the prevailing adverse global economic environment, our economy, it is hoped, would still register a relatively high growth rate.

Hon'ble members are aware that the sharp increase in global commodity prices, especially those of petroleum and food, had an adverse impact on our economy. This shock was in large measure absorbed by the government and the citizen insulated. This also required that Government put in place several fiscal and monetary measures to contain inflation. As a result of these actions, my Government has been able to bring down the rate of inflation from 12 per cent in September 2008 to around 5-6 per cent in January, 2009. The prices of petrol, and diesel and LPG have also been reduced to provide relief to the common man.

The nation faced multiple internal security challenges. The country witnessed terrorist attacks in several cities with growing levels of sophistication and assistance from outside the country. Several innocent lives have been lost. The terrorist attack in Mumbai as well as the terrorist incidents in Delhi, Ahmedabad, Hyderabad, Jaipur, Bengaluru and Assam and before that on our Embassy in Kabul, were an assault on all the values that our country stands for. The attack in Mumbai was deliberately planned to retard our economic progress. My Government is heartened by the international support it has received after these attacks. There is greater appreciation in the international community of the threat that exists to the region and the world from the terrorism emanating from Pakistan.

I salute the members of our security forces, including members of State police forces, who face grave challenges from terrorists, left wing extremist and insurgent groups and resolutely defend the integrity and sovereignty of our country. Many of them have made the supreme sacrifice and laid down their lives, most recently in the attacks in Mumbai. We share the grief of their families, and my Government will ensure that they are adequately compensated so that they can lead normal lives.

My Government has strengthened the country's internal security to protect people from such mindless acts of violence. A National Investigation Agency has been established to deal with terrorism. The Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act has been amended to deal with terrorist offences and terrorist organizations. These measures have strengthened the legal and investigative framework to tackle terrorist forces. While arming the internal security apparatus with these powers, all care would be taken to uphold legal procedures and prevent any misuse of such powers. A comprehensive plan has been drawn up to strengthen maritime and coastal security against threats from the sea.

Left wing extremism remained a major concern in several States. My government has adopted a holistic approach to tackle this problem in close coordination with the affected states through modernization of police forces

and better implementation of socio-economic development programmes for the most backward regions. Similarly, several initiatives were taken to deal with the problem of insurgency in the North-East.

The general situation in the north-east has improved significantly over the last four years. Efforts have been made to initiate a dialogue process with various groups who abjure violence with the aim of bringing them into the national mainstream. To address the infrastructure deficit of north-eastern States, a Special Accelerated Road Development Programme targeted to provide inter-region, inter-state and district level roads connectivity totaling about 8700 kilometers has been taken up. The 1840 km long Trans-Arunachal Expressway has been approved. Special emphasis has been given to the development of an alternate highway to Sikkim, and rail and air connectivity to the North-East States has been put on fast track. The Kaladan project will link Mizoram and North East to the sea and open up the entire region. Along with infrastructure, expansion of educational facilities in this region has been given high priority with a Central University in each State of the region. An Indian Institute of Management has already been set up in Shillong.

For Jammu and Kashmir, my Government has taken up a Reconstruction Plan under which Rs. 24,000 crore is being invested in 67 projects. It aims at strengthening infrastructure and catering to other development needs of the three regions of Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh. The Baglihar hydro-electric project has been commissioned. Commencement of the first railway line in the valley has meant both physical and emotional connectivity for the people of the region with the rest of India. Srinagar-Kargil-Leh road has been declared a national highway and its upgradation is in progress. Against this background, my Government has reached out to people resorting to violence to join the mainstream and work for the welfare and rapid development of Jammu and Kashmir.

The protection of India's security and territorial integrity has received the highest attention of my Government. Our Armed Forces have made the country proud with their sense of commitment, sacrifice and professionalism. They have time and again come to the aid of civil authority in natural disasters, as well as to combat insurgency in affected areas.

Our long borders encompassing different geographical and climate conditions and terrains make it imperative to keep the Armed Forces in a state of full preparedness to face diverse challenges at all times. The modernization programme of the Armed Forces is focused on state-of-the-art technology, network centric warfare, and includes an Integrated Space Cell to deal with the challenges posed by the militarization of space. Government stands committed to give financial support for modernization to the required extent. The actions taken by the Indian Navy to deal with threats of piracy in the Gulf of Aden and to secure our sea-lanes of

communication have demonstrated our capacity and willingness to protect our interests.

Our research and development efforts in the area of defence technology showed concrete results through launches of the Agni-I and Agni-III and other missiles. The main battle tank Arjun was productionised. Defence procurement procedures were continually reviewed and updated to ensure maximum transparency, economy of resources and support for our indigenization efforts.

India has the second largest diaspora in the world. The overseas Indian community estimated at over 25 million is spread across every major region in the globe. My Government has taken a series of measures to improve the welfare of overseas Indians, particularly in West Asia and the Gulf, and to create mechanisms to facilitate their participation in nation building activities. These have included scholarship programmes, the creation of the India Development Foundation, the establishment of a Council for Promotion of Overseas Employment and an Overseas Workers Resource Centre and a People of Indian Origin/Non-Resident Indian University. In recognition of the importance attached to the role of overseas Indians, a Prime Minister's Global Advisory Council of Persons of Indian Origin has been set up to catalyse ideas for national development.

My Government has accorded highest priority to fostering close political, economic, social and cultural relations with all countries, on the basis of sovereign equality and mutual respect, to help promote a friendly and peaceful external environment, to safeguard our national security and ensure rapid socio-economic development for our people. We have also consistently endeavoured to promote a stable and prosperous South Asia in the recognition of the fact that we are bound by strong ties of history, culture and ethnicity.

The conduct of our foreign policy has enhanced India's stature in the world. My Government's foreign policy has been imbued with the values that our nation rests upon—of independence of thought and action, ensuring a democratic, just and equitable world order and the rule of law. India's views on the major international issues of our times are not just heard, but are now being actively sought.

My Government worked actively with the international community to address key global challenges of terrorism, energy and food security, climate change and sustainable development, the global economic and financial crisis, and the reform of international institutions, including of the United Nations, to reflect contemporary realities.

The conclusion of an India Specific Safeguards Agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency and the decision of the Nuclear Suppliers' Group in 2008 to allow its members to enter into full civil nuclear

co-operation and trade with India in nuclear material and technology marks the beginning of the end of thirty four years of nuclear isolation and the technology denial regime that India was being subjected to. This has opened the way for our indigenous nuclear power generation programme to be reinforced by additionalities through international civil nuclear energy co-operation, thereby also contributing to the global fight against climate change. The opening of such cooperation with India is a vindication of India's impeccable record on non-proliferation and our long-standing commitment to universal, non-discriminatory and comprehensive nuclear disarmament.

India discharged her responsibilities in South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation to promote economic re-integration in our neighbourhood. During India's Chairmanship of the SAARC and thereafter, several regional initiatives, including the decision to establish the South Asian University in India, were launched which transformed SAARC from a declaratory to an implementation phase.

We consolidated our relations with Afghanistan, and remained closely involved with its economic reconstruction and development efforts. We wish to see a stable, pluralistic and democratic Afghanistan. The terrorist attack on our Embassy in Kabul in 2008 was a matter of deep concern and reinforced our determination to fulfill our commitments to the people of Afghanistan. We welcome the return of multi-party democratic politics in Bangladesh and remain committed to working closely with the newly elected Government. The visit of the Prime Minister to Bhutan and my own visit to represent India at the Coronation of His Majesty Jigme Khesar Wangchuck further consolidated our multi-faceted relations with our closest neighbour. India and the Maldives continue to enjoy traditional bonds of friendship and close cooperation. With Myanmar we have conducted our relations in a manner that reflects our shared history and mutual desire to promote peace and tranquility along the border. Government extended its full support to the people of Nepal in their historic transition to a multi-party democracy, and we wish them well.

We are concerned at the plight of civilians internally displaced in Sri Lanka on account of escalation of the military conflict. We continue to support a negotiated political settlement in Sri Lanka within the framework of an undivided Sri Lanka acceptable to all the communities, including the Tamil community. I would appeal to the Government of Sri Lanka and to the LTTE to return to the negotiating table. This can be achieved if, simultaneously, the Government of Sri Lanka suspends its military operations and the LTTE declares its willingness to lay down arms and to begin talks with the government.

Our relations with Pakistan have made considerable progress since 2004, but, regrettably, terrorism from Pakistan has eroded the achievements of

the bilateral dialogue process and has caused a grave setback to our relations. Despite solemn commitments given by Pakistan at the highest level that it would not allow territory under its control to be used for terrorism in any manner against India, terrorists from Pakistan have continued to attack India. We expect Pakistan to honour the commitments made to us, and to take decisive and credible action against all terrorist groups that are based in, and operate from, its territory.

Our relations with the People's Republic of China have witnessed regular high-level exchanges, growing economic and trade ties, increased defence contacts and enhanced people-to-people exchanges. Our Strategic and Cooperative Partnership with China is progressively acquiring a more regional and international perspective. Both sides are also engaged in efforts at resolving outstanding issues including the boundary question through dialogue, while maintaining peace and tranquility in the border areas.

The signing of the Agreement on Cooperation on Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Energy with USA was one of the manifestations of the transformation in our relationship with the United States of America. Our relations with the USA cover a broad canvas of sectors ranging from science and technology, agriculture, education, health to trade and investment. We look forward to working with the new Administration to mutual benefit in the bilateral field as well as on the major challenges of our time. India's strategic partnership and long standing relations with Russia have been strengthened and diversified. Russia remains our valued partner in meeting our defence and nuclear energy needs, and in the area of science and technology, including co-operation in the field of space. Our interaction with the European Union and other countries in Europe in the fields of defence and security, science and technology, trade and investment, agriculture, culture and education has significantly deepened. Agreements on civil nuclear cooperation were signed with Russia and France, and negotiations to conclude similar agreements with other friendly countries were initiated.

Our Strategic and Global Partnership with Japan was consolidated and our relations are marked by a strong mutual desire to harness our complementarities. Our engagement with East Asia was a manifestation of our belief that the twenty-first century belongs to Asia, and that India has a role to play in the Asian resurgence. My visits to Vietnam and Indonesia, and India's participation for the first time in the Summit meeting of the ASEM countries provided a major impetus to our "Look East Policy".

We paid special attention to the intensification of our traditional and historic relations with the Gulf. The visit of the Prime Minister to Oman and Qatar opened new avenues of co-operation in the areas of energy security, investment and welfare of Indians working in the Gulf. Our ties with West Asia were reinforced through the visits of the Presidents of Egypt, Syria and the Palestinian Authority. The most tragic loss of lives and acute suffering

surrounding the recent incursions into Gaza highlight the urgent need for a comprehensive resolution of the Palestinian issue. We remain steadfast in our support to the Palestinian cause, and in our desire to see peace and stability in West Asia. The government worked towards building a contemporary relationship with Iran. The visit by the President of Kazakhstan as the Chief Guest for our Republic Day symbolized the importance attached by Government to our extended neighbourhood in Central Asia.

My Government opened a new chapter in our relations with the great continent of Africa. The first ever India-Africa Forum Summit held in India established a blueprint for our relations with Africa for the future. We will share our resources and technical know-how to assist Africa in its development efforts. My first overseas visit as President was to Brazil, Mexico and Chile. Several steps have been taken to tap the vast potential that exists in our relations with Latin America and the Caribbean countries.

India's participation in the Summit meeting of the G-20 countries, and the hosting of the third IBSA Summit and second BIMSTEC Summit in India were utilized to forge new, and strengthen existing, economic linkages at a time of turmoil in the international economic and financial system.

Honourable Members, the efforts of my government were singularly focussed on enhancing the prosperity of our people through the sharing of opportunity. My government believes that its programmes for inclusive development have created those opportunities that help share the benefits of progress more equitably. When a child in a remote tribal village has access to a local school that has come up in her habitation, when her health care needs are attended to, when her parents do not have to migrate for work but find employment locally through the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, when they have rights on their land, and when they are empowered to make the government accountable to them for these actions through the Right to Information we have moved closer to meeting the goals that Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru flagged for the nation. At the turn of our independence his clarion call in these very hallowed precincts was that collectively we must act to "remove poverty, ignorance, disease and the inequality of opportunity". Even while acknowledging that the move towards an inclusive society with equal opportunities for all our citizens is still work in progress, on the basis of the record of its performance, it is my Government's belief that we have moved much closer to realizing this agenda.

My Government has steadfastly sought to accelerate the pace of growth to enable our youth to access global opportunities. Young India has the power to dream big. Our economic progress has enabled such global aspirations. Our investments in knowledge will get us closer to our goals. Our young people have never been more confident about the future. Let our reach exceed our grasp.

Jai Hind.

ADDRESS TO PARLIAMENT—4 JUNE 2009

Lok Sabha	—	Fifteenth Lok Sabha
Session	—	First Session after the 15th General Election
President of India	—	Smt. Pratibha Devisingh Patil
Vice-President of India	—	Mohammad Hamid Ansari
Prime Minister of India	—	Dr. Manmohan Singh
Speaker, Lok Sabha	—	Smt. Meira Kumar

HONOURABLE MEMBERS,

I am extremely happy to address the first session of both Houses of Parliament after the elections to the 15th Lok Sabha. My greetings to all members, especially the newly elected members of the Lok Sabha. They are here having spent the last few months in the scorching heat trying to persuade their voters on how they could best represent the aspirations of their electorate. They now have the mandate and the opportunity to translate the hopes and aspirations of the people of India into change in the everyday lives of the people. It is indeed a unique privilege given to a chosen few to represent the hopes of over a billion people, a sixth of humanity.

I am sure that their anxieties, hopes and dreams will weigh on you as you commence your work. I urge you to use each day of the next five years in giving substance to those aspirations and in doing so, find greater meaning in your own lives. My good wishes are with you.

I congratulate the members of the Lok Sabha for unanimously electing the Speaker and that too a woman who is a Dalit with honourable credentials. This has enhanced the prestige of India's democratic traditions, that of the House and its members.

Last week the State of West Bengal was affected by a cyclone inflicting damage to lives and property. Let us convey our heartfelt sympathies to the bereaved families. My Government will extend all possible succour to the cyclone affected people of West Bengal.

I would like to congratulate the Election Commission and the lakhs of officials, who conducted the smooth and largely peaceful elections to the 15th Lok Sabha. Election to the Indian Parliament is truly the greatest

festival of democracy in the world and this mammoth task has been executed exceedingly well. Democracy is one of the finest ideas that humankind has produced and every Indian election celebrates the freedom of choice that powers this idea. India has a unique place in the consciousness of the world as the largest functioning democracy. When an elderly woman in a remote village proudly holds up the indelible ink mark on her index finger, she is telling the world that she has the power to make change in her country.

In 2004 my Government had set before the country a vision of an inclusive society and an inclusive economy. It worked diligently towards translating this vision into policies and programmes. My Government sees the overwhelming mandate it has received as a vindication of the policy architecture of inclusion that it put in place. It is a mandate for inclusive growth, equitable development and a secular and plural India. My Government is determined to work harder and better to realize these goals.

A continuing priority of my Government would be to consolidate the ongoing flagship programmes for inclusion. This will require re-energising government and improving governance. It will require meeting the challenge of restoring economic growth, which is now hurt by the global economic slowdown, back to a higher growth path. High growth is necessary to provide the government the capacity to expand opportunities for employment. It is necessary to provide resources to increase outlays in education, health care and infrastructure to meet the needs of all regions and all people. My Government will ensure that the growth process is not only accelerated but also made socially and regionally more inclusive and equitable. The yearning of our people for inclusiveness—economic, social and cultural—and the rejection of the forces of divisiveness and intolerance that my Government spoke of in 2004 continues as both its inspiring vision and its unfinished business.

My Government is acutely conscious of the challenge of rising expectations. There would be ten broad areas of priority for my Government for the next five years.

- Internal security and preservation of communal harmony;
- Stepping up of economic growth in agriculture, manufacturing and services;
- Consolidation of the existing flagship programmes for employment, education, health, rural infrastructure, urban renewal and introduction of new flagship programmes for food security and skill development;
- Concerted action for the welfare of women, youth, children, other backward classes, scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, minorities, the differently-abled and the elderly along with strengthened social protection;

- Governance reform;
- Creation and modernization of infrastructure and capacity addition in key sectors;
- Prudent fiscal management;
- Energy security and environment protection;
- Constructive and creative engagement with the world; and
- Promotion of a culture of enterprise and innovation.

My Government will maintain utmost vigil in the area of internal security. A policy of zero-tolerance towards terrorism, from whatever source it originates, will be pursued. Stern measures to handle insurgency and left wing extremism will be taken. Government has already prepared a detailed plan to address internal security challenges to be implemented in a time-bound manner. The Multi-Agency Centre will be strengthened to ensure effective intelligence sharing and processing and Subsidiary Multi-Agency Centres will be activated in all States. The National Investigation Agency has become operational and will be empowered to handle terror-related offences. Central and State police forces and intelligence agencies will be expanded and fully equipped with the best technology. A national counter-terrorism centre will be established to take pro-active anti-terrorism measures. Special Forces and Quick Response Teams will be raised and deployed in vulnerable areas. Enhanced information and intelligence sharing on a real time basis, would be made possible by the creation of a net-centric information command structure.

My Government will actively pursue police reform and in order to ensure the active participation of the citizenry in internal security, community policing will be promoted. At the same time government will continue to constructively engage with all groups that abjure violence in the Northeast, Jammu and Kashmir and other parts of the country.

Communal harmony shall be preserved at all costs. The mandate my Government received was unmistakable in that the people wanted the country's secular fabric to be protected. With this objective my Government will seek early approval of the Bill introduced in Parliament for the prevention of communal violence.

Our armed forces are the nation's pride, a symbol of our values of sacrifice, valour and the spirit of national integration. India's defence forces stand committed to the task of defending the territorial integrity of the country. They will be fully enabled with modern technology to repel any threat from land, sea or air. To enhance combat efficiency as also to address the requirements of modern day warfare, a number of steps are under way. The welfare of ex-servicemen will continue to be accorded high priority. The Committee headed by the Cabinet Secretary, to look into the

issue of One Rank One Pension has already commenced its work and expects to complete it by the end of June 2009.

The Unique Identity Card scheme for each citizen will be implemented in three years overseen by an Empowered Group. This would serve the purpose of identification for development programmes and security.

My Government was able to accelerate growth substantially in the last five years to a record five year average of 8.5 per cent. This produced an impressive expansion in high quality jobs and also gave us the capacity to guarantee rural employment and expand social and economic infrastructure in an unprecedented manner. My Government gave a new deal to agriculture. Public investment in agriculture was increased, farm loans of over Rupees sixty five thousand crore waived and there were handsome increases in procurement prices. These measures contributed to a revival of agricultural growth. My Government was able to expand access to education through a large number of new schools and other educational institutions, support a mid-day meal programme covering over fifteen crore children, provide nearly a crore of deserving students with scholarships each year, loans to over 16 lakh students and create a new wave of investment in institutions of higher education. It was able to revamp rural public health infrastructure and massively expand social protection through insurance schemes and pensions. Government was also able to effect pay revision for its employees including defence personnel, public sector employees and teachers in colleges. My Government could also increase assistance to States substantially in the last five years. All these initiatives were possible because high growth generated more resources. It is therefore imperative that our growth momentum is resumed.

The current financial year is expected to see a slowing down of growth on account of the global recession. My Government has responded to this unforeseen situation with a range of measures, including three stimulus packages, which have begun to show results. It is a matter of satisfaction that the Indian economy has not suffered the kind of slowdown that has been witnessed in almost every other country of the world. Government has also actively engaged with the international community, especially through the forum of the G-20, in order to ensure that coordinated action is taken at the global level and the necessary reforms brought in at the earliest. Our immediate priority must be to focus on management of the economy that will counter the effect of the global slowdown by a combination of sectoral and macro-level policies. My Government will focus attention on sectors that are adversely affected, especially Small and Medium Enterprises, exports, textiles, commercial vehicles, infrastructure and housing. This must be accompanied by measures to achieve a countercyclical expansion in public investment in infrastructure sectors including public-private partnerships in these sectors. Financing the investment will be a critical

constraint and my Government is determined to ensure that innovative steps are taken in this area, consistent with a medium-term strategy of prudent fiscal management.

Our country has benefited from large foreign investment flows in recent years. These flows, especially foreign direct investment, need to be encouraged through an appropriate policy regime. There is also a need to augment resources in the banking and insurance sectors in order to permit them to serve the needs of society better. Towards this end my Government will recapitalize the public sector banks to strengthen their financial position and also bring legislation to establish a regulator for the pension sector.

The momentum of public investment in agriculture and irrigation built up in the last five years will be further expanded and the three major instruments—the Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana, National Food Security Mission and the National Horticulture Mission—introduced by my Government strengthened.

The flagship programmes which my Government introduced have moved the country towards inclusive development. It would be our endeavour to consolidate these programmes in the next five years. The National Rural Employment Guarantee Act has proved to be what it promised—an effective social protection measure and the largest programme in the world for rural reconstruction. Its transformational potential is unfolding before our eyes. My Government would enlarge the scope of works permitted under the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act presently limited to unskilled manual work. The opportunity for improving land productivity through the NREGA will be maximized through better convergence of NREGA with other programmes. To ensure transparency and public accountability, independent monitoring and grievance redressal mechanisms will be set up at the district level.

The National Rural Health Mission has begun to strengthen rural public health infrastructure. The Mission would be consolidated to make perceptible reduction in infant mortality and maternal mortality in the next five years. Vaccine producing institutes in the public sector will be revived to support the immunization programme. My Government will expand the Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana to cover all families below the poverty line in the next five years. Malnutrition has emerged as a major health challenge needing urgent response. Hence the nutrition delivery programme will be comprehensively revamped to bring it under the watch of panchayat institutions and move to provision of hot cooked meals in anganwadis.

Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan has been able to provide access to children to elementary schools and retention has increased on account of the universal mid-day meal programme. The focus will be on making quality education a right through the enactment of the Right to Free and Compulsory Education

Bill now under consideration of Parliament. The Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan will universalize access to secondary education. The massive expansion in higher education through new institutions under implementation in the Eleventh Plan will enable the country to meet the challenge of education in full measure. In the last five years, a wide range of scholarships and educational loans was introduced for the needy and deserving students. This effort will be reviewed and further strengthened. Government's strategy for higher education will be formulated around a three-fold objective of expansion, inclusion and excellence. The suggestions given by the National Knowledge Commission will guide the formulation and implementation of the strategy.

While male literacy went up to over 75 per cent in the last census and is expected to be higher now, female literacy was only 54 per cent in 2001. My Government will recast the National Literacy Mission as a National Mission for Female Literacy to make every woman literate in the next five years. Increased female literacy is expected to become a force multiplier for all our social development programmes.

My Government launched Bharat Nirman five years ago as a time-bound business plan for rural infrastructure. It has succeeded in reaching basic infrastructure of roads, electricity and telephone to a large number of villages. It has also achieved most of the targets of rural water supply, rural housing and has increased irrigation potential. The remaining tasks will be completed in the second phase of Bharat Nirman. It is also proposed to set enhanced targets for Bharat Nirman in the second phase.

- The Indira Awas Yojana, which exceeded the original target of sixty lakh houses for the period 2004-2009, will now take up double the target of rural housing to one crore twenty lakh houses to be completed in the next five years.
- Rural Water supply programme will be completed by 2011 and handed over to be managed by panchayats in the next Plan.
- The rural telecommunication target will be set at reaching 40 per cent rural teledensity in the next five years and expanding broadband coverage to connect every panchayat to a broadband network in three years. The scheme for Common Service Centres or e-kiosks will be suitably repositioned to be a network of panchayat-level Bharat Nirman Common Service Centres to provide government services to citizens in rural areas.
- New targets would be set for rural electrification, irrigation and road connectivity.

The Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM) with approval of projects of nearly Rs. 50,000 crore in the last four years is reshaping our cities and has been widely welcomed. It will continue to

focus on infrastructure, basic services and governance reform and increase support to cities to upgrade public transport. Over 15 lakh houses are under construction for the urban poor. There is a need to focus urban housing programmes on the poor living in slums. My Government proposes to introduce a Rajiv Awas Yojana for the slum dwellers and the urban poor on the lines of the Indira Awas Yojana for the rural poor. The schemes for affordable housing through partnership and the scheme for interest subsidy for urban housing would be dovetailed into the Rajiv Awas Yojana which would extend support under JNNURM to States that are willing to assign property rights to people living in slum areas. My Government's effort would be to create a slum free India in five years through the Rajiv Awas Yojana.

My Government proposes to enact a new law—the National Food Security Act—that will provide a statutory basis for a framework which assures food security for all. Every family below the poverty line in rural as well as urban areas will be entitled, by law, to 25 kilograms of rice or wheat per month at Rs. 3 per kilogram. This legislation will also be used to bring about broader systemic reform in the public distribution system.

Government is acutely conscious of its responsibilities to provide greater opportunities for women, youth, other backward classes, scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, minorities and the elderly as well as strengthen measures for social protection for categories with special vulnerabilities. Some concrete steps that are proposed to create equal opportunities for women are reservation to elected bodies at all levels, reservation in jobs and a National Mission on Female Literacy.

Over 50 per cent of our population is below 25 years of age and their creative energy is our greatest strategic resource. The challenge is to invest in their education, employability and employment. India has the capacity to contribute to a fourth of the global work force if it invests in skill development of its youth. Education which provides employable skills holds the key for equal opportunities for Other Backward Classes, Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Minorities. My Government has in the last five years brought in legal changes and investment in this direction. These would be consolidated. Besides making massive investment in education, government will focus on the national skill development initiative that has commenced operation with the very ambitious goal of creation of 500 million skilled people by 2022 so that we realize the demographic dividend.

The implementation of the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act would be monitored to ensure that all title deeds are distributed by end of 2009.

My Government will continue to accord the highest priority to the welfare of minorities. The Prime Minister's New 15 Point Programme for the

Welfare of Minorities and the action taken on the recommendations of the Sachar Committee have, to some extent, succeeded in ensuring an equitable share for the minorities in government resources, jobs and plans. Steps under way would be consolidated further. Government would strive to strengthen and modernize the administration of wakfs, reform the management of Haj operations and set up an Equal Opportunity Commission.

The Amendment Bill to the Land Acquisition Act and the Rehabilitation and Resettlement Bill prepared to protect farmers and others dependent on farming from unfair displacement and which was placed before Parliament could not be carried through. It will be our endeavour to have these bills reintroduced and enacted in the budget session of Parliament.

My Government considerably enhanced provisions for social security through old age pension for all people below the poverty line and above 65 years of age, all handicapped people and all widows above the age of forty. It will examine extending social protection to other persons at special risk. Social security schemes for other occupations like landless labour, weavers, fisherfolk, toddy tappers, leather workers, plantation labour, construction labour, mine workers and beedi workers will be appropriately expanded.

An area of major focus for my Government would be reform of governance for effective delivery of public services. Reports of the Administrative Reforms Commission would guide the effort. Reform of structures in the higher echelons of government, increased decentralization, inclusion of women and youth in governance, process reform and public accountability would be key areas for focused action. As part of process reform, all proposals to the Cabinet will have to report on how the proposal under consideration will enhance the goals of equity or inclusion, innovation and public accountability.

My Government will initiate steps within the next hundred days on the following measures:

- Early passage of the Women's Reservation Bill in Parliament providing for one-third reservation to women in State legislatures and in Parliament;
- Constitutional amendment to provide 50 per cent reservation for women in panchayats and urban local bodies. Women suffer multiple deprivations of class, caste and gender and enhancing reservation in panchayats and urban local bodies will lead to more women entering the public sphere;
- Concerted effort to increase representation of women in Central Government jobs;

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- A National Mission on Empowerment of Women for implementation of women-centric programmes in a mission mode to achieve better coordination;
 - A voluntary national youth corps which could take up creative social action around the river cleaning and beautification programme beginning with the river Ganga;
 - Restructuring the Backward Regions Grant Fund, which overlaps with other development investment, to focus on decentralized planning and capacity building of elected panchayat representatives. The next three years would be devoted to training panchayat raj functionaries in administering flagship programmes;
 - A public data policy to place all information covering non-strategic areas in the public domain. It would help citizens to challenge the data and engage directly in governance reform;
 - Increasing transparency and public accountability of NREGA by enforcing social audit and ensuring grievance redressal by setting up district level ombudsman;
 - Strengthening Right to Information by suitably amending the law to provide for disclosure by government in all non-strategic areas;
 - Strengthening public accountability of flagship programmes by the creation of an Independent Evaluation Office at an arm's distance from the government catalysed by the Planning Commission. It will work on a network model by collaborating with leading social science research organizations and concurrently evaluate the impact of flagship programmes and place it in the public domain;
 - Establishing mechanisms for performance monitoring and performance evaluation in government on a regular basis;
 - Five Annual Reports to be presented by government as Reports to the People on Education, Health, Employment, Environment and Infrastructure to generate a national debate;
 - Facilitating a Voluntary Technical Corps of professionals in all urban areas through JNNURM to support city development activities;
 - Enabling non-government organisations in the area of development action seeking government support through a web-based transaction on a government portal in which the status of the application will be transparently monitorable;
 - Provision of scholarships and social security schemes through accounts in post offices and banks and phased transition to smart cards;

- Revamping of banks and post offices to become outreach units for financial inclusion complemented by business correspondents aided by technology;
- Electronic governance through Bharat Nirman common service centres in all panchayats in the next three years;
- A model Public Services Law, that covers functionaries providing important social services like education, health, rural development etc. and commits them to their duties, will be drawn up in consultation with states;
- A National Council for Human Resources in Health as an overarching regulatory body for the health sector to reform the current regulatory framework and enhance supply of skilled personnel;
- A National Council for Higher Education as recommended by the Yashpal Committee and the National Knowledge Commission to bring in reform of regulatory institutions;
- Develop a “brain gain” policy to attract talent from all over the world into the 14 universities proposed in the 11th Plan to position them as “Innovation Universities”;
- A roadmap for judicial reform to be outlined in six months and implemented in a time-bound manner;
- Targeted identification cards would subsume and replace omnibus Below Poverty Line (BPL) list. NREGA has a job card and the proposed Food Security Act would also create a new card. Identification of beneficiaries for other programmes which currently use the omnibus BPL list would improve identification based on programme objectives with the common underlying principle that all identification of beneficiaries will be done through gram sabhas and urban local bodies and the list placed in the public domain to be open to challenge;
- A Delivery Monitoring Unit in the Prime Minister’s Office to monitor flagship programmes and iconic projects and report on their status publicly;
- Suitably institutionalized quarterly reporting on Flagship programmes as “Bharat Nirman Quarterly Reports” where Ministers would publicly report on progress through the media.

Infrastructure is a fundamental enabler for a modern economy and infrastructure development will be a key focus area for the next five years. Public investment in infrastructure is of paramount importance. Bottlenecks and delays in implementation of infrastructure projects because of policies and procedures, especially in railways, power, highways, ports, airports and rural telecom will be systematically removed. Public-Private Partnership

(PPP) projects are a key element of the strategy. A large number of PPP projects in different areas currently awaiting government approval would be cleared expeditiously. The regulatory and legal framework for PPPs would be made more investment friendly. My Government will continue its special emphasis on infrastructure development in the North-East and Jammu and Kashmir and enhance connectivity to these regions.

Our fellow citizens have every right to own part of the shares of public sector companies while the government retains majority shareholding and control. My Government will develop a roadmap for listing and people-ownership of public sector undertakings while ensuring that government equity does not fall below 51 per cent.

My Government is firmly committed to maintaining high growth with low inflation, particularly in relation to prices of essential agricultural and industrial commodities. It will steadfastly observe fiscal responsibility so that the ability of the Centre to invest in essential social and economic infrastructure is continuously enhanced. This will require that all subsidies reach only the truly needy and poor sections of our society. A national consensus will be created on this issue and necessary policy changes implemented.

My Government has been able to significantly increase realization of direct taxes as a result of improved and simplified tax administration and this process will continue. The roadmap for moving towards a Goods and Services Tax will be vigorously pursued. My Government is fully seized of the issues of illegal money of Indian citizens outside the country in secret bank accounts. It will vigorously pursue all necessary steps in coordination with the countries concerned.

Coordinated action for energy would be guided by the integrated energy policy. The effort would be to see that at least 13,000 MW of generating capacity is added each year through a mix of sources—coal, hydel, nuclear and renewables. Village and rural household electrification and reduction in aggregate technical and commercial losses will continue to be given the highest priority. Competitiveness and efficiency in the power sector will be enhanced through time-bound measures, including operationalising the provision of open access.

The pace of oil and gas exploration will be intensified and India's oil diplomacy aggressively pursued. Reforms in the coal sector, for which a detailed blueprint has been prepared, will be pursued with urgency. The international civil nuclear agreements will be operationalised with various countries even as domestic sources of uranium are exploited and work continues on the indigenously designed fast breeder and thorium reactors.

My Government will ensure that our space programme which has achieved wide recognition continues to bring rich dividends to society in agriculture,

tele-medicine, tele-education and by providing information to rural knowledge centres, besides contributing to telecommunication, television broadcasting and weather forecasting. Several innovative initiatives commenced by government in the science and technology sector in the last five years and now under implementation will be further strengthened.

My Government is proactively addressing issues of climate change through eight national missions. Of these the National Solar Mission, the National Water Mission, the National Mission on Energy Efficiency, the National Mission on Sustainable Agriculture and the National Mission on Sustainable Habitat will be launched by the end of this year. The National Ganga River Basin Authority, set up recently will evolve a new action plan for cleaning and beautifying the river in partnership with the basin states.

My Government's foreign policy will continue to pursue India's enlightened national interest, maintaining the strategic autonomy and independent decision-making that has been its hallmark. India has a vital interest in the stability and prosperity of our neighbours. The highest priority will be accorded to working with our friends in SAARC to promote stability, development and prosperity in the region. Government will sincerely work with our neighbours to ensure that outstanding issues are addressed and the full potential of our region is realized.

My Government will seek to reshape our relationship with Pakistan depending on the sincerity of Pakistan's actions to confront groups who launch terrorist attacks against India from its territory. We will support initiatives in Sri Lanka, which can lead to a permanent political solution of the conflict there and ensure that all Sri Lankan communities, especially the Tamils, feel secure and enjoy equal rights so that they can lead a life of dignity and self-respect. India will make appropriate contribution to rehabilitate those affected by the conflict. In Nepal and Bangladesh, where multi-party democracy has returned, India will work closely with both countries to continue expanding bilateral ties for mutual benefit. Government will strengthen our close and vibrant partnerships with Bhutan and Maldives and continue to assist in the reconstruction of Afghanistan.

The momentum of improvement of our relations with the major powers will be maintained. The transformation of our partnership with the United States of America will be taken forward. Our strategic partnership with Russia has grown over the years, and we will seek to further consolidate it. With countries of Europe and Japan my Government will continue the sustained diplomatic efforts, which have produced qualitative changes in our relations since 2004. The multi-faceted partnership with China will be expanded.

My Government will continue to work with other developing nations. It will contribute to all efforts at peace in West-Asia through the establishment of a viable Palestinian State at the earliest. The traditionally close ties with

countries in the Gulf will be strengthened. The process of engagement with Africa reenergized with the first Indo-Africa Summit organized by my Government will be further expanded. The multi-dimensional partnerships with countries in South-East Asia and the Pacific as well as Central Asia and the Latin American region will be consolidated.

The Indian diaspora estimated at over twenty-five million across the world is an important economic, social and cultural force and my Government will deepen its engagement with it. Our ties and kinship with the diaspora make us acutely conscious of their well-being and to be sensitive to their concerns. As a responsible member of the international community, India will work with other countries in tackling issues of common concern such as international terrorism, the global economic crisis, climate change, energy security and reform of multilateral institutions to reflect contemporary realities.

Honourable Members, my Government believes that in the knowledge society in which we live today, creativity, innovation and enterprise hold the key to people and nations realizing their potential. The “dreary desert sand of dead habit” must be left behind. Our young people are tearing down the narrow domestic walls of religion, region, language, caste and gender that confine them. The nation must invest in their hope. My Government will ensure that its policies for education and science and technology are imbued with a spirit of innovation so that the creativity of a billion people is unleashed. The next ten years would be dedicated as a Decade of Innovation. It may be a symbolic gesture but an important gesture to drive home the need to be innovative in finding solutions to our many challenges. India’s young population is naturally restless and wants to see change quickly. My Government carries the weight of their dreams. Together let us dedicate ourselves to making each day of the next five years, a day closer to the realization of their dreams.

Jai Hind.

ADDRESS TO PARLIAMENT—22 FEBRUARY 2010

Lok Sabha	–	Fifteenth Lok Sabha
Session	–	First Session of the Year
President of India	–	Smt. Pratibha Devisingh Patil
Vice-President of India	–	Mohammad Hamid Ansari
Prime Minister of India	–	Dr. Manmohan Singh
Speaker, Lok Sabha	–	Smt. Meira Kumar

HONOURABLE MEMBERS,

My greetings to you as you assemble here today for the first session of both Houses of Parliament in the new decade. I am confident that all members would dedicate themselves to making this decade a glorious period in our country's march to prosperity and to its rightful place in the comity of nations. A heavy legislative agenda awaits you, which merits your careful attention.

I wish to convey my heartfelt condolences to the families of those who have lost their lives in the recent terrorist act in Pune. Left wing extremists continue to indulge in senseless violence, as in their recent attacks in West Bengal, where a large number of innocent lives have been lost. These cowardly acts strengthen our resolve to meet with added vigour the challenge posed by such violence. My Government has also given a call to left wing extremists to abjure violence and come for talks. Our plan to strengthen civil administration and bring the fruits of inclusive development to all would continue with determination.

My Government was voted to office with a clear cut mandate to protect and deepen the values of pluralism and secularism, and to ensure rapid growth with justice and fairness for all. Since assuming office in May 2009, my Government has worked single-mindedly to build on the achievements of its earlier term to deliver the promise of faster and more inclusive growth. The *aam aadmi* was and is at the core of this promise; the *aam aadmi* had to be protected against the ravages of the worst ever global economic crisis since the Great Depression and against the failure of the monsoon in large parts of the country in mid-2009.

My Government has combined a caring and sensitive approach in dealing with the immediate economic and social problems, has taken measures to

strengthen the nation's security, has proceeded with a desire to accommodate disparate political and regional voices, has sincerely worked towards deepening our federal polity, has vigorously pursued our enlightened national interests in pro-actively engaging with the global community, and has introduced sensitivity in the partnership between the institutions of Governance and civil society.

The global economic slowdown was met by strong policies of administering a domestic stimulus to the economy which has yielded handsome results. Economic growth which had slowed to 6.7 per cent in 2008-09 is likely to improve to around 7.5 per cent in 2009-10. At a time when industrialised countries have experienced negative growth, India has continued to grow at an impressive rate.

The unexpected and severe drought posed special challenges in managing the economy in 2009. My Government joined hands with the States to help the farmers in minimizing the impact of this massive adversity. A sum of more than Rs. 4000 crore has so far been allocated from the National Calamity Contingency Fund and the Calamity Relief Fund to the drought affected States. A Diesel Subsidy Scheme was introduced. Funds under Centrally Sponsored Schemes such as the Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana, and the National Food Security Mission were permitted to be used to create agricultural infrastructure for facilitating crop specific strategies, to minimize loss in production due to drought. An amendment in the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme was made to allow water conservation works in the fields of small and marginal farmers as well. It was due to these efforts that the fall in food production could be contained to a large extent. Special efforts were made to ensure that rabi production was not affected.

While we were able to avert any threat to our food security, there has been an unhappy pressure on the prices of food grains and food products. Higher prices were inevitable given the shortfall in domestic production and prevailing high prices of rice, cereals and edible oils globally. They are also to some extent a reflection of the implementation of our schemes of inclusive growth involving payment of higher procurement prices to our farmers and the impact of higher public spending on programmes of rural development, which have successfully raised incomes in rural areas.

My Government continues to accord the highest importance to ensuring relief to the *aam aadmi* on food prices. Despite a significant increase in the procurement prices of foodgrains, central issue prices for purposes of public distribution have been kept constant since 2002. The import regime for essential commodities has been liberalized. Government has decided to release 30 lakh tonnes of wheat and rice in the open market over the next two months, and release 5 lakh tonnes of wheat and 2 lakh tonnes of rice through the National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation and the

National Cooperative Consumers' Federation and their affiliated cooperatives, to benefit consumers at the retail level. Government has also released an additional allocation of 36 lakh tonnes of wheat and rice for distribution to cardholders over the months of January and February, 2010. This will be available to card holders over and above their normal allocations under the Public Distribution System. The scheme for subsidy on edible oils and pulses has been continued. State Governments have been advised to ensure effective action at the State level through de-hoarding, and appropriate use of State agencies such as Civil Supplies Corporations for the procurement of non-PDS food articles in bulk. The imports of wheat and refined sugar have been further liberalised. Steps have been taken to strictly check the smuggling of sugar. Government recently convened a meeting of the Chief Ministers and State Ministers of Food and Civil Supplies to discuss issues related to the rise in the prices of food articles and evolve a coordinated strategy. A Core Group consisting of senior Ministers of the Union Government and some Chief Ministers has been constituted to examine a wide range of related policy issues.

In the longer term, our food security can be ensured only through sustained efforts at increasing agricultural productivity combined with a comprehensive reform of the public distribution system and open market intervention. My Government is committed to bringing forth a legislation to ensure food security.

We now look forward confidently to further improvement in our growth performance in 2010-11. My Government will aim at a growth rate above 8 per cent in 2010-11 and seek to achieve 9 per cent growth in 2011-12. We will concentrate on infrastructure development, agriculture and rural development, education and health and ensure that the growth process is adequately sensitive to the concerns and well being of the weaker sections of society. We will work to create an environment which encourages investments, including in Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises.

My Government has taken several new measures to strengthen the security apparatus of the country to equip it to meet the grave challenge posed by terrorism. These include strengthening of the State and district police machinery and Central Para-Military Forces, operationalization of the National Investigation Agency, establishment of four National Security Guard hubs to ensure quick and effective response to any possible terror attack, augmentation of the strength of the Intelligence Bureau, strengthening of the Multi-Agency Centre in the Intelligence Bureau to enable it to function on a round-the-clock basis, and strengthening of coastal security.

Government remains vigilant against all forms of challenges posed by terrorism. Zero tolerance of terrorist activities is our principled policy. We have to keep constant watch and innovate against global terrorist groups.

The overall internal security, law and order, and the communal situation remained largely under control during 2009. Infiltration of terrorists from across the line of control in Jammu and Kashmir has gone up. Even then, the security situation has improved significantly in Jammu and Kashmir as well as in the North-East, but left wing extremism continues to be a significant cause of concern.

The Nation is proud of our armed forces. They have distinguished themselves in preserving the country's unity and territorial integrity and in defending our borders. Government is fully committed to the modernization of the armed forces. We will accord the highest priority to modernisation programmes to equip our armed forces with the required weaponry, equipment and platforms. The successful launch of the Agni-III missile is a shining example of the capabilities of our scientists and engineers who deserve full praise. Efforts to enhance our technological self-reliance received a new impetus with the commencement of the handing over of the main battle tank, Arjun, to the Indian Army.

My Government is committed to the welfare of servicemen and ex-servicemen. An Armed Forces Tribunal has been established for adjudication of complaints and disputes regarding service matters and other appeals. The recommendations regarding substantial improvements in the pensionary benefits of personnel below officers rank and commissioned officers have been accepted.

My Government firmly believes that the time has come to focus on ensuring that the processes of Governance are sensitized, administrative instruments sharpened, and that the benefits of welfare programmes reach the *aam aadmi*. This commitment to canons of good Governance must guide the massive slew of rural and urban reconstruction initiatives under Bharat Nirman, and other schemes for ensuring inclusive growth and social protection.

The pace of implementation of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act has picked up considerably. During 2009-10, so far, 4.33 crore households have been provided employment and 203 crore person-days were generated. This scheme has benefited the marginalised sections, with the participation rate of Scheduled Castes and Tribes being about 52 per cent. Participation of women has also been encouraging at around 49 per cent. The scheme has also resulted in an upward revision of rural wages.

My Government remains committed to completing the remaining tasks of Bharat Nirman in its second phase.

Under the rural housing component, during 2009-10, upto last December, 14 lakh houses have been constructed. Under the rural roads component, up to November, 2009, connectivity has been provided to nearly 34 thousand

villages through the construction of 96 thousand kilometers of roads. Under the rural water supply component, of the remaining 627 uncovered habitations, 586 have been taken up in 2009-10. Of the 1.79 lakh quality-affected habitations, about 35 thousand have been taken up in 2009-10. Under the irrigation component, which began in 2005-06, creation of irrigation potential of one crore hectares is targeted by 2011-12. As on 31.12.2009, coverage of more than 70 lakh hectares has been achieved.

The Rajiv Gandhi Grameen Vidyutikaran Yojana has resulted in the electrification of more than 67 thousand villages. Free electricity connections have been provided to nearly 84 lakh below poverty line households. Steps have been initiated to achieve rural tele-density of 40 per cent by 2014.

The urban sector of our country poses a challenge and presents an opportunity too. The Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission was launched in 2005 to address this challenge and harness the opportunity. Under the mission, projects worth over Rs. one lakh crore have been approved for urban development and welfare of the urban poor.

Urban housing and slums continue to demand our attention. Government is working on the ambitious Rajiv Awas Yojana to assist States that are willing to assign property rights to people living in slums. This programme will strive to create a formal space for slum dwellers within our cities and transform and redevelop these cities to make them slum-free.

The Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) sector is vital for sustained and inclusive growth. Government will take necessary steps to expeditiously implement the recommendations of the Task Force on MSMEs. These include improved credit access, development of infrastructure, strengthening of the District Industries Centres, improved raw material supply, facilitating of product marketing, and institutional reforms.

My Government subscribes to the idea of a balanced approach to national development, with special attention to our border States.

The Prime Minister's reconstruction plan for Jammu and Kashmir has been working well. Roads, colleges, Industrial Training Institutes, and Anganwadi centres have been taken up on an urgent basis under this initiative. An additional 500 megawatts of power has been provided to the State during the winter months.

My Government remains committed to the rapid development of infrastructure in the North-Eastern States. The Special Accelerated Road Development Programme covering almost 10,000 kilometers is in progress. This project will provide minimum two-lane national highway link to all the State capitals, and to each district in these States. This includes over 1600 kilometers long Trans-Arunachal Highway. A special programme to provide home lighting systems to all the border villages of Arunachal Pradesh is at an advanced stage of implementation.

It is imperative that as our economy grows apace, the disadvantaged sections of society be made part of the Indian success story.

Under the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, nearly seven lakh titles have been distributed so far. Further efforts will be made, in conjunction with State Governments, to ensure early disposal of the remaining claims.

Government has developed a comprehensive roadmap for the development of minority communities. Credit flows to the minority communities have risen to Rs. 82000 crore in 2008-09, which exceeds 12 per cent of the total priority sector lending. Recruitment of minorities to posts under the Central Government has gone up steadily. In fresh recruitments, minority representation has increased from 7 per cent in 2006-07 to more than 9 per cent in 2008-09.

The Multi-sectoral Development Programme for minority concentration districts has started off well. The three scholarship schemes started in 2007-08 have received an overwhelming response. The number of scholarships awarded has gone up to nearly 15 lakh. Girls constitute a very significant proportion of the awardees.

My Government will bring a proposal to amend the Waqf Act during this session of Parliament.

Our unity and social harmony is the best answer to the terrorists and their divisive designs. Hence, Government is committed deeply to protecting our social fabric and to that end, it proposes to move for the early passage of the Communal Violence (Prevention, Control and Rehabilitation of Victims) Bill, 2005, in this Session of Parliament.

My Government is committed to ensuring early passage of the Women's Reservation Bill which was introduced in the Rajya Sabha in May, 2008. Honourable Members, I would urge you to accord special attention to this critical proposal.

Two bills for constitutional amendment to provide 50 per cent reservation for women in panchayats and urban local bodies have already been introduced and it is hoped that these can be passed during this session.

The National Youth Corps Scheme has been introduced to enable young men and women between the age group of 25 to 35 years, to serve two years in nation-building activities. In the first phase 20 thousand volunteers would be deployed and they would be utilized in several creative social activities like cleaning the Dal Lake in Jammu and Kashmir.

Investment in education is critical for accelerated inclusive growth. Government has made substantial investments in primary education through the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan and the Mid-day Meal Programme, and is moving

towards universalization of education at the secondary level with the new Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan. The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 has been notified to be effective from 1st April, 2010. A scheme to assist State Governments in setting up 373 model colleges in educationally backward districts has been approved. A National Mission for Education through Information and Communication Technology has been launched to provide broadband internet connectivity to around 18,000 colleges and 400 universities in the country. A scheme to provide interest subsidy on educational loans taken by students from economically weak families has also been launched. A new campaign called “Sakshar Bharat”, with special focus on female literacy, has been started.

My Government is committed to bringing about a paradigm shift in our education infrastructure based on the three pillars of expansion, inclusion and excellence. A National Council for Higher Education and Research will soon be established as an overarching body to regulate higher education and research in India. Government is endeavouring to bring forward an appropriate legislation for facilitating the participation of globally renowned and quality academic institutions in our higher education sector, and for bringing in foreign education providers for vocational training and skill development.

For providing the common man an opportunity to share in the growth of the central public sector enterprises, Government has decided to list profitable companies on the stock exchanges through a public offer of at least 10 per cent of the equity.

My Government has taken several steps to meet the challenge of climate change. The National Action Plan on Climate Change is being operationalised. The Jawahar Lal Nehru National Solar Mission has been launched with an ambitious target of 20 thousand megawatts of solar power by 2022.

A mission for Enhanced Energy Efficiency has been approved, and it is expected to work towards saving of 10 thousand megawatts of electricity by the end of the Eleventh Plan.

To ensure expeditious and effective disposal of civil cases relating to environmental protection and conservation of forests, a National Green Tribunal Bill, 2009 has been introduced.

The economy remains critically dependent on oil and gas. After the near stagnation in production for about a decade, the year 2009-10 is set to register a major increase, with 20 new oil discoveries.

My Government is committed to give the aam aadmi maximum access to gas and petroleum products. A new scheme of rural LPG distribution namely, ‘Rajiv Gandhi Gramin LPG Vitarak Yojana’ has been launched.

With a view to meeting the objective of 'Power to All' by 2012, as stated in the National Electricity Policy, a special effort has been made to encourage expansion in electricity generation capacity. As a result, during the Eleventh Five Year Plan we expect to add more than three times the capacity that was added in the Tenth Plan.

My Government has announced a quantum jump in the pace of developing National Highways to reach 20 kilometers a day. Several policy initiatives have been taken to create an enabling environment. There is a fresh momentum in the development of National Highways.

The Civil Aviation sector could not remain unaffected by the global slowdown. Our national carrier, Air India, was particularly badly hit. Steps are being taken for its early rehabilitation under the careful guidance of a Group of Ministers.

The expansion and modernization of airports, especially the four metro airports, are progressing well. The Delhi airport project would be fully operational by July, 2010, well in time for the Commonwealth Games. The Airports Economic Regulatory Authority has been established to discharge regulatory functions in the airport sector.

My Government has been implementing the National Maritime Development Programme which envisages an investment of over Rupees one lakh crore, including private investment, on identified projects in the port and shipping sectors. The Indian Maritime University has now become fully functional with campuses in Chennai, Mumbai, Kolkata, Visakhapatnam and Kochi.

The Indian Railways knit this vast country together. My Government is committed to fulfilling a substantial expansion in capacity and modernisation of railway technology and to increasing the speed of both passenger and freight trains, while improving safety.

Train services have commenced in the entire Kashmir Valley, from Qazigund to Baramulla, demonstrating the commitment of my Government to the development of all corners of our country. A special North-East Rail Development Fund has been created, to provide assured financing for nine major national projects in the North-Eastern region.

The Indian Railways have also commenced work on the ambitious Dedicated Freight Corridors on the Eastern and Western trunk routes. This project would help drive India's growth.

Government, in partnership with the Government of Japan, has moved ahead on implementing the ambitious Delhi-Mumbai Industrial Corridor project. This challenging initiative, embracing six States, will provide impetus to industrial development in an environmentally sustainable manner, by

providing quality infrastructure, efficient transportation, reliable energy supplies and efficient logistics.

My Government is committed to the goal of extending the benefits of modern communication facilities to rural areas. Financial support is provided from Universal Service Obligation Fund to provide infrastructure for rural connectivity. My Government has already initiated action to set up 10 thousand towers in 2010-11 for connecting remote areas across the country. As against the target of 60 crore telephone connections by 2012, the achievement already exceeds 57 crore, with an unprecedented addition of nearly 2 crore connections in the month of December 2009 itself.

Mission Clean Ganga, under the aegis of the National Ganga River Basin Authority is expected to ensure that by the year 2020, no untreated municipal sewage and industrial effluents flow into the Ganga. This task, to ensure both nirmal dhara and aviral dhara, would involve collective and coordinated efforts of the Centre and the States concerned.

In the inclusive society that we aspire for, people must have confidence and access to a fair system of justice. Government has decided to set up a National Mission for the Delivery of Justice and Legal Reforms aimed at transforming the Government into a responsible and cautious litigant, introducing judicial management, leveraging information and communication technology to improve court administration and case management and reducing pendency of arrears.

Our quest for good health for all remains a national challenge. The National Rural Health Mission has stimulated creation of public healthcare infrastructure. To correspondingly augment the availability of human resources, many measures like establishment of more medical, nursing and para-medical institutions in under-served areas, creation of additional seats for specialists and super-specialists, and incentivising service by doctors in rural areas, have been initiated. Early indications reflect the positive impact of this mission.

My Government responded with alacrity to the Influenza A H1N1 pandemic. More than one crore in bound passengers were screened at international airports. New H1N1 testing laboratories were set-up, two crore doses of drugs were distributed to States free of cost, and 15 lakh doses of vaccines have been imported for health workers. For the first time in our country an indigenous Influenza A H1N1 vaccine is being developed which will be available this year.

My Government has undertaken a number of steps to unearth unaccounted money parked outside India. These include amendment of the Income-tax Act, 1961 to enable the Central Government to enter into tax agreements with non-sovereign jurisdictions. Steps have already been

initiated for negotiations for entering into Agreements for the Exchange of Information with major jurisdictions. Renegotiation of the Tax Treaty with Switzerland is in process. India is an active part of the global efforts to facilitate exchange of tax information, and to take action against tax evasion.

Access to news and entertainment must be made affordable and universal. To this end, in addition to notifying guidelines for providing Headend in the Sky services, the digitalization of both All India Radio and Doordarshan is on the anvil. The Commonwealth Games 2010 will be covered in High Definition format by Doordarshan for the first time. We also take pride that Indian films and music compositions have got international acclaim and recognition for our artists.

The Unique Identification Authority of India has been established with a mandate to issue unique identity numbers based on biometrics to all residents of India. This mammoth and unprecedented exercise will serve as a great enabler to improve targeting and delivery of major Government welfare programmes and public services, especially to those who are poor and marginalized. The first set of unique identity numbers is expected to be issued in the early part of 2011.

A Delivery Monitoring Unit (DMU) has been established in the Prime Minister's Office to review a select number of flagship programmes and other initiatives. The nodal ministries concerned have begun publishing DMU reports on their websites on a quarterly basis, to keep the nation informed of their progress.

Government is committed to creating an innovation strategy for Government, industry, entrepreneurs, technologists and academicians with a focus on inclusive growth and appropriate eco-system necessary to bring about generational change in our approach to development.

The country is hosting the prestigious 19th Commonwealth Games in October, 2010. Preparations for the event are at an advanced stage. Every effort will be made to ensure a befitting and successful conduct of the Games.

We have played our role in global affairs with responsibility and in the pursuit of peace, stability and progress in our region and beyond. Government will continue its active engagement with the world based upon the principles laid down by our founding fathers, and with the objective of furthering our goals of rapid and inclusive economic development and poverty alleviation in an increasingly interdependent world.

The visits to India by the King of Bhutan and the Prime Minister of Bhutan, the Prime Minister of Bangladesh, the President of Maldives, and the President and the Prime Minister of Nepal have given new content to

our traditional ties of friendship with neighbouring countries. Following the elections in Sri Lanka, we will continue to work with the Government to enhance our partnership. India will contribute to the humanitarian and rehabilitation efforts for the Tamil minority and long term re-construction in conflict-affected areas. India's assistance to the reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan witnessed important milestones and we will continue to partner Afghanistan in its development efforts. India is ready to explore a meaningful relationship with Pakistan if Pakistan seriously addresses the threat of terrorism and takes effective steps to prevent terrorist activities against India.

Our relations with the major powers have been further consolidated. The Prime Minister's visit to the USA laid the framework for the further expansion of the India-US partnership at the bilateral, regional and global level. My visit to Russia and the visit by the Prime Minister have renewed our time-tested friendship and opened new areas of cooperation. The 10th India – European Union Summit held in New Delhi was a milestone in our widening partnership with Europe. Our Strategic and Cooperative Partnership with China progressively acquired greater regional and global content. The visit of the Prime Minister of Japan underlined our mutual desire to accelerate our cooperation in all areas. The Prime Minister attended the first ever stand-alone summit of the BRIC countries.

My Government pursued its 'Look East' policy with vigour. The President of the Republic of Korea was our honoured Chief Guest at the Republic Day celebrations. Government hosted the President of Mongolia, and the Prime Ministers of Australia and Malaysia. The signing of the India-ASEAN Free Trade Agreement and the launching of several new initiatives within the India–ASEAN framework and the East Asia Summit process will further integrate India into the Asia-Pacific region.

My visit to Tajikistan, and the Prime Minister's presence for the first time at the Summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation were a reflection of Government's policy to strengthen the bridges of friendship and understanding with Central Asia. Relations with Turkey were strengthened following the visit of the President of Turkey.

The Prime Minister's participation in the Non-aligned Summit in Egypt further consolidated our relations with the developing world. We will continue to accord special attention to the countries of the Gulf and West Asia. India's steadfast support to the Palestinian cause was reiterated during the visit of the President of the Palestinian National Authority. The visit of the President of Namibia, and the visit by our Vice President to Botswana, Malawi, and Zambia carried forward our deepening engagement with the continent of Africa. We will build upon our steadily expanding cooperation with Latin America.

India's views on global challenges such as terrorism, energy and food security, climate change and the international financial and economic crisis were unambiguously articulated at the appropriate fora. The issue of reform of institutions of Global Governance was brought to the fore of the international agenda. India's voice was heard with respect in the G-20 process, the G-8 plus G-5 Summit, and the Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen.

We can take justifiable pride in the contributions made by the overseas Indian community in all walks of life across the globe which have earned them high respect. The first meeting of the Prime Minister's Global Advisory Council of Overseas Indians was held this year. Government will work towards giving Indian citizens living abroad the opportunity to vote by the time of the next regular general elections. We are committed to the security and welfare of the Indian diaspora. An Indian Community Welfare Fund has been established.

As part of the ambitious expansion of the country's nuclear energy programme, approval was accorded for the construction of additional Pressurised Heavy Water Reactors and sites for setting up Light Water Reactors. Following the availability of imported fuel as a result of the opening of international civil nuclear cooperation, commercial production has commenced in two units of the Rajasthan Atomic Power Project, and one more unit is expected to begin commercial production soon. New agreements for cooperation in the field of civil nuclear energy were concluded with Russia, Mongolia, Namibia, Argentina and the United Kingdom, while others are under negotiation.

The space programme continued to provide societal services to the Nation in the areas of tele-medicine, tele-education and village resource centres. The Oceansat-2 satellite was successfully launched onboard the Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle. The flight test of the GSLV- D3 launch vehicle with indigenous cryogenic stage, and the launch of the Cartosat-2B, INSAT-3D and Resourcesat-2 satellites are planned in the near future. The GSLV-Mark III launch vehicle will be further developed and activities towards the Chandrayaan-2 Mission will be initiated.

Our country stands at a historic turning point. Never before were we so close as we are today to realizing our national aspirations as envisioned by our founding fathers and spelt out by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru in this very hall on the midnight of 14th August 1947:

“The service of India means the service of the millions who suffer. It means ending poverty and ignorance and disease and inequality of opportunity.”

We have taken decisive strides towards reaching these goals. Still, much remains to be done. The road is long, but our journey is in progress. Let us march together with confidence to a new, bright future.

Jai Hind.

ADDRESS TO PARLIAMENT—21 FEBRUARY 2011

Lok Sabha	—	Fifteenth Lok Sabha
Session	—	First Session of the year
President of India	—	Smt. Pratibha Devisingh Patil
Vice-President of India	—	Mohammad Hamid Ansari
Prime Minister of India	—	Dr. Manmohan Singh
Speaker, Lok Sabha	—	Smt. Meira Kumar

HON'BLE MEMBERS,

I welcome you to the first session of the new decade. I hope this will be a very productive and useful session.

Our heart goes out to the people of Ladakh, who suffered the consequences of a severe cloud-burst, leading to an unprecedented loss of life and property. My government has taken effective measures for the immediate relief and rehabilitation of the affected people and it stands committed to completing the remaining tasks with the utmost urgency.

Recently, we suffered a national loss in the death of Pandit Bhimsen Joshi. The void left by his death in the cultural life of our country will be difficult to fill.

The Commonwealth Games in October last were a great success. Our sports persons secured an unprecedented medal tally. The citizens of Delhi displayed exemplary discipline and courtesy. We are proud of these achievements.

We have gone through a difficult year for our country. Inflation has been a problem in the past year. Certain parts of the country have suffered from unacceptably high levels of violence, especially areas affected by left-wing extremism and the Kashmir valley. There has been a grievance in some quarters that the benefits intended for the poor through anti-poverty programmes have not reached them in full measure.

My Government's foremost priorities in 2011-2012 will be:

- (i) to combat inflation and, in particular, to protect the common man from the impact of rising food prices;

- (ii) to address frontally the concern regarding the lack of probity and integrity in public life;
- (iii) to sustain the momentum of economic growth, while ensuring that the poor, the weak and the disadvantaged get a fair share in the fruits of growth;
- (iv) to maintain an uncompromising vigil on the internal and external security fronts; and
- (v) to pursue a foreign policy which will ensure that our voice is heard and our interests are protected in global fora.

The Indian economy continues to be on a trajectory of high growth despite an adverse global environment. The policies we followed to handle the global financial meltdown stand vindicated. However, there is no room for complacency. We have to strive to make the domestic environment more conducive to investment, encouraging public as well as private investment, and domestic as well as foreign investment, particularly foreign direct investment. We have to maintain the momentum for reforms on a wide front.

My Government is deeply concerned over the adverse impact of inflation on the aam aadmi and the threat it poses to the growth momentum. It has taken a number of pro-active measures to counteract the ill-effects of inflation. The import regime has been liberalized to ease supply constraints of critical items. Exports of commodities like edible oils and pulses have been banned. Pulses are being supplied at subsidized prices through the public distribution system. Public sector units have been directed to open more retail outlets for selling vegetables to individual consumers. The issue prices for rice and wheat for the public distribution system have not been changed for the last eight years. These steps have shown results. Cereal prices, a dominant cause of concern last year, have been in check. In fact, inflation was declining until November last when unseasonal rains in some states, led to a spurt in vegetable prices. These prices have come down again following the arrival of the fresh crop.

The long term solution lies in increasing productivity and production. My Government has provided huge incentives to our farmers to produce more. The minimum support price for paddy has been raised from ₹ 550 to ₹ 1000 per quintal and that for wheat from ₹ 630 to ₹ 1100 per quintal over a six year period. The support price for sugarcane has been increased by more than 50 per cent over the past two years. We have continued to give incentives through the supply of fertilizers at subsidized prices. The new nutrient based system is likely to enhance the rational use of fertilisers. The Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana, has pumped in investment of around ₹ 35,000 crore in agriculture. The National Food Security Mission has taken the green revolution to Eastern India. Credit flows to agriculture have

reached record levels. Nearly one crore hectares have been brought under assured irrigation since 2005-06. Water conservation measures have been taken up on a war footing under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act.

My Government stands committed to ensuring that farmers get remunerative prices for their produce. They should be able to sell to the consumer without impediments being placed on them. Measures necessary to ensure this fall largely in the domain of states. Concrete steps will be taken to augment investment and provide suitable incentives to the states in this direction.

I had announced earlier my government's commitment to bring forward a Food Security Law that will entitle statutorily every family, below the poverty line, to foodgrains at highly subsidized prices. Important inputs in this regard have been received from the National Advisory Council. The states are being consulted as the success of the programme hinges critically on their commitment to reforms in the public distribution system.

Our citizens deserve good governance; it is their entitlement and our obligation. My government stands committed to improving the quality of governance and enhancing transparency, probity and integrity in public life. A Group of Ministers is considering all measures, including legislative and administrative, to tackle corruption and improve transparency. The Group will consider issues relating to the formulation of a public procurement policy and enunciation of public procurement standards, review and abolition of discretionary powers enjoyed by Ministers, introduction of an open and competitive system of exploiting natural resources, fast tracking of cases against public servants charged with corruption, and amendments to the relevant laws to facilitate quicker action against public servants. It will also consider issues relating to the state funding of elections. The report of the Group of Ministers is expected soon. A bill to give protection to whistleblowers has been introduced in Parliament. My government has also decided to ratify the United Nations Convention Against Corruption.

The subject of electoral reforms has been debated over the years. I am sure that all parties across the political spectrum support the need for bringing about such reforms. I am happy to share with the Hon'ble Members that my government has constituted a committee on electoral reforms to fast track the process. The Committee has held regional conferences with the concerned stakeholders. This will culminate in a national conference in April this year. It is expected that this process of consultation would lead to a consensus on an acceptable agenda of reforms.

My Government attaches high priority to improving the delivery of justice and reducing delays in the disposal of cases. The details of the National Mission for Delivery of Justice and Legal Reforms are expected to

be finalized soon. This should result in re-engineering of procedures, improving of human resources in this sector and leveraging of information technology. The Judicial Standards and Accountability Bill, already introduced in Parliament, is intended to enhance the accountability of the judiciary, thereby improving its image and efficiency.

The issue of black money has attracted a lot of attention in the recent past, especially that allegedly stashed away in foreign banks. Government fully shares the concern about the ill-effects of black money whether generated by evasion of taxes on income earned legitimately or through illegal activities. My government stands committed to tackling the menace frontally. It requires diligent, sustained effort by all law enforcement agencies, including those of state governments.

My Government has taken many steps to strengthen the legal framework, build new institutions, and improve capacity to tackle this problem. A multidisciplinary study has been commissioned to study its ramifications for national security and recommend a suitable framework to tackle it. Government is also working closely with the international community, especially through the G-20, to expedite the process of identification and recovery of such money. India is now a member of the Financial Action Task Force in recognition of its anti-money laundering and anti-tax evasion measures. India has also gained membership of the Eurasian Group and the Task Force on Financial Integrity and Economic Development. My Government has taken steps to facilitate exchange of information for tax purposes with such countries and entities where Indian citizens may have parked their money. The early results have been encouraging. These steps have led to additional collection of taxes of ₹ 34,601 crore and detection of additional income of ₹ 48,784 crore. My government will spare no effort in bringing back to India what belongs to it and to bring the guilty to book.

Infrastructure is critical for development. My government has accorded the highest priority to improving infrastructure. The investment of over ₹ 20 lakh crore in the Eleventh Plan is more than twice the investment in the Tenth Plan. This is proposed to be doubled in the Twelfth Plan.

This huge quantum of investment cannot be funded by government alone. It needs to be supplemented by private participation. My government has put in place the required framework for a transparent public-private partnership. The contribution of the private sector has reached 34 per cent of the total investment in infrastructure last year.

The Indian telecom network has expanded to almost 800 million connections. The wireless network is the second largest in the world. My government is now making concerted efforts to take mobile and broadband services to the rural areas.

My Government proposes to extend the coverage of private FM radio services to all cities with a population of one lakh and above. A total of 806 new FM radio channels in 283 cities are proposed to be set up. It is also proposed to give incentives to future FM radio operations in Jammu and Kashmir, the North Eastern States and island territories.

Electricity is vital for our rapidly growing and increasingly inclusive economy. Although the programme to add power generation capacity shows improvement, energy shortages continue. My Government is committed to enhancing the per capita consumption of electricity, especially in rural areas. Total electrification of all villages is being accorded priority. Supply of quality power at reasonable prices to all, including farmers, will be possible if there is greater efficiency in the power sector. This requires concerted action on reforms in the power sector, particularly in improving the financial and technical capabilities of the electricity distribution companies in the States.

My Government is committed to making the coal sector more efficient, productive, environment friendly and consumer oriented. Steps are underway to augment the growth in coal production from the mines in the public sector as well as captive mines in order to meet the growing demands mainly of the power sector.

The National Solar Mission has been operationalised. The programme for adding 20,000 MW of solar capacity by 2020 has taken off.

My Government considers the mineral wealth of the country as a vital national resource which has to be harnessed towards rapid industrial development and inclusive growth. The Mines & Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act is proposed to be replaced with a new piece of legislation, which will, among other measures, ensure that local communities benefit adequately from the development process.

An efficient, reliable and safe transport system is vital for fostering rapid economic growth. My Government has set up a High Level National Transport Development Policy Committee for evolving a policy framework to provide an integrated and sustainable transport system.

Airport development is proceeding well. A state-of-the-art, integrated terminal has been operationalised in Delhi last year, making a new beginning in setting up world class infrastructure in this sector with public-private participation.

The tonnage under Indian flag crossed the 10 million mark for the first time in October, 2010. The capacity of Indian ports crossed one billion tonnes per annum in January, 2011.

The Indian Railways have prepared a road map for high growth, rapid expansion of their network, augmentation of capacity and modernization work on the Eastern & Western Dedicated Freight Corridors has commenced.

The development of highways is receiving priority attention. Almost 16,000 kms of road construction works is in progress. My Government has approved a scheme for the development of over 1,100 km of national highways and 4,300 km of State roads in left-wing extremism affected areas as a special project. The Arunachal Pradesh package for road & highways, involving development of about 2300 km length of roads, including the trans-Arunachal Highway, is expected to be completed by June, 2015.

There has been a massive growth in foreign tourist arrivals despite the global meltdown. Considering the immense potential of employment generation offered by the tourism sector, my Government proposes to provide training to at least ten thousand unemployed youth in this field.

To enhance the country's energy security, my Government is encouraging the national oil companies to aggressively pursue equity oil and gas opportunities overseas. The ninth round of the New Exploration Licensing Policy has been launched to harness the hydrocarbon potential of the country. Identification and exploitation of shale gas potential are being given priority.

Special Economic Zones have provided the requisite facilities to support production for export, with exports from such zones more than doubling last year to exceed ₹ 2 lakh crore. The Delhi Mumbai Industrial Corridor, which is under implementation, will provide world class infrastructure for manufacturing.

The micro, small and medium enterprises sector continues to retain its dynamism in terms of production, employment generation and contribution to exports. New initiatives will be launched shortly based on the report of the Task Force on Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises.

The khadi sector is a very large employer, with khadi and village units giving employment to over one crore persons. A comprehensive Khadi Reform Programme has been launched.

My Government is steadfast in the pursuit of inclusive growth and empowerment of the weaker sections of our society. More than 10 lakh titles have been distributed so far under the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act. The Scheduled Caste Sub Plan and the Tribal Sub Plan guidelines have been reviewed to ensure effective fulfillment of their objectives. Works under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, designed to improve productivity, can now be taken up on private land belonging to members of the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and other disadvantaged sections. Scholarship rates have been revised which will benefit 45 lakh students belonging to the Scheduled castes. More than 38 lakh students belonging to minority communities have benefitted from various scholarship schemes

designed to assist them. Hon'ble Members would be glad to know that close to half of these beneficiaries are girl students. The number of scholarships under the Rajiv Gandhi National Fellowship for Scheduled Caste students has been increased.

In 2004, my Government unveiled an innovative programme of Bharat Nirman. It was designed to improve the quality of life in our villages and small towns by addressing gaps in rural infrastructure. The second phase began in 2009.

Nearly 90,000 villages have been electrified and free electricity connections have been provided to about 1.40 crore households below the poverty line. There has been impressive progress in bringing additional area under assured irrigation and connecting rural areas with all weather roads. The target of 40 per cent rural teledensity by 2014 is likely to be exceeded. All panchayats will be provided with broad band connectivity in the next three years.

The original target of providing safe drinking water to more than 55,000 uncovered habitations has been nearly achieved; only 103 habitations now remain uncovered. Nearly 70 lakh houses were constructed in the first phase of Bharat Nirman. My Government now has an ambitious target of constructing 120 lakh houses during 2009-14 and 45 lakh houses have been constructed already.

My Government had introduced a constitutional amendment bill to provide reservation for women in Parliament and State legislatures. This has been passed by the Rajya Sabha and I hope sincerely that it will be considered by the Lok Sabha at the earliest.

The Protection of Women against Sexual Harassment at Workplace Bill has also been introduced in Parliament. My Government also proposes to introduce a bill regarding protection of children from sexual offences.

To address the needs of the old and the needy, my Government has launched 'Swavalamban', an old age pension scheme for workers in the unorganized sectors of the economy.

I am happy to inform you that my Government has taken a series of steps to commemorate the 150th birth anniversaries of Rabindra Nath Tagore and Swami Vivekananda in a befitting manner.

A strong and prosperous nation needs healthy and educated citizens. During the last seven years, my Government has endeavoured to ensure that our future generations are healthy, well educated and equipped to compete in the global market place. India is among the few countries with a legally guaranteed Right to Work. The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act has provided an effective social security net for

the poor who are assured employment for 100 days and a wage rate of ₹ 100 per day, adjusted with the cost of living index. Under this programme, employment was provided to around 5.25 crore households in 2009-10. Nearly 10 crore accounts have been opened to ensure transparency, convenience and financial inclusion.

The Right to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act is another step in my Government's approach to right-based governance. The Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan has been aligned to the implementation of this Act. It has been scaled up to universalise elementary education with a universal mid-day meal programme to improve both enrolment and retention.

My Government is committed to universalizing secondary education through the Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan. A girls' hostel is being set up in each of the 3,500 educationally backward blocks in the country to bring secondary education within the reach of girls. The Saakshar Bharat programme is designed to improve adult literacy, especially among the disadvantaged sections of society. By 2012, it will extend to all 365 districts that have poor adult female literacy levels.

Our country has a huge advantage in terms of being a young nation. Our young people have to be invested with skills if we are to reap the demographic dividend. To address the skill deficit in various sectors, my government is taking steps to effect changes in the Apprenticeship Act, to introduce a large number of modular training courses, and to make skills training bankable.

The National Rural Health Mission was introduced to address the need for comprehensive health care in rural areas. So far, more than ₹ 53,000 crore has been provided to the states for augmenting the health infrastructure. During the last five years, my government has also approved the appointment of more than 53,500 health workers in the health sub-centres in 235 districts considered extremely deficient in respect of health services. The coverage of beneficiaries of Janani Suraksha Yojana has increased from around six lakh in 2005-06 to nearly one crore in 2009-10. The benefits are already getting reflected in a decline in infant mortality rates.

My Government has initiated a new national programme for the prevention and control of cancer, diabetes, cardio-vascular diseases and stroke. It is expected that more than 15 crore people over the age of 30 and pregnant women of all age groups would be screened under this programme.

Scientific and technological competence of a high order is essential for sustained economic growth. A significant milestone was achieved in the three-stage indigenous nuclear programme with the commissioning of the

second Power Reactor Processing Plant in Tarapur. An Academy of Scientific and Innovative Research is being established to promote inter-disciplinary research and impart instruction in the frontier areas of science and technology. A Biotechnology Industry Research Assistance Council will be set up to augment efforts on food security, promote industrial research and development and facilitate innovation in biotechnology. A national programme for Crop Genetic Enhancement Network will be launched to develop improved varieties. A Biotechnology Regulatory Authority of India Bill is proposed to be introduced in this session. A National Science & Engineering Research Board has been notified to provide impetus for promoting basic research in the country.

Management of water resources of our country poses a major challenge. Emphasis will be given to increasing public awareness and ensuring participation of stakeholders in water management. Further, an integrated river basin approach, combining both surface and ground water, using advanced technological tools, would be adopted for water management and conservation.

My Government attaches the highest importance to the implementation of all laws relating to the protection of the environment and forests. The rapid pace of economic growth is imposing new challenges. A developing country like ours must find ways to strike an appropriate balance between environmental imperatives and developmental needs. My Government has constituted a Group of Ministers to look into all issues relating to the reconciliation of environmental concerns arising out of different kinds of developmental activities, without in any way diluting our pursuit of ecologically sustainable growth paths.

Conservation of rivers is an ongoing and collective effort of the Central and State Governments. Several measures have been initiated by my Government under the National Ganga River Basin Authority. A consortium of seven IITs is preparing a Basin Management Plan for the river Ganga.

My Government has established a National Green Tribunal to ensure effective and expeditious disposal of cases relating to environmental protection and conservation of forests and other natural resources.

The maintenance of law and order is the primary responsibility of State Governments with the support of the Central government. Terrorism, fundamentalism, ethnic violence and left wing extremism continue to pose major challenges. My Government initiated a major revamp in the security apparatus following the terrorist attack on Mumbai. A Multi-Agency Centre and Subsidiary Multi-Agency Centres have been operationalised; the National Investigation Agency has been constituted. Regional hubs of National Security Guards have been established. Nearly a hundred new battalions of Central para-military forces have been sanctioned and many have been raised in

the last two years. Coastal security has been strengthened. My Government is also committed to provide grants-in-aid of more than ₹ 2,000 crore to the States, over the next five years, to fill the gaps in training and infrastructure. Except for two incidents of terror in Pune and Varanasi, the internal security scenario has largely been under control.

The increase in police forces, with emphasis on recruitment from areas affected by left-wing extremism, has begun to show results. My Government has recently approved an Integrated Action Plan for 60 selected tribal and backward districts, in nine states, in order to address the felt needs of the local population.

The situation in Jammu & Kashmir has improved. A number of proactive measures have been taken by the Central and State Governments. An all party delegation visited the State. The interlocutors have also been engaged fruitfully in their endeavours. Intensive engagement with various groups in the North-East has largely reduced violence in those States.

I take this opportunity to salute the brave men and women of our armed forces. My Government will continue to ensure the welfare of servicemen and ex-servicemen and insist on the highest levels of probity and professionalism in the armed forces.

My Government is taking all necessary steps to transform our armed forces into a modern force that is equipped to meet the security challenges of the twenty first century. Special attention is being paid to the indigenous development of defence technologies, the expansion of defence production capabilities, and the creation of an environment for private industry to contribute to defence production. The indigenous multi-role light combat aircraft, Tejas, is being inducted into the Indian Air Force.

My Government's foreign policy priority remains the promotion and creation of an environment that is conducive to the socio-economic transformation of India. The pursuit of peace, shared prosperity and regional cooperation within the Indian sub-continent and in our extended neighbourhood will continue to guide my Government's efforts. High-level visits by the Heads of States and Governments of Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal and Sri Lanka to India during the last year have led to a qualitatively new level of understanding with our neighbours. We will continue to work for the return of stability and peace in Afghanistan and to help the Afghan people's reconstruction efforts. With Pakistan we seek a peaceful resolution of issues through a meaningful dialogue so long as Pakistan does not allow its soil to be used for terrorist activities against India.

My Government has also broadened India's economic and political relations with the countries of the Gulf, West Asia, Central Asia and East Asia. My visits to China, our neighbour, and to Laos and Cambodia, promoted

our links with an area which is increasingly important to India. The President of Indonesia was the Chief Guest at our Republic Day, and our relations with Malaysia, Vietnam and Japan, which were visited by the Prime Minister, continue to develop steadily.

Millions of our fellow citizens today work in the Gulf and West Asia. Indians overseas make valuable contributions to the countries of their residence and they do us proud. We will continue to work for the welfare of our diaspora, whose contributions to India we appreciate and whose links we will foster.

We have an abiding interest in peace, stability and development of countries in our extended neighbourhood. Egypt has recently seen momentous developments. As a democracy ourselves, we welcome the dawn of democracy elsewhere. My visits to the UAE and Syria significantly consolidated our relations, as did the Prime Minister's historic visit to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

In Central Asia, India is now a party to the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India Pipeline Project which could potentially transform the energy scenario in this sub-region.

My Government intends to hold the second India-Africa Forum Summit in Ethiopia later this year. As the first such initiative in Africa by India, it is a measure of the special place that Africa enjoys in the hearts of the people of India.

Our relations with the major powers also continue to develop satisfactorily. The leaders of all five Permanent Members of the UN Security Council—China, France, Russia, the UK and the United States of America—visited India during 2010. My government will continue to work to realize the full potential of these relationships in the pursuit of India's interests.

The international economic situation continues to remain complicated by the after effects of the global financial crisis. We have worked with our international partners in the G-20, the BRIC, and the IBSA groupings to promote an open and inclusive international trading order, resisting protectionist impulses. The Vice-President represented India at the last Asia-Europe (ASEM) Summit in Belgium. We have participated in global climate change negotiations to fulfil our responsibilities as global citizens, the demands of global equity, and the imperatives of India's rapid economic transformation. As a member of the United Nations Security Council for a two-year term starting in January this year my government will advance the cause of peace, development and security, and uphold the values of multilateralism.

We are blessed with the benefits of democracy. Our founding fathers gave us institutions, conventions and practices that have stood us in good stead. We owe it to ourselves and to the coming generations to strengthen these institutions, conventions and practices so that our future as a strong, free, prosperous and democratic nation is assured. I offer my best wishes to all of you in this endeavour.

Jai Hind.

ADDRESS TO PARLIAMENT—12 MARCH 2012

Lok Sabha	–	Fifteenth Lok Sabha
Session	–	First Session of the Year
President of India	–	Smt. Pratibha Devisingh Patil
Vice-President of India	–	Mohammad Hamid Ansari
Prime Minister of India	–	Dr. Manmohan Singh
Speaker, Lok Sabha	–	Smt. Meira Kumar

HONOURABLE MEMBERS,

I welcome you to this session which marks the halfway of my Government. I hope this session will be productive and useful.

The current year has been a difficult one for the world economy. Economic uncertainties have had an adverse impact across the globe. There is increased political uncertainty and turbulence in the international system and the environment in which we operate has become more challenging over the last one year. Our economy grew at a handsome rate of 8.4 per cent in 2010-11, but it has slowed down to about 7 per cent this year. This remains a healthy growth given current global trends.

The long-term fundamentals of the Indian economy remain robust. India's growth prospects arise from factors such as high domestic savings and investment rates, favourable demographics, and a stable democratic polity. My Government is confident that it will soon steer the country back to the high growth trajectory of 8 to 9 per cent.

My Government has remained committed to providing an honest and more efficient Government and has taken several further important steps towards that end. A formidable and unprecedented array of Bills has been introduced in the Parliament. These include the Public Interest Disclosure and Protection of Persons Making the Disclosure Bill, the Prevention of Bribery of Foreign Public Officials and Officials of Public International Organisations Bill, the Citizens' Right to Grievance Redress Bill, the Judicial Standards and Accountability Bill and the Lokpal and Lokayuktas Bill. India has also ratified the United Nations Convention against Corruption. Together these have the potential of bringing about a transformational change in curbing corruption and enhancing transparency and accountability in

governance. A comprehensive public procurement law is being formulated. The National Mission for Delivery of Justice and Legal Reforms has already been set up.

The Government has initiated action on various fronts to tackle the menace of black money. These include enactment of the *Benami* Transactions (Prohibition) Act, amendment of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act, setting up of a special committee to examine measures to strengthen laws to curb black money generation in the country, and commissioning of studies by independent agencies to assess the quantum of black money both inside and outside the country. The framing of the General Anti-Avoidance Rules and Controlled Foreign Company Rules has been taken up under the proposed Direct Taxes Code. Efforts are underway to build political consensus on the Goods and Services Tax, which will give a major boost to the economy by rationalising indirect taxes and giving full input credit.

We are taking many steps to contain the generation and outflow of illicit funds from the country and for opening channels for getting wider information on black money from other countries. These include: the operationalization of new Income Tax Overseas Units, signing of new Double Taxation Avoidance Agreements and new Tax Information Exchange Agreements and better implementation of Transfer Pricing and International Taxation provisions.

Efficient and automated delivery of public services with minimum human intervention is one of the keys to reducing corruption. Under the National e-Governance programme, more than 97,000 Common Service Centres have been established across the country for making public services conveniently available to citizens. Departments responsible for Income Tax, Passports, Central Excise, and Corporate Affairs have started delivering online services. New e-Governance projects in education, health, public distribution and postal services will be launched. The Electronic Services Delivery Bill has been introduced in the Parliament. Increasingly, public services under all e-Governance projects will be delivered through internet and mobile phones.

To reach the millions of underprivileged people, my Government has launched a unique ADHAAR scheme which would help improve service delivery, accountability and transparency in social sector programmes and lead to their financial inclusion.

The year 2012-13 will mark the first year of the 12th Five Year Plan that sets the goal of 'faster, sustainable and more inclusive growth'. The Approach Paper sets a target growth rate of 9 per cent for the 12th Plan period with 4 per cent growth for the agriculture sector.

My Government will work on five important challenges that our country faces today:

- to strive for livelihood security for the vast majority of our population and continue to work for removal of poverty, hunger and illiteracy from our land;
- to achieve economic security through rapid and broad based development and creation of productive jobs for our people;
- to ensure energy security for our rapid growth;
- to realize our developmental goals without jeopardizing our ecological and environmental security; and
- to guarantee our internal and external security within the framework of a just, plural, secular and inclusive democracy.

The objective of livelihood security is best achieved through a process of rapid and inclusive growth based on empowering the citizens of the country through education and skill development. Building on the platform provided by the Right to Education, integration of skill training with education at all levels is being emphasized. A National Vocational Education Qualification Framework is being developed to set common principles and guidelines for a nationally recognized qualification system.

My Government aims to provide skill training to 85 lakh people during 2012-13 and 800 lakh people during the 12th Plan. The Government will set up 1500 new Industrial Training Institutes and 5000 Skill Development Centres under Public Private Partnership at an estimated cost of ₹ 13,000 crore.

The Higher Education and Research Bill has been introduced in the Parliament. A National Commission for Higher Education & Research is being constituted to set a road-map for the future.

The teacher is at the core of the education system. My Government intends to launch a National Mission for Teachers aimed at improving teacher education and faculty development.

To provide all students opportunities to access higher education irrespective of their paying capacity, my Government intends to set up a Higher Education Credit Guarantee Authority for providing limited credit guarantees through risk-pooling for educational loans.

Recognizing the significance of education for empowerment, my Government has recently enhanced post-matric scholarship rates for students belonging to Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Classes after enhancing the scholarships for Scheduled Caste students. During the past one year, over 1.5 crore students belonging to Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Other Backward Classes and Minorities have been awarded scholarships and fellowships.

People need to be healthy if they have to learn, earn and lead a productive and fulfilling life. Our National Rural Health Mission has started making a difference as reflected in the health indicators. The Infant Mortality Rate has declined from 58 per thousand live births in 2005 to 47 in 2010 and Maternal Mortality Ratio has declined from 254 per one lakh deliveries in 2004-2006 to 212 in 2007-2009. The Janani Suraksha Yojana registered impressive gains with 1.13 crore women benefitting during 2010-11. Polio has been almost eradicated from the country. The World Health Organisation has decided to take India off the list of countries with active endemic wild poliovirus transmission.

In spite of the increased investment in health sector over the last 7 years, public expenditure on healthcare continues to be low. To attain the goal of universal healthcare, my Government would endeavour to increase both Plan and Non-Plan public expenditure in the Centre and the States taken together to 2.5 per cent of the GDP by the end of the 12th Plan. Universal access to free generic essential medicines in public health institutions in a phased and time bound manner will be ensured. The National Rural Health Mission will be converted into a National Health Mission covering urban areas also, in the course of the 12th Plan. My Government launched The National Programme for Prevention & Control of Cancer, Diabetes, Cardiovascular Diseases & Stroke and The National Programme for Health Care of the Elderly. We will strengthen district hospitals to provide advanced level secondary care. My Government is also working to end the shortage of human resources in health sector. Over the last three years there has been a 26 per cent increase in MBBS seats and 62 per cent increase in post graduate seats.

Drawing upon our rich heritage, Ayurveda, Yoga & Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homoeopathy (AYUSH) are being integrated with allopathic health care services. The States are given financial support for providing AYUSH facilities at Primary Health Centres, Community Health Centres and District Hospitals.

The immensely popular Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana, under which health insurance cover is already being provided to around 2.64 crore families, will be expanded. It is expected that by the end of the 12th Plan around 7 crore families will be provided health insurance cover under this scheme.

Malnutrition has been seriously impacting children, affecting their chances of gaining education and earning sustainable livelihood. My Government will restructure and strengthen the Integrated Child Development Services during the 12th Five Year Plan. In addition to the ICDS, a Multi-Sectoral Nutrition Programme will be launched in 200 High-burden Districts to address maternal and child nutrition needs.

My Government is committed to the development of the weak and vulnerable sections of our society. We will make major amendments to the Child Labour (Prohibition & Regulation) Act to prohibit employment of children under 14 years of age. Their place is in schools and not at the workplace.

In order to safeguard and promote the livelihoods of millions of street vendors, my Government is working on a legislation.

My Government will introduce a new Bill in the Parliament for eliminating manual scavenging and insanitary latrines. This will also provide for proper rehabilitation of manual scavengers in alternative occupations so that they are able to lead a life of dignity.

A separate Department of Disability Affairs is proposed to be set up for greater focus on addressing issues confronting persons with disabilities. The Government is considering a new legislation for persons with disabilities to replace the existing Act.

My Government is setting up a National Council for Senior Citizens as a broad-based participatory forum for this important segment of our population.

To help disadvantaged forest dwellers, more than 12.46 lakh titles have been distributed under the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act. Introduction of a scheme for Minimum Support Price for minor forest produce is being considered.

My Government will consolidate the gains of the Prime Minister's New 15-Point Programme which earmarks 15 per cent of the targets and outlays of identified Government schemes for disadvantaged sections of minority communities. The Multi-Sectoral Development Programme for Minority Concentration Districts has succeeded in committing an investment of over Rs. 3500 crore in socio-economic infrastructure in 90 minority concentration districts. This programme will be strengthened and its reach will be expanded during the year.

The outstanding loans to minority communities by public sector banks have increased to 14.5 per cent of priority sector lending for the year 2011-12. My Government will strive to reach the target of 15 per cent during the year 2012-13.

With a view to ensuring empowerment of minorities, my Government has recently decided to provide a sub-quota of 4.5 per cent for socially and educationally backward classes of citizens belonging to minorities, within the 27 per cent reservation for Other Backward Classes.

I am happy that my Government's continued emphasis on Agriculture has yielded fruit. The agricultural sector has grown at 6.6 per cent during

2010-11, the highest growth rate recorded in recent times. The country witnessed a record production of 241.56 million tonnes of foodgrains during 2010-11. We have achieved record production of fruits and vegetables at 231 million tonnes, pulses at 18 million tonnes, oilseeds at 31.1 million tonnes, and cotton at 33.42 million bales. My Government incentivized public investment in agriculture through its flagship programmes like the Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana, the National Food Security Mission and the National Horticulture Mission. The pro-farmer price support policy of my Government of the last 7 years is being continued. During the year 2011-12 the minimum support prices of selected agricultural commodities were raised by 10 to 40 per cent over the previous year.

Credit to agriculture reached about ₹ 4,60,000 crore in 2010-11 which is 22 per cent above the target. I am confident that the 2011-12 target of ₹ 4,75,000 crore will be achieved. An interest subvention scheme was implemented to ensure the availability of crop loans to small farmers for loans up to ₹ 3 lakh at the rate of 7 per cent per annum. An additional subvention of 3 per cent is being provided to such farmers who repay their short-term crop loan in time, reducing their effective interest rate to 4 per cent.

My Government will take steps to reduce the gap of about 10 million hectare between the irrigation potential created and the irrigation potential utilized by strengthening the Command Area Development Programme and merging it with the Accelerated Irrigation Benefit Programme. The National Water Mission will be implemented with focus on improving water use efficiency by 20 per cent in five years. My Government will make efforts to realize the farming potential of rain-fed and dry land areas by ensuring healthy participation by all stakeholders and convergence of various Government sponsored programmes.

Availability of all subsidized fertilizers has been ensured as per the requirements during the year. The Ministry is working on a comprehensive fertilizer monitoring system which would present information on fertilizer availability to the farmers through SMS, internet and telephone. My Government has decided to revive eight urea units of Fertilizer Corporation of India and Hindustan Fertilizer Corporation to create an extra installed capacity of 9 million tonnes of urea. We are aiming to achieve self-sufficiency in urea production in the next five years.

As I had announced in my address to the Parliament in June, 2009, my Government has introduced The National Food Security Bill in the Lok Sabha in the last winter session. This will provide the statutory framework for assuring food security. My Government is simultaneously working with the State Governments towards complete computerization of the Public Distribution System.

My Government will continue to focus on ensuring greater transparency, efficiency and accountability in the implementation of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee scheme. Since its inception, about 1100 crore man-days of employment has been generated and nearly ₹ 1,48,000 crore has been spent. The scheme has benefitted 25 crore people so far. The guidelines of the Scheme have been revised to ensure that it can be better aligned with the objective of raising land productivity.

My Government has launched the National Rural Livelihood Mission to enable poor rural households to access employment opportunities on a sustainable basis.

To underline inclusive growth, my Government will work for the early enactment of the Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Bill which provides for a liberal regime of compensation along with a mandatory rehabilitation and resettlement package, not only for land owners but also for those dependent on such land for livelihood.

With a view to improving rural infrastructure, my Government launched the ambitious Bharat Nirman programme in 2004. The second phase of this programme began in 2009. I am happy to state that the cumulative targets of creating additional irrigation potential of 1 crore hectares, providing electricity to 1 lakh villages and 1.75 crore poor households, upgrading 1.94 lakh kilometres of existing rural roads and providing safe drinking water to identified habitations, have been achieved well before 31st March, 2012, the targeted date.

To secure livelihoods in the urban areas, my Government will soon launch the National Urban Livelihoods Mission for imparting large scale skill upgradation, enabling entrepreneurship development, and providing wage employment and self-employment opportunities.

My Government will be launching the next phase of the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission in the light of the experience gained in the functioning of the Programme. The focus of the Mission will now shift from metropolitan cities and large towns to Class I and medium towns.

As part of our continuing efforts for providing sustainable and environment-friendly urban transportation, my Government will be taking up Phase-III of the Delhi Metro this year and requisite financial assistance will be provided for speedy implementation of Metro projects in Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Kolkata and Chennai. My Government has also decided to support preparation of feasibility reports for Metro Rail projects for all cities with population over 20 lakh people.

My Government proposes to introduce a Bill to provide for a uniform regulatory environment that would protect consumer interests, help speedy adjudication and ensure orderly growth of the real estate sector.

The needs of the urban homeless and destitute are of the highest priority for my Government, and I am happy to announce a new scheme called the “National Programme for the Urban Homeless” that would help create a network of composite shelters in the urban local bodies, with adequate provisions for housing and food for the destitute.

The Tourism sector has tremendous potential for job creation. My Government will target 12 per cent annual growth in this sector in the Twelfth Five Year Plan. In 2012-13, about 50 lakh jobs will be generated. The number of foreign tourist arrivals in 2011-12 is around 63 lakh, an increase of 9 per cent over the previous year.

My Government has undertaken a time-bound programme to convert the entire analog cable television system to digital by December, 2014. This will create a more equitable and transparent system and provide better viewing experience at affordable cost.

In order to extend FM radio services to millions living in small towns and remote areas, my Government has taken a significant decision to e-auction 839 FM Radio Channels in 245 cities across the country including in border areas of Jammu and Kashmir and the North-East.

For further ensuring the welfare of handloom weavers my Government recently announced a financial package of ₹ 3,884 crore for waiver of loans of handloom weavers and their societies. A comprehensive package of ₹ 2,362 crore has also been announced for providing cheap credit and subsidized yarn to weavers.

For investments in textile industry, my Government has approved the Restructured Technology Upgradation Fund Scheme and nearly doubled its outlay for the Eleventh Plan period from ₹ 8,000 crore to ₹ 15,000 crore.

Inflation, particularly in food articles, has been a major challenge in many countries including India. Rising global prices of commodities, industrial materials and fuels have contributed to inflation. The Government has taken several measures to ease the supply constraints, like reduction in import duties and a calibrated ban on exports. In order to ease the pressure of high international prices on fuels, custom duty on crude oil and import duty on petrol and diesel has been reduced.

Strong policy actions by RBI and effective measures by the Government of India have yielded results. Inflation in primary food articles fell sharply, giving relief to the common man. General inflation has also eased.

The Government has taken various steps to attract overseas capital to India by liberalizing rules regarding External Commercial Borrowings, increasing the limits on lending by Foreign Institutional Investors and launching of schemes to attract investment in mutual funds and equity from Qualified Foreign Investors.

The Government has set up the Financial Sector Legislative Reforms Commission to help rewrite and harmonize financial sector legislation, rules and regulations to address contemporary requirements.

My Government has undertaken a number of e-Governance initiatives for improving tax-payer services, transparency, accountability and efficiency in the direct and indirect tax administration in India. The e-filing of income tax returns, e-payment of taxes, ECS facility for electronic refunds directly in taxpayers' bank accounts and electronic filing of TDS returns are now available throughout the country. A Single Window System, called Aayakar Seva Kendra, for computerized registration of all taxpayers' applications including paper income tax returns, has been introduced.

India's merchandise exports touched US\$ 298 billion during 2011 registering a growth of more than 34 per cent over 2010. My Government has prepared a roadmap to double our merchandise exports to US\$ 500 billion by 2013-14. Comprehensive economic partnership agreements with Japan, Malaysia, Republic of Korea and a Free Trade Agreement with ASEAN have come into force. Negotiations with the European Union and a number of other countries are underway.

Under the Financial Inclusion Plan, nearly 73,000 habitations with population of over 2000 have been identified for extending banking services through banks or technology based banking solutions. By November, 2011, over 49000 villages had been covered. In order to promote the Self Help Groups, particularly those run by women, guidelines have been formulated to involve Non-Government Organizations.

My Government intends to recapitalise the Public Sector Banks to the extent necessary to maintain their financial health. The process to recapitalise 40 Regional Rural Banks has also been started.

My Government is preparing a Mission Plan 2012-2022 for the Indian electrical equipment industry. To promote electric automobiles, the National Board of Electric Mobility and the National Council of Electric Mobility have been formed. A scheme for promotion of the capital goods industry will be launched during the 12th Five Year Plan. A Policy for acquisition of raw material assets abroad has been instituted.

My Government has announced a National Manufacturing Policy which aims at augmenting the share of manufacturing in GDP to 25 per cent within this decade and creating 10 crore new jobs. Government will be establishing National Investment and Manufacturing Zones to promote growth in manufacturing.

The iconic Delhi Mumbai Industrial Corridor being developed along the Western Dedicated Rail Freight Corridor between Dadri and Navi Mumbai has made significant progress. My Government has decided to provide

₹ 17,500 crore to the DMIC over a period of five years for implementation of trunk infrastructure projects and another ₹ 1000 crore for project development activities.

The Government has recently approved the Public Procurement Policy for goods produced and services rendered by Micro and Small Enterprises with a special provision for enterprises owned by Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

To promote a strong competition culture, my Government is finalizing the National Competition Policy. The revised Companies Bill has been introduced in the Parliament.

My Government accords high priority to development of adequate and quality infrastructure to enable India to achieve sustainable and inclusive economic growth and make India a globally competitive economy. To meet the challenge of mobilizing resources for infrastructure, my Government has taken a number of initiatives such as issuing regulations for setting up Infrastructure Debt Funds to tap pension and insurance funds for the first time. A uniform definition of Infrastructure is also being finalised.

In order to promote private sector participation in creation of infrastructure, the Government has included additional sub-sectors under the Scheme for Financial Support to Public Private Partnerships in Infrastructure under the Viability Gap Funding Scheme. These include capital investment in the creation of modern storage capacity including cold chains and post-harvest storage, education, health and skill development.

We need to significantly upgrade and expand our infrastructure. My Government is making efforts to increase port capacity. Rail and road connectivity to ports is being improved. Possibilities are being explored to take up more inland water transport projects particularly in the North-East.

A comprehensive modernization programme of Railways is being launched. More dedicated freight corridors, in addition to the eastern and western corridors already in progress, will be built to segregate freight and passenger train operations.

My Government continues to give priority to road development. Projects for construction of at least 7000 kms of roads will be awarded this year. Initiatives have been taken to ensure transparency by switching to e-procurement and e-tendering.

Measures will be taken to protect the interests of air travellers. A Bill will be introduced this year for a Civil Aviation Authority to ensure safe, secure and affordable air services. An independent Air Accident Investigation Bureau will be constituted. Air traffic management services and airports will be upgraded and modernized.

My Government is taking all measures to step up the domestic production of oil and gas. The 9th round of New Exploration Licensing Policy has commenced. Bharat Oman Refinery Limited, a joint venture of BPCL and Oman Oil Company with refining capacity of 6 million metric tonnes per annum, was commissioned in June 2011.

My Government is working to connect all people across the country. Today there are 76 telephone connections for every 100 persons. My Government is working on new policies on Telecom, Information Technology and Electronics. A National Optical Fibre Network is being created at a cost of ₹ 20,000 crore for providing Broad-band connectivity to all Panchayats. Suitable measures are being put in place to facilitate the domestic manufacture of IT hardware.

As we expand our economy our energy requirements are expected to more than double in a decade. There are major achievements on the power generation front. Capacity addition in the 11th plan period is likely to be around 52,000 MW as against 21,000 MW in the 10th plan period. In 2011-12 alone we are likely to add a record 15,000 MW.

Under the Restructured Accelerated Power Development Reforms Programme, projects of around ₹ 30,000 crore have been sanctioned in about 1400 identified towns. For strengthening the distribution networks in other areas, my Government has approved the setting up of the National Electricity Fund that would provide interest subsidy on loans disbursed to the State Power Utilities. The Fund aims at galvanizing an investment of around ₹ 25,000 crore in the next two years. The Government has initiated steps to ease the supply of fuel for power generation.

We need new and renewable ways to cater to our energy demands. Solar power projects of around 400 MW are planned to be added by the end of the current financial year under the Jawaharlal Nehru National Solar Mission. One of the objectives of the Mission is to bring the cost of solar power generation closer to grid parity levels. I am happy to inform you that recent tariff bids are 50 per cent less than they were when the Mission was launched just two years ago.

The installed capacity of nuclear plants in the country has risen to 4780 MW, and is expected to further increase to 10,080 MW by the end of the 12th Plan. My Government attaches the highest priority to safety while harnessing nuclear energy, and will not compromise on safety or the livelihood of any section of society in the pursuit of our nuclear energy programme. After the Fukushima accident in Japan in March 2011, my Government ordered technical reviews of all safety systems of nuclear power plants in the country. The reports were made public and their recommendations for enhancing safety are being implemented. The Nuclear Safety Regulatory Authority Bill has been introduced in the Parliament.

My Government introduced the Mines and Minerals (Development & Regulation) Bill in the last session of the Parliament. The Bill aims at putting in place a legislative framework that would accelerate investments and infuse advanced technology in the mining sector and ensure that proceeds from mining activities are available for developing the areas affected by it and maintaining environmental balance.

India played a constructive and leading role in reaching positive outcomes in the international climate change talks held in Durban in December, 2011. We will continue to engage with the international community.

My Government attaches utmost importance to the conservation of our environment and biodiversity. The National Ganga River Basin Authority is galvanizing the efforts of the Centre and the States for cleaning the river in a holistic manner. Pollution abatement works of about ₹ 2600 crore have been sanctioned by the Authority in the last three years.

I am happy to say that India is hosting the 11th Conference of the Parties to the UN Convention on Biodiversity in Hyderabad in October, 2012. My Government will endeavour to use this Conference to bring about global consensus and forward-looking action on initiatives like operationalization of access and benefit sharing mechanisms. It would also promote community participation in conservation of resources.

My Government has revised and strengthened the Project Tiger Scheme with a Central assistance of over ₹ 1200 crore for the Eleventh Plan Period. A special Programme for re-introducing the extinct Cheetah has also been instituted.

A national mission for a Green India has been mooted under the National Action Plan on Climate Change for increasing the forest cover and improving its quality over 10 million hectares.

India's rightful place in the comity of nations hinges on our ability to achieve socio-economic transformation through scientific and technological excellence. My Government will persevere in its efforts to increase the expenditure on Research & Development from 1 per cent to 2 per cent of GDP. Public investment in Research & Development has grown at 20 to 25 per cent each year during the 11th Plan period. Government has successfully introduced the Innovation in Science Pursuit for Inspired Research or INSPIRE scheme and more than 5 lakh science students have been given awards till now.

A number of institutional initiatives have been taken to facilitate innovation in the field of science & technology. A Biotechnology Industry Research Assistance Council is being set up as a not-for-profit company to facilitate the growth of biotech industry to help small and medium enterprises. To focus on socio-economic issues of national importance that

have linkage with science & technology, an Academy for Science Policy Implementation and Research or ASPIRE has been set up. The Academy of Scientific and Innovative Research has also been set up.

The Monsoon Mission programme launched by my Government will enable us to significantly improve monsoon prediction for the benefit of our farmers. The coverage of farmers under the agro-meteorological services will be raised from the current level of 10 per cent to around 40 per cent in the next Plan period. Integrated ocean information advisory services will be extended to 90 per cent of coastal fishermen in our country.

My Government pursued the utilization of space technologies for national benefit. Eight satellites were launched successfully. The communication satellite GSAT-8 was put into orbit. Several major satellite launches are planned for 2012, including India's first microwave remote sensing satellite with all-weather imaging capability and India's first navigational satellite. We propose to conduct the next flight of the Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle using the indigenous cryogenic upper stage in 2012.

Our Armed Forces are known for their professionalism, discipline and devotion to duty. The Government of India is committed to ensuring the welfare of all our Servicemen and Ex-servicemen.

Active measures are being undertaken to maintain the three Services as a modern and evolving force that is capable of meeting the security challenges of the future, including coastal security. Our focus is on enhancing domestic defence production capabilities as well as achieving technological self-reliance in weapons and delivery systems. In the years ahead, our aim is to make our Armed Forces among the technologically most advanced in the world. Recent milestones in this direction include the launch of the Agni-IV missile and the proposed induction of the Light Combat Aircraft, Tejas, into the Indian Air Force.

The Central Armed Police Forces protect our borders and our hinterland with equal valour and sacrifice. For these forces, my Government is setting up the first medical institute and super speciality hospital as a mega health-care infrastructure project.

In the area of internal security my Government has launched a number of measures towards development of areas affected by Left Wing Extremism. The Integrated Action Plan with an outlay of ₹ 3,300 crore in the last two years has brought development to the villages in the most backward and violence-affected districts of the country. The Plan, which was being implemented so far in 60 districts, has been extended to 78 districts.

My Government has shown that acts of violence can be contained with a firm but humane approach. The security situation in the North-Eastern States and Jammu and Kashmir has shown considerable improvement during

the last year. My Government has always been willing to enter into dialogue with any group willing to abjure the path of violence. It is encouraging that a number of organisations have come forward seeking resolution of their grievances in a peaceful manner.

A major success achieved in Jammu and Kashmir was the conduct of the Panchayat elections after a long gap. It received an overwhelming response from the people with more than 80 per cent voter turnout. More than one crore pilgrims had 'Darshan' of Mata Vaishno Devi during 2011. The Special Industry Initiative Scheme known as "Udaan" and the Skill development and Employment Scheme called "Himayat" have been launched for the youth of Jammu and Kashmir. While "Udaan" aims at targeting 40,000 youth for skill development, "Himayat" would be covering one lakh youth in the next 5 years at a cost of ₹ 235 crore. More than 1,000 trainees have already been given placement letters in different sectors.

The bomb blasts on July 13, 2011 in Mumbai and September 7, 2011 in Delhi were a grim reminder that terrorist modules continue to be active in the country. In 2011, eighteen terrorist modules were neutralized. The National Intelligence Grid and the National Counter Terrorism Centre aim to improve India's capability to counter internal security threats.

In deference to the long cherished wishes of the people of the region, my Government signed a tripartite agreement for setting up of the Gorkhaland Territorial Administration. Another tripartite Memorandum of Settlement has been signed with United People's Democratic Solidarity in Assam. A non-lapsable central pool of resources has been created to cover the gaps in funding requirements of Central Government projects in the North-East.

In the realm of foreign affairs my Government has pursued a policy of promoting peace and cooperation in our immediate neighbourhood and beyond to enable us to achieve our goals of socio-economic development and national security. My Government remains firmly committed to the success of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation. We wish to see all nations in South Asia prosper, enjoy stability and realise their true potential through the broadening of regional economic cooperation, trade and infrastructure development.

This process received significant impulses from the visits of the Prime Minister to Afghanistan, Bangladesh and the Maldives and the visits of the President of Myanmar, His Majesty the King of Bhutan, the President of Afghanistan and the Prime Minister of Nepal to India.

The Protocol on the Land Boundary Agreement between India and Bangladesh paves the way for settlement of long standing issues and a mutually beneficial bilateral cooperation. My Government also initiated

steps for resettlement and rehabilitation of the internally displaced persons in Sri Lanka.

We are committed to resolving all outstanding issues with Pakistan through dialogue. We look forward to building upon the progress made so far mindful of the need for Pakistan to take credible action against terrorist groups and the related infrastructure on its soil.

India's 'Look East' policy has resulted in a significantly deeper engagement with countries of East Asia and South-East Asia. We were privileged to have the Prime Minister of Thailand as the Chief Guest for this year's Republic Day celebrations. India will, for the first time, host a commemorative India-Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) Summit in December this year to mark twenty years of our dialogue partnership.

India has a vital stake in the peace, stability and progress of the countries of West Asia and North Africa. Over six million Indians live and work in the Gulf region. We would like the people of the region to chart their own pathways to nation building and development at this historic time of transition and change. We are unwavering in our support to the Palestinian cause.

Our traditional relationship with Africa received a fresh impetus following the second Africa-India Forum Summit which was held for the first time in Africa last year. Our ambitious Pan African e-Network project has been commissioned in 47 out of 54 countries in the African continent.

The visit by the Head of State of Slovenia to India, my visits to Austria and Switzerland and the Vice-President's visit to Turkey consolidated our political relations with Central Europe. The Prime Minister's visit to Kazakhstan and the visit of the President of Uzbekistan to India added new impetus to our relations with Central Asia.

Our partnerships with the major world powers continue to develop. The United States is a valued strategic partner with whom we have a multi-faceted relationship based on our national interests. India's special and privileged Strategic Partnership with Russia was further strengthened during Prime Minister's visit to Russia last year. We attach high priority to the development of our Strategic and Cooperative Partnership with China. The rapid growth of our trade and economic relations with China has significance not only for our bilateral relationship, but for the global economy as a whole. India's relations with the European Union and its Member-States are based on shared values and expanding commercial, economic and people to people exchanges. India's relations with Japan continue to expand in the economic as well as security spheres based on strong political will on both sides.

India played an active part in the G-20, BRICS and IBSA processes. We look forward to shortly hosting the next BRICS Summit in India. As a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council, we have sought to work with the rest of the world in efforts to maintain international peace and security while respecting the established principles of international law, national sovereignty and territorial integrity.

My Government has embarked upon a comprehensive overhaul of the Passport issuance system through the mission-mode “Passport Seva Project” which is expected to be fully implemented during the current year. An Integrated online Visa application system under the Immigration, Visa and Foreigners Registration & Tracking scheme is under implementation.

The overseas Indian community is a vibrant element of India’s civilizational and cultural ethos. Last year, my Government undertook Operation Safe Homecoming to evacuate over 16,000 Indian nationals from Libya in view of the deteriorating situation in that country. We also made arrangements for evacuation of Indian nationals from Egypt and Yemen following disturbances in those countries. A Bill has been introduced in the Parliament to streamline and merge the People of Indian Origin and Overseas Citizen of India schemes by amending the Citizenship Act.

Hon’ble Members, my Government is showing a new path towards rapid development and modernisation based on the belief that a prosperous society can be built on the principles of humanity, equality and fraternity which the founding fathers of our nation so cherished. We are presenting a new template of a society where livelihoods can be secured for millions of underprivileged and the aspirations of our youth for a better life can be met; a society where massive developmental projects do not impinge on the security of the ecology and environment; a society that is open, democratic and transparent, but where national security is always paramount.

Hon’ble Members, Parliament has a heavy agenda. I hope that all of you will work together in a spirit of constructive cooperation to discharge the business before the two Houses. I offer my best wishes to you in your task of fulfilling the aspirations of the people.

Jai Hind.

SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE



ADDRESS TO PARLIAMENT—21 FEBRUARY 2013

Lok Sabha	—	Fifteenth Lok Sabha
Session	—	First Session of the Year
President of India	—	Shri Pranab Mukherjee
Vice-President of India	—	Mohammad Hamid Ansari
Prime Minister of India	—	Dr. Manmohan Singh
Speaker, Lok Sabha	—	Smt. Meira Kumar

HONOURABLE MEMBERS,

I welcome you to this session as I address this joint sitting of the two Houses for the first time as President. I hope this session will be productive and useful.

As I speak to you, I am aware that an aspirational India is emerging, an India that demands more opportunities, greater choices, better infrastructure, and enhanced safety and security. Our youth, our greatest national asset, are a confident and courageous lot. I have no doubt that their passion, energy and enterprise will take India to new heights.

Amidst these aspirations, we are also burdened by gathering anxieties about economic slowdown, job security and employment prospects. People are concerned about the security of our women and children. They are also anxious about timely delivery of their entitlements and about persisting social and economic inequality.

The past year has been a very difficult one for the global economy. Europe is in recession. Most emerging markets are growing very slowly. It has been a difficult year for India also. Both global and domestic factors have affected our growth. We need to address the impact of both. My Government has responded to the situation by taking several measures to revive investment activity and investor sentiment.

An important initiative that my Government has taken recently is the rollout of the Direct Benefits Transfer system. This would enable Government sponsored benefits such as scholarships, pensions and maternity benefits to flow directly into the accounts of beneficiaries, who can access them using their Aadhaar number. In due course, the Direct Benefits Transfer System will also cover wages and subsidies on food and LPG. This system will help

cut down leakages, bring millions of people into the financial system and lead to better targeting of beneficiaries. It will be a trend-setter in the use of modern technology to bring benefits to our poorest citizens, especially in rural areas. However, the Direct Benefits Transfer System will not be a substitute for public services and will be complementary to the Public Distribution System.

The average annual growth rate of GDP in the 11th Plan, which concluded last year, was 8 per cent. A notable feature of the Plan was the progress towards achieving inclusiveness with a faster decline in poverty than in the previous decade. The National Development Council has recently adopted the 12th Five Year Plan, which further sharpens the focus on faster, more inclusive and sustainable growth. The 12th Plan recognises that growth outcomes will depend upon the extent to which we are able to take some difficult decisions. The Plan proposes to consolidate Centrally Sponsored Schemes into a smaller number and increase their flexibility. This will give States the much-needed freedom to experiment and innovate.

The Indian economy is currently experiencing slower growth. Real GDP grew by 5.4 per cent in the first half of the current fiscal year. This is significantly lower than the average of around 8 per cent in the last decade. Our slower growth is the consequence of a combination of global and domestic factors. My Government is taking steps to deal with the factors responsible for the slowdown. Inflation is easing gradually but is still a problem.

In recent months, there have been positive developments too. There has been a moderation in core inflation and recovery in growth is likely. Policy measures announced during the year have also restored optimism at home and abroad.

My Government has announced a roadmap for fiscal consolidation by containing the current year's fiscal deficit at 5.3 per cent of the GDP. The Government is also working with State Governments to reach a consensus on the Goods and Services Tax.

There is reason for cheer on the agricultural front. The growth in agriculture and allied sectors during the 11th Plan was 3.7 per cent compared to 2.4 per cent in the 10th Plan.

I am proud to mention that relentless efforts of farmers coupled with conducive policies of the Government, have resulted in record foodgrain production for two consecutive years with last year achieving a peak of 260 million tons. This year, despite erratic and deficient rainfall, it is projected that we will produce more than 250 million tons of foodgrains.

Our foodgrains position is, therefore, comfortable. The total stock of foodgrains with the public sector agencies was 662 lakh tons on

1st February 2013, including 307 lakh tons of wheat and over 353 lakh tons of rice. My Government is committed to enacting the National Food Security Bill, having received the recommendations of the Standing Committee.

Several specific initiatives have been undertaken under the Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojna. Sugarcane and cotton production have touched record levels in 2011-12.

My Government will continue to lay emphasis on the development of rainfed and degraded areas during the 12th Five Year Plan. An outlay of ₹ 29,296 crore has been earmarked under the Integrated Watershed Management Programme during the Plan period.

Horticulture production reached an all-time high of 251 million tons during 2011-12. The year 2012-13 has been declared as the 'Year of Horticulture'. A National Centre for Cold Chain Development has been constituted to give a fillip to the cold chain sector.

With 128 million tons of milk production in 2011-12, India continues to be the largest producer of milk in the world. In order to meet the rapidly growing demand for milk, the Government has approved the National Dairy Plan Phase-I, which will help meet the projected national demand of 150 million tons of milk by 2016-17.

To give a further boost to food processing, my Government has launched the National Mission on Food Processing. Construction of godowns is being promoted under Public Private Partnership mode. Storage capacity of about 181 lakh tons will be created over the next two years across the country with additional storage space of 5.4 lakh tons in the North-East.

The recently approved New Investment Policy for urea is expected to create nearly 100 lakh MT of additional production capacity in urea by 2017, making the country self-reliant in urea.

Around 34 lakh hectares of irrigation potential was created under the Accelerated Irrigation Benefit Programme during the 11th Plan. During the 12th Plan, an additional 87 lakh hectares of irrigation potential is planned to be created under the Programme. The New National Water Policy adopted recently by the National Water Resources Council emphasizes efficient use of water and the need to align planning for water resources with the challenges of climate change, equity, social justice and sustainability.

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme continues to break new ground in my Government's effort to provide work to those who seek employment during times of hardship. Around 5 crore households were provided employment under the scheme in 2011-12.

In order to make available improved housing for the rural poor, the Government has substantially enhanced the assistance under Indira Awas Yojana by increasing it from ₹ 45,000 to ₹ 70,000 per unit in plain areas

and from ₹ 48,500 to ₹ 75,000 per unit in hilly and difficult areas including Left Wing Extremism affected areas.

My Government has recently introduced important official amendments to the Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Bill. I am confident that the law will be enacted.

The next phase of the Jawaharlal Nehru Urban Renewal Mission is being finalized. Meanwhile, the tenure of the current Mission has been extended until March 2014 for completion of ongoing projects and for sanction of new projects so as to maintain the momentum of development of urban infrastructure. In order to give a push to capacity building efforts of Urban Local Bodies, the Government has decided to create a separate fund of ₹ 1,000 crore.

My Government proposes to extend the Rajiv Awas Yojana to all small and medium towns, with a target of one million houses in the 12th Plan.

My Government is giving priority to addressing the problem of contamination of sources of drinking water. During 2012-13, 5 per cent of the National Rural Drinking Water Programme Fund has been earmarked for allocation to States facing this problem. A Rural Water Supply & Sanitation Project for Low Income States, estimated at nearly ₹ 5,000 crore, is being developed with the help of the World Bank to assist States that are lagging behind in the coverage of piped water supply.

Recognising its crucial role in reducing the burden of disease, my Government has accorded increased priority to rural sanitation. The Total Sanitation Campaign has been modified in the form of the Nirmal Bharat Abhiyan with the goal of providing access to sanitation for all rural households by the year 2022.

My Government has recently increased the pension for widows and disabled beneficiaries under the Indira Gandhi National Widow Pension Scheme and Indira Gandhi National Disability Pension Scheme from ₹ 200 to ₹ 300 per month. On attaining the age of 80 years, beneficiaries of both the schemes now migrate to Indira Gandhi National Old Age Pension Scheme where they get a pension of ₹ 500 per month.

With a view to recognizing the contribution of street vendors and ensuring uniformity in the legal framework for street vending across States, the “Street Vendors (Protection of Livelihood and Regulation of Street Vending) Bill, 2012” has been introduced in Parliament.

Under the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006, more than 32 lakh claims have been filed and nearly 13 lakh titles have been distributed.

To ensure the educational empowerment of minority communities, my Government is implementing three scholarship schemes, with 30 per cent of the funds in each scheme earmarked for girl students. An amount of over ₹ 880 crore has been disbursed as scholarships to more than 55 lakh students till 31 December in 2012-13. To encourage students belonging to minority communities to take up higher studies, an amount of ₹ 66 crore has been released under the Maulana Azad National Fellowship Scheme. The Wakf Act is being amended and Wakf Development Corporation will be set up for development and protection of Wakf properties.

Under Prime Minister's New 15-Point Programme, the effort is to ensure that 15 per cent of the targets and outlays of the identified schemes benefit the minority communities. For financial inclusion, the flow of priority sector credit to minorities at the national level during 2012-13 reached ₹ 1,71,960 crore as on 30.9.2012, which was more than 15 per cent of the total priority sector lending.

As promised by my predecessor last year, a new Bill for the elimination of manual scavenging and rehabilitation of manual scavengers was introduced in the Lok Sabha in September 2012.

A centrally sponsored scholarship scheme has been introduced for Scheduled Caste students studying in classes IX and X. It is expected to benefit about 40 lakh students.

My Government has created a separate Department of Disability Affairs. The Government recently launched the Rajiv Gandhi National Fellowship for students with disabilities to enable them to pursue higher education.

For holistic development of children, the Government has approved the restructuring and strengthening of the Integrated Child Development Scheme during the 12th Plan with a total outlay of ₹ 1,23,580 crore.

My Government has enacted a path-breaking legislation, the 'Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act', which provides for stringent punishment for persons who commit or abet such offences.

For ensuring a safe and secure environment for women in work places, the Government introduced the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Bill, 2012 in Parliament. The Bill has been passed by the Lok Sabha. My Government is also deeply concerned about incidents of sexual offences against women. After considering the recommendations of the Justice J.S. Verma Committee, the Government has promulgated an ordinance, amending the criminal law to provide for stringent punishment for heinous sexual offences against women. The Government has also begun to implement a series of administrative measures to improve the safety and security of women in the country.

The National Mission for Empowerment of Women will implement a pilot project in public hospitals in 100 districts, called “One Stop Crisis Centre”, a specialized facility for providing all necessary services for women subjected to violence.

The Mid-day Meal Programme today covers around 11 crore children in over 12 lakh schools. Several new initiatives have been taken by the Government to make it more effective. My Government is committed to expanding coverage under this programme to pre-primary schools in a progressive manner.

My Government is considering a strategic shift in central funding to States for higher education through a new programme called the Rashtriya Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan. This programme will encourage States to develop comprehensive higher education plans in an integrated manner to address the issues of expansion, equity and excellence.

My Government has taken major strides in accelerating our skill development efforts. The number of ITIs that stood at 5114 in 2006-07, more than doubled to 10344 by the end of 2012.

In January 2013, we completed two years without detection of even a single case of wild polio-virus. This is the longest polio-free period in the country ever since eradication efforts were launched.

In health infrastructure, over 43,500 new construction and upgradation works of health facilities were taken up in the period 2005-06 to 2012-13 and nearly 70,000 additional beds have been added in Government health institutions. During the same period, around 1.45 lakh medicare staff has been added in various States under the National Rural Health Mission.

To overcome the shortage of nursing staff, Government has sanctioned over 200 nursing schools in remote and under-served districts in the last two years. To increase the availability of doctors and specialists, several reforms were initiated, resulting in a record increase of 46 per cent MBBS seats and 70 per cent Post-Graduate seats in the last five years. An overarching National Health Mission, covering both rural and urban areas, is being finalized.

Over 1.1 crore women benefited from the Janani Suraksha Yojana during 2011-12. Under the Janani Shishu Suraksha Karyakram, pregnant women are entitled to absolutely free care in public health institutions.

To further improve child health, my Government has launched the Rashtriya Bal Swasthya Karyakram for screening of children below 18 years for 30 different types of diseases, disorders, deficiencies and disabilities. This national initiative will eventually cover around 270 million children across the country.

Due to efforts of the Government, there have been significant reductions in Maternal Mortality Rate, Infant Mortality Rate and Total Fertility Rate in recent years. Life expectancy at birth has increased from 61.9 years in the period 1996-2000 to 66.1 years in the period 2006-2010.

The National AIDS Control Programme has been recognized globally as a success story. The programme has reduced annual new HIV infections by 57 per cent in the last decade. Adult HIV prevalence has decreased from 0.40 per cent in 2000 to 0.27 per cent in 2011.

Since the launch of the Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana, more than 3.35 crore smart cards have been issued and more than 43.26 lakh persons have availed hospitalization facility under the scheme. This insurance scheme has been extended to building and other construction workers, street vendors, beedi workers and other categories.

Lack of adequate and quality infrastructure is a major hurdle in the fast growth of our economy. Therefore, it is imperative that the infrastructure deficit is overcome and adequate investment takes place. Government has taken two major steps to ensure that impediments in this area are eliminated.

The first is setting up of the Cabinet Committee on Investment to expedite decisions on approvals and clearances for implementation of projects. The second is the creation of Infrastructure Debt Funds to raise low-cost, long-term resources for refinancing infrastructure projects.

My Government remains committed to increasing the share of manufacturing to 25 per cent of GDP and creating 100 million jobs within a decade. Under the National Manufacturing Policy, 12 National Investment & Manufacturing Zones stand notified, 8 of them along the Delhi-Mumbai Industrial Corridor and 4 others at Nagpur, Tumkur, Chittor and Medak. The Government has also liberalized the FDI policy in single-brand and multi-brand retail trading, air transport services, power exchanges and the broadcasting sector. The E-Biz project has been launched to serve as a 24x7 online single window system for providing services to investors and businesses.

The National Electric Mobility Mission Plan-2020 has been prepared. It envisages a roadmap for facilitating manufacture of electric and hybrid vehicles that are environment friendly and reduce our dependence on fossil fuels.

My Government has notified the National Pharmaceutical Pricing Policy-2012 to ensure availability of essential medicines at affordable prices even while providing sufficient opportunity for innovation and competition to support the growth of the industry. Six new National Institutes of Pharmaceutical Education & Research at Hyderabad, Gandhinagar, Hajipur, Kolkata, Guwahati and Raebareli have started functioning.

My Government has taken effective measures to incentivize exports and provide support to labour intensive sectors. India became the largest exporter of rice in 2012-13.

With a view to providing further support to handloom weavers, the Government is considering a scheme for concessional credit for the handloom sector to benefit about 10 lakh handloom weavers.

To promote Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises, 20 per cent of all Government procurement is required to be from Micro & Small Enterprises. The Bombay Stock Exchange and the National Stock Exchange launched Small and Medium Enterprises exchange platforms in 2012, making access to capital markets easier.

As a major step forward in reforming our banking sector, the Banking Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2012 was passed by both the Houses of Parliament in December, 2012. The Government amended the Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002 for more effective prevention of money laundering.

Pursuing the Budget announcement of 2012-13, Government has notified the Rajiv Gandhi Equity Savings Scheme for first-time retail investors. Through the disinvestment policy, we have broad-based people's ownership of Government enterprises.

The tourism sector contributes substantially to the country's foreign exchange earnings, which during 2012 were estimated at ₹ 94,487 crore, a growth of over 21 per cent over the previous year. Foreign tourist arrivals in India in 2012 were estimated at 6.65 million.

India is the ninth largest civil aviation market in the world. Kolkata and Chennai Airports now have new terminals. My Government has given 'in-principle' approval for setting up a greenfield airport at Aranmula in Kerala, apart from airports at Navi Mumbai, Mopa and Kannur.

The Dedicated Freight Corridor project is an ambitious mega project connecting our Eastern and Western Coasts with the interiors of the country and will cover 3300 km of railway track. Construction of over 1000 km route length is expected to begin shortly.

A state of the art Coach Production Facility at Raebareli has been commissioned for producing modern stainless steel coaches. Innovative approaches under the PPP mode are being launched for first-and-last-mile projects and development of railway stations. Construction of the Banihal-Qazigund tunnel in Jammu and Kashmir has been completed and work on starting train services is in progress.

In 2012-13, 2600 km of roads are expected to be constructed and contracts for 3000 km of new roads are expected to be awarded. A new approach to road construction, the EPC mode, has been put in place. This

will ensure significant cost and time savings compared to traditional contracting methods. A length of 2900 km of highways will be put under the Operate, Maintain and Transfer system, which will improve road maintenance. To improve connectivity from Kashmir Valley to Kargil-Ladakh region, a tunnel of 6.5 km has already been approved and another tunnel of 13 km is planned. This would ensure all weather connectivity.

In 2012-13, 42 PPP port projects have been targeted for award, involving an additional capacity of 251 Million Tonnes Per Annum with an investment of ₹ 14,770 crore in 2012-13. The Government proposes to establish two new major ports, one at Sagar Island in West Bengal and the other in Andhra Pradesh with a total additional capacity of around 100 Million Tonnes Per Annum.

A number of steps such as technology development & modernization and development of new coal blocks by engaging Mine Developer and Operator have been taken to improve the productivity of Coal India Limited (CIL). After resolving pending issues, 46 Fuel Supply Agreements were signed by CIL with power utilities. Following the notification of the new Auction by Competitive Bidding Rules, my Government is in the process of allocation of 17 coal blocks to Government companies, as a first step.

My Government has taken important steps to harness our mineral resources. Geological Survey of India has planned to complete the geophysical and geochemical mapping of highly promising 5.71 lakh square km. area during the 12th Plan. For developing deep sea mineral exploration capability, an Ocean Going Research Vessel is likely to be commissioned in 2013.

In the 11th Plan, 54,964 MW of electricity generation capacity has been added which is about two & half times the capacity added during the 10th Plan. The total installed capacity stood at about 2 lakh MW at the end of the 11th Plan. To meet the projected demand by the end of the 12th Plan, the targeted capacity addition in the Plan is 88,537 MW.

Under Rajiv Gandhi Gramin Vidyutikaran Yojana, more than one lakh un-electrified villages have been electrified. Nearly 2,85,000 villages have been intensively electrified and free electricity connections given to more than 2 crore BPL households.

A scheme for financial restructuring of State owned distribution companies has been notified by the Government of India to enable their turnaround and long-term viability. This would help settle loans worth more than ₹ 1.85 lakh crore that the power utilities owe to financial institutions.

Through suitable policy interventions, my Government is targeting significant reduction of our dependence on imported oil and gas which is presently more than 75 per cent of our requirement.

Renewable energy has to play an expanding role in achieving energy security in the years ahead. The country has an installed capacity of over 26,400 MW from various renewable energy sources, which is over 12 per cent of the country's total power generation capacity.

My Government's reform measures and proactive policies, as well as active participation by the private sector have resulted in an unprecedented growth of the telecom sector. With more than 935 million telephone connections, the Indian telecom network is the second largest in the world. Tele-density was 76.75 per cent in October, 2012 with rural tele-density crossing 40 per cent. The Government approved the National Telecom Policy-2012 which lays down the vision and strategic direction for the telecom sector. Two and a half lakh Gram Panchayats will be connected with broadband facility under the National Optical Fibre Network project by December 2014.

The Department of Posts is rolling out a rural ICT programme, through which all post offices will be connected electronically. Computers will be provided to 1,30,000 post offices, which would facilitate both postal and banking services at post offices.

In 2011-12, the Indian IT and IT Enabled Services industry showed remarkable resilience by earning revenue of US\$101 billion. The total employment in IT Software and Services touched 2.8 million in 2011-12, with an annual growth of about 9 per cent.

My Government has approved the National Electronics Policy, 2012, covering a comprehensive set of schemes with special focus on promoting domestic Electronics System Design and Manufacturing. The National Policy on Information Technology has been approved. It envisions strengthening and enhancing India's position as a global hub for IT and using IT as an engine for rapid, inclusive and sustainable growth. About 1,00,000 Citizen Service Centres are delivering IT services to the people.

The Government has successfully completed the first phase of Cable TV digitization in three metro cities. This will be extended to other cities in a phased manner.

We are commemorating 100 years of Indian cinema. The first phase of the National Museum of Indian Cinema is proposed to be dedicated to the nation at Gulshan Mahal, Mumbai.

During 2012, Government commemorated the 150th Birth Anniversaries of Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore, Shri Madan Mohan Malaviya and Shri Motilal Nehru apart from undertaking preparatory work for observing the 150th Birth Anniversary of Swami Vivekananda and the Centenary of the Gadar movement. A new International Award, namely the "Tagore Award for Cultural

Harmony”, has been instituted. The first award will be given posthumously to late Pandit Ravi Shankar. A National Mission for Libraries commenced its work in 2012.

The Archaeological Survey of India celebrated 150 years of existence in 2012 and took up important initiatives in Cambodia, Myanmar and Laos for restoration of temples there.

The performance of our athletes at the London Olympics and the Paralympics was encouraging. My Government has decided to put in place a long-term plan for training of sports-persons in select disciplines. My Government also intends to put in place a new system for identification of sports talent from the panchayat to the district level.

The Rajiv Gandhi National Institute of Youth Development in Tamil Nadu has been accorded the status of an institute of national importance.

Some parts of our country have in the recent past witnessed communal incidents. My Government is determined to thwart any attempt at disturbing our communal peace and harmony.

In July 2012, incidents of violence took place in some districts of Assam, in which about hundred persons were killed. In order to control the violence, adequate army and paramilitary forces were deployed. The State Government set up relief camps and provided basic amenities to the affected people. The Central Government announced a package of ₹ 300 crore for relief and rehabilitation efforts.

Incidents of Left Wing extremist violence have shown a declining trend. The number of deaths in naxal violence declined from 611 in 2011 to 414 in 2012.

My Government is committed to dealing with Left Wing Extremism in a comprehensive manner. It is pursuing a two-pronged approach of conducting proactive and sustained operations against extremists and focussing attention on development and governance issues in extremist affected areas. A new scheme for construction and strengthening of 400 police stations has been started in the affected areas. The first phase of the plan for improving road connectivity in 34 most affected districts at a cost of ₹ 7,300 crore is likely to be completed by March, 2015.

The security situation in Jammu and Kashmir and the North East has shown a perceptible improvement. The number of tourists visiting Jammu and Kashmir has increased from 8.99 lakh in 2011 to 12.37 lakh in 2012. Compared with 2011, the number of fatalities in incidents of terrorist violence in 2012 declined by nearly half. Under the placement linked scheme named Udaan, proposals of corporate houses to train nearly 25,000 youth from Jammu and Kashmir have already been approved. Under another

placement linked skill development initiative called *Himayat*, more than 1650 youth from the state have been trained, of which over 650 have been employed.

My Government has accorded high priority to Border Management. In addition to the work of border fencing, roads and floodlighting along the borders with Bangladesh, Pakistan and Myanmar, Government has decided to undertake the construction of 509 additional border outposts along the Indo-Bangladesh and Indo-Pakistan border. The Integrated Check Post at Attari was operationalised in April, 2012.

In pursuance of the tri-partite agreement, an autonomous body called the Gorkhaland Territorial Administration (GTA) has been formed in August, 2012 for the Darjeeling Hill Areas. My Government will provide the GTA financial assistance of ₹ 200 crore per annum for 3 years for development of socio-economic infrastructure. This will be over and above the normal plan assistance to the State of West Bengal.

My Government remains committed to ushering in reforms for greater transparency, probity, integrity and accountability in governance. To this end, my Government attaches priority to the enactment of legislation proposed in the Whistle Blowers' Protection Bill, the Prevention of Bribery of Foreign Public Officials and Officials of Public International Organizations Bill, Citizens' Right to Grievance Redress Bill, and the Lokpal and Lokayuktas Bill, which already stand introduced in the Parliament. My Government is also considering amendments to the Prevention of Corruption Act to punish the guilty and protect the honest public servants more effectively.

My Government has taken significant initiatives including enhanced funding of ₹ 4867 crore in the 12th Plan to strengthen the legal and judicial infrastructure in the country. Over 14,000 District and Subordinate Courts are being equipped with the tools of information and communication to provide quality citizen-centric services to litigants. As one of its foremost priorities, Government will endeavour to establish Gram Nyayalayas for ensuring affordable and expeditious justice to the common man. My Government proposes to introduce the Judicial Standards and Accountability Bill in this session as a significant initiative towards judicial reforms.

The people of India are grateful to our Armed Forces for their exemplary professionalism, commitment and bravery in defending our nation. The country is united in paying tribute to our soldiers who have made the supreme sacrifice by laying down their lives for the country.

Our Armed Forces are fully prepared to defend the country against any threat. My Government will continue to take all necessary steps to modernize and equip our Armed Forces; bolster defence infrastructure, especially in the border areas; encourage indigenous defence R&D; and expand domestic

production of defence equipment. The continuing progress in our missile programme has strengthened our deterrence capability. Coastal security has also been further strengthened.

My Government attaches the highest importance to the welfare of servicemen and ex-servicemen. Significant steps have been taken to enhance the pay and pension of serving and retired Services personnel and to remove disparities. This will benefit over 13 lakh personnel.

My Government's foreign policy continues to be driven by the objectives of creating an enabling environment for our national development, ensuring the security of the nation and fulfilling our international responsibilities.

We continue to seek peace, stability, cooperation and economic development in the sub-continent. We attach the highest priority to relations with our immediate neighbours. With Pakistan, we have made progress towards normalization of relations, strengthening mechanisms for bilateral trade and facilitating greater people-to-people contact. While we remain committed to taking the process forward, it is also important that Pakistan abides by its commitments and desists from acts that contribute to a trust deficit. As Afghanistan prepares for the political and security transition in 2014 and beyond, we will continue to help Afghanistan evolve peacefully and fight terrorism and extremism.

My Government proposes to introduce a Constitutional Amendment Bill in Parliament to give effect to the provisions of the Land Boundary Agreement with Bangladesh and its 2011 protocol, which will strengthen border management and our security.

We are making progress in our engagement with Sri Lanka, including in our efforts to resettle and rehabilitate the internally displaced persons there and to ensure a life of peace, dignity and equality for the Tamil people.

In West Asia and North Africa, my Government supports efforts to promote peaceful settlement of conflicts and resolution of disputes in a manner that accommodates the democratic aspirations of the people. We are also mindful of the fact that the Gulf region is home to nearly six million Indians who live and work there and that we depend on the region for the bulk of our energy requirements. We have further enhanced our political engagement with and economic assistance to countries of Africa.

At the ASEAN-India Commemorative Summit in New Delhi in December 2012, which marked the tenth anniversary of the annual ASEAN-India Summits, we elevated our relations with ASEAN to a strategic partnership and concluded negotiations on an ASEAN-India Free Trade Agreement on services and investment.

My Government intends to work with the new Chinese leadership to reinforce the positive direction of our relationship. Our multi-faceted relationship with Japan, which is also a major partner in our infrastructure development efforts, is making good progress. The privileged and strategic partnership we have built with Russia received a further boost during the visit of President Valdimir Putin in December 2012.

The Strategic Partnership with the United States has deepened, with progress across all areas of our relationship and we look forward to intensifying this engagement during the second term of President Obama. India's traditionally strong relations with Europe will continue to develop. The visit of President Francois Hollande to Delhi in February 2013, his first Asian destination as President, will further strengthen our friendship and broad-based strategic cooperation with France.

As a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council during the last two years, India played an important role in the Council's efforts to promote international peace and security. We intensified efforts to generate momentum for early reform of the United Nations Security Council. We are also seeking concerted international action against piracy. In addition, a Piracy Bill was introduced in the Parliament last year for prosecution in India of persons committing piracy.

India also remained constructively engaged in global multilateral diplomacy. We hosted the fourth BRICS Summit in New Delhi in March 2012 and the ministerial meet of the Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation in October 2012.

As our development partnership expands and assumes an increasingly vital role in our foreign policy, my Government has established a Development Partnership Administration in the Ministry of External Affairs for more efficient and effective administration of our wide-ranging assistance programme, which covers financial aid, capacity building and training and the sharing of our development experience and expertise.

My Government has successfully completed the implementation of the Passport Seva Project, one of the mission-mode projects under the National e-Governance Plan, to deliver passport related services to our citizens in a timely, convenient and transparent manner.

My Government is deeply committed to promoting the interests and welfare of overseas Indians. The Government launched the Mahatma Gandhi Pravasi Suraksha Yojana on a pilot basis in May 2012 to provide emigrant Indian workers benefits like life insurance cover, pensions and Return and Resettlement savings. We also signed Social Security Agreements with Finland, Canada, Japan and Sweden. Similar agreements with Austria and Portugal will be signed soon.

Our space programme epitomizes India's scientific achievements and benefits the country in a number of areas. The launch of the Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle on 9 September 2012 marked our 100th space mission. India's first remote sensing satellite RISAT-1, with all-weather imaging capability, was also launched in 2012. Several space missions are planned for 2013, including India's first mission to Mars and the launch of our first navigational satellite.

The country continues to make progress in the field of nuclear energy. Electricity generation from nuclear power plants increased by about 23 per cent in 2011-12 over the previous year. This year, two units of the nuclear power plant at Kudankulam, established with Russian collaboration, will be commissioned. My Government attaches the highest priority to the safety of nuclear power plants. A Bill to set up a Nuclear Safety Regulatory Authority has been introduced in Parliament. We have also conducted internal technical reviews of all safety systems of nuclear power plants in the country. In addition, we are working with the International Atomic Energy Agency on all nuclear safety issues.

The Government has unveiled the Science, Technology and Innovation Policy 2013 to accelerate the pace of discovery, diffusion and delivery of science-led solutions for faster, sustainable and inclusive growth. In order to popularize science education in schools, nearly 7.30 lakh scholarships have been awarded under a scheme called Innovation in Science Pursuit for Inspired Research. About 48 per cent of the awardees are girls and 25 per cent belong to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. A new PPP doctoral fellowship titled "Prime Minister's Fellowship Scheme for Doctoral Research" has been implemented this year.

The Government is setting up a dedicated Seismological Research Laboratory and has launched a first-of-its-kind research programme in the earthquake-prone Koyna-Warna region of Maharashtra to study precursor changes. The Indian tsunami early warning system was recognized as the Regional Tsunami Service Provider for the Indian Ocean region in October 2012. India's third permanent station in Antarctica was commissioned in March 2012.

India successfully hosted the eleventh Conference of Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity in Hyderabad in October, 2012. The event provided India with an opportunity to consolidate, scale-up and showcase its strengths in the field of biodiversity. One of the most important outcomes of this Conference was the commitment made by the Parties to double the total biodiversity-related international financial resource flows to developing countries by 2015. At the Conference, the Prime Minister launched the 'Hyderabad Pledge', wherein he announced earmarking US \$50 million during India's presidency of the Conference of Parties to strengthen the institutional, technical and human capabilities for biodiversity conservation in India, and to promote similar capacity building in other developing countries.

At the recently held Doha Conference on Climate Change, India played a lead role in ensuring that the principles of equity and common but differentiated responsibility continue to be recognized as the basis of the Parties' efforts under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

India stands tall as a nation because we are seen as a liberal and plural democracy, which has faced and overcome tremendous odds. The world recognizes India's demonstrable democratic and secular practices as a major achievement. While we should rejoice in the benefits that our plurality brings, the challenge is to relentlessly pursue our efforts to accelerate economic growth and widen opportunities within our democratic framework. It is only if we constantly renew and defend the democratic values that define our nationhood that we will be able to face the great challenges that lie before us. On behalf of my Government, I appeal to all of you to support our endeavours in marching ahead as a proud nation.

Jai Hind.

ADDRESS TO PARLIAMENT—9 JUNE 2014

Lok Sabha	—	Sixteenth Lok Sabha
Session	—	First Session after the 16th General Election
President of India	—	Shri Pranab Mukherjee
Vice-President of India	—	Mohammad Hamid Ansari
Prime Minister of India	—	Shri Narendra Modi
Speaker, Lok Sabha	—	Smt. Sumitra Mahajan

HONOURABLE MEMBERS,

I am delighted to address this first session of both Houses of Parliament after the elections to the 16th Lok Sabha. Let me begin by extending warm greetings to my fellow citizens, who participated in large numbers in the recently concluded Lok Sabha elections. We should never forget that we are here because of them. Serving them should be our first priority. I also felicitate the members of the new Lok Sabha. You have successfully obtained the mandate from the electorate and now you represent their hopes, aspirations and dreams. I extend a warm welcome to all of you and hope that the sessions ahead with heavy legislative agenda will be productive and useful.

It is a matter of great satisfaction that the recent general elections were smooth and largely peaceful. I would like to congratulate the Election Commission of India and the official machinery for conducting these elections successfully. The unprecedented interest shown by the people of India in the elections is a sign of progressive deepening of our vibrant democracy. Before I dwell upon the tasks ahead of us, I would like to express my solidarity with the families of all those who lost their lives during the election process.

I congratulate the new Speaker of the Lok Sabha on her unanimous election to this august office. By successively electing women Speakers, the Lok Sabha has re-affirmed our age-old belief in the importance of women in our society.

This has been an election of Hope. It marks a turning point in the evolution of our democratic polity. The surge in aspirations and the belief

that these could be realized through democratic processes, has been amply reflected in the record 66.4 per cent participation by voters, and a clear verdict in favour of a single political party after a gap of nearly 30 years. The electorate transcended the boundaries of caste, creed, region and religion to come together and vote decisively in favour of Development through Good Governance.

The country needed a strong and stable Government that could provide effective leadership. In my Republic Day speech earlier this year, I had hoped for 2014 to be a year of healing after the fractured and contentious politics of the previous years. Standing here today, I applaud the wisdom of my fellow citizens for having voted for stability, honesty and development in a resurgent India in which corruption will have no place. They have voted for a united, strong, and modern India—“Ek Bharat—Shreshtha Bharat”. My Government will work to fulfill these aspirations; with the involvement of all the 125 crore people of this great country.

My Government is committed to nurturing the right environment for actualizing this mandate of the people. For this, it pledges itself to the principle of ‘Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas’; which can be fulfilled only through your active participation. We will work together to re-establish the credibility of the institutions of democracy. My government will function on the mantra of ‘Minimum Government, Maximum Governance’. In all our actions, we will be guided by the core values of our great civilization.

My Government is dedicated to the poor. Poverty has no religion, hunger has no creed, and despair has no geography. The greatest challenge before us is to end the curse of poverty in India. My Government will not be satisfied with mere “poverty alleviation”; and commits itself to the goal of “poverty elimination”. With a firm belief that the first claim on development belongs to the poor; the government will focus its attention on those who need the basic necessities of life most urgently. It will take necessary steps to provide security in its entirety to all citizens; through empathy, support and empowerment.

Containing food inflation will be the topmost priority for my Government. There would be an emphasis on improving the supply side of various agro and agro-based products. My Government will take effective steps to prevent hoarding and black marketing. It will reform the Public Distribution System, incorporating best practices from the States. My Government is alert about the possibility of a subnormal monsoon this year and contingency plans are being prepared.

Despite more than two-thirds of our people living in rural areas; we have not been able to provide adequate public amenities and livelihood opportunities to them. My Government is committed to improving the quality of life in our villages, through empowered Panchayati Raj institutions.

A substantial part of investment will focus on creating community assets and improving basic infrastructure such as roads, shelter, power and drinking water. My Government will strive to end the rural-urban divide guided by the idea of Rurban; providing urban amenities to rural areas while preserving the ethos of the villages.

Agriculture is the source of livelihood for majority of our people. In the recent past, our farmers have been under severe stress with hopelessness driving some of them to suicides. My Government is committed to reversing this unfortunate trend. It will increase investment in agriculture, both public and private, especially in Agri-infrastructure. Steps will be taken to convert farming into a profitable venture through scientific practices and Agro-technology. My Government will address issues pertaining to pricing and procurement of agricultural produce, crop insurance and post-harvest management. Productivity of Animal Husbandry will be increased. My Government will incentivize the setting up of food processing industries. Existing cooperative sector laws will be reviewed to remove anomalies and lacunae. My Government will adopt a National Land Use Policy which will facilitate scientific identification of non-cultivable land and its strategic development.

Each drop of water is precious. My Government is committed to giving high priority to water security. It will complete the long pending irrigation projects on priority and launch the 'Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana' with the motto of 'Har Khet Ko Paani'. There is a need for seriously considering all options including linking of rivers, where feasible; for ensuring optimal use of our water resources to prevent the recurrence of floods and drought. By harnessing rain water through 'Jal Sanchay' and 'Jal Sinchan', we will nurture water conservation and ground water recharge. Micro irrigation will be popularised to ensure 'Per drop-More crop'.

India is the world's oldest civilization. Today it is also a country with the largest population of the youth. We must equip and nurture our youth with the right kind of education, skill-set and opportunity to reap this demographic dividend. My Government will strive to transition from Youth Development to Youth-led Development. It will set up Massive Open Online Courses and virtual classrooms. It will formulate a National Education Policy aimed at meeting the challenges posed by lack of quality, research and innovation in our educational institutions. We will set up IITs and IIMs in every State. In order to empower school teachers and students, a national e-library will be established. With the motto of "Har Haath Ko Hunar", my Government will strive to break the barriers between formal education and skill development, and put in place a mechanism to give academic equivalence to vocational qualifications. With the goal of Skilled India, my Government will also launch a National Multi-skill Mission.

The children and youth of the country need avenues of recreation that develop them constructively and keep them fit. My Government will launch a 'National Sports Talent Search System'. It will facilitate development and promotion of Indian sports, particularly rural sports. Sports will be popularised by making it an integral part of the school curriculum and providing educational incentives.

Our country needs a holistic healthcare system that is universally accessible, affordable and effective. To achieve this objective, my government will formulate a New Health Policy and roll out a National Health Assurance Mission. It will promote Yoga and AYUSH. To address the shortfall of healthcare professionals, health education and training will be transformed. AIIMS like institutes will be established in every State in a phased manner.

We must not tolerate the indignity of homes without toilets and public spaces littered with garbage. For ensuring hygiene, waste management and sanitation across the nation a "Swachh Bharat Mission" will be launched. This will be our tribute to Mahatma Gandhi on his 150th birth anniversary to be celebrated in the year 2019.

Keeping in mind welfare of the people belonging to the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Other Backward Classes and the weaker sections of our society; my government will take steps to create an enabling eco-system of equal opportunity in education, health and livelihood. My Government is committed to see that those belonging to the Scheduled Castes and Other Backward Classes are able to avail emerging opportunities. For the Scheduled Tribes, my Government will launch a dedicated "Van Bandhu Kalyan Yojana". Electrification of tribal hamlets and connecting them with all-weather roads will be a priority area.

It is unfortunate that even after several decades of independence, sections of minority communities continue to suffer from poverty, as benefits of government schemes do not reach them. My Government is committed to making all minorities equal partners in India's progress. The government will especially strengthen measures to spread modern and technical education among minority communities and a National Madarsa Modernization Programme will be initiated.

The welfare and rehabilitation of specially-abled people is integral to my Government's vision of a caring society. It will take steps to provide dignity of life to them by facilitating their participation in all walks of life. Steps will be taken to identify their special needs and to provide institutional care to them.

My Government recognizes the important role our women play in the development of our society and growth of the nation. It is committed to providing 33 per cent reservation to them in the Parliament and State

Legislative Assemblies. With a commitment of “Beti Bachao - Beti Padhao”, my Government will launch a mass campaign for saving the girl child and enabling her education. It will structure a comprehensive scheme, incorporating best practices from States in this regard. In the recent past, the country has witnessed some grue, some incidents of violence against women. The government will have a policy of zero tolerance for violence against women, and will strengthen the criminal justice system for its effective implementation.

India is a federal polity. But, over the years, the federal spirit has been diluted. The States and the Centre should function as an organic Team India. In order to actively engage with the States on national issues, my government will reinvigorate fora like the National Development Council and the Inter-State Council. The Centre will be an enabler in the rapid progress of States through Cooperative Federalism. State-specific development models will be developed taking into account the special needs and unique problems of Coastal, Hilly and Desert areas. Highest priority will be accorded to bring eastern region of the country on par with western region in terms of physical and social infrastructure. My government is committed to addressing the issues relating to development of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana. The government will lay special emphasis on improving the intra-region connectivity and border infrastructure in the Northeast as well as in Jammu and Kashmir. The issue of infiltration and illegal immigrants in the Northeast region will be tackled on priority and all pending fencing work along the Northeast border will be completed. Special efforts will be made to ensure that Kashmiri Pandits return to the land of their ancestors with full dignity, security and assured livelihood.

My Government is committed to providing a clean and efficient administration focussed on delivery. The institution of Lok Pal is important to curb corruption and my Government will endeavour to formulate rules in conformity with the Act. My Government will take steps to build the confidence and morale of our bureaucracy; enabling it with the freedom to work, and welcoming innovative ideas. The government will stress on putting in place transparent systems and timebound delivery of government services. Government systems and processes will be revisited to make them citizen friendly, corruption free and accountable. Efforts will be made to eliminate obsolete laws, regulations, administrative structures and practices. Rationalization and convergence among Ministries, Departments and other arms of the government will be ensured to have focussed delivery. Digitization of government records will be done for improving accessibility.

E-governance brings empowerment, equity and efficiency. It has the power to transform peoples’ lives. The backbone of my Government’s new ways of working will be a Digital India. IT will be used to drive re-engineering of government processes to improve service delivery and programme

implementation. We will strive to provide Wi-Fi zones in critical public areas in the next five years. My Government will rollout broad band highway to reach every village and make all schools e-enabled in a phased manner. Technology will be used to prepare our children for a knowledge society. The National e-governance plan will be expanded to cover every government office from the centre to the Panchayat; to provide a wide variety of services to citizens. Emerging technologies like Social Media will be used as a tool for; participative governance, directly engaging the people in policy making and administration.

My Government is determined to rid the country of the scourge of corruption and the menace of black money. As a first step in this direction, the Government has already constituted a SIT to unearth black money stashed abroad. This will be followed up vigorously by proactively engaging with foreign governments.

Keeping in mind that justice delayed is justice denied, my Government will adopt a multi-pronged approach to address the problem of high pendency of cases in our judicial system. It will progressively modernize the courts to improve their operational efficiency, and start reform of the criminal justice system to make dispensation of justice simpler, quicker and more effective. It will initiate a mission mode project for filling vacancies in the judiciary and for doubling the number of courts and judges in the subordinate judiciary in a phased manner. The government will give special emphasis to the development of Alternate Dispute Resolution mechanisms.

On the economic front, we are passing through an extremely difficult phase. For two consecutive years, our GDP growth has been less than 5 per cent. Tax collection has declined. Inflation continues to be at an unacceptable level. Thus, putting the Indian economy back on track is paramount for my government. We will work together to usher our economy into a high growth path, rein in inflation, reignite the investment cycle, accelerate job creation and restore the confidence of the domestic as well as international community in our economy.

My Government will create a policy environment which is predictable, transparent and fair. It will embark on rationalisation and simplification of the tax regime to make it non-adversarial and conducive to investment, enterprise and growth. My Government will make every effort to introduce the GST while addressing the concerns of States. Reforms will be undertaken to enhance the ease of doing business. My Government will follow a policy of encouraging investments, including through FDI; which will be allowed in sectors that help create jobs and assets.

For rapid creation of jobs in the manufacturing sector, the government will strategically promote labour-intensive manufacturing. Employment opportunities will also be expanded by promoting tourism and agro-based

industries. My Government will transform Employment Exchanges into “Career Centres”—connecting our youth with job opportunities in a transparent and effective manner through the use of technology as well as through counselling and training. The government will strengthen the pension and health insurance safety nets for labour force of all categories and would provide them access to modern financial services.

We need to transform ourselves into a globally competitive manufacturing hub powered by Skill, Scale and Speed. To this end, the government will set up world class investment and industrial regions, particularly along the Dedicated Freight Corridors and Industrial Corridors spanning the country. My Government will encourage the domestic industry to innovate and collaborate internationally. It will strive to move towards a single-window system of clearances both at the Centre and at the States through a hub-spoke model.

To strengthen our share in global trade, procedures will be simplified and trade infrastructure strengthened so as to reduce transaction time and costs. The SSI and Handicraft sectors will be encouraged by providing them enhanced technological, marketing and investment support. Export potential of this sector will be encouraged. My government will make every effort to improve the working conditions of our weavers in particular. It will also set up a task force to review and revive our MSME sector.

Lack of robust infrastructure is one of India’s major impediments. The government will chalk out an ambitious infrastructure development programme to be implemented in the next 10 years. A fast-track, investment friendly and predictable PPP mechanism will be put in place. Modernization and revamping of Railways is on top of the infrastructure agenda. My Government will launch a Diamond Quadrilateral project of high speed trains. The country will have a network of freight corridors with specialised Agri-Rail networks for perishable agricultural products. Investment in railways will be increased using innovative financing methods. Expansion of railways in Hilly States and Northeast region and modernization of rail safety systems will be prime focus areas. We will encourage R&D and high level local manufacturing for railway systems. A fast, time-bound and well monitored programme for execution of the National Highways programme will be initiated, to overcome the stagnancy of the past few years. Low cost airports will be developed to promote air connectivity to smaller towns. The government will evolve a model of Port-led development. Our long coastline will become the gateway for India’s prosperity. My government will facilitate modernization of existing ports on one hand, and development of new world class ports on the other. Stringing together the Sagar Mala project we will connect the ports with the hinterland through road and rail. Inland and coastal waterways will be developed as major transport routes.

My Government will come out with a comprehensive National Energy Policy and focus on development of energy related infrastructure, human resource and technology. The aim of the government will be to substantially augment electricity generation capacity through judicious mix of conventional and non-conventional sources. It will expand the national solar mission and connect households and industries with gas-grids. Reforms in the coal sector will be pursued with urgency for attracting private investment in a transparent manner. The international civil nuclear agreements will be operationalized and nuclear power projects for civilian purposes will be developed.

My Government is conscious of the fact that our urban infrastructure is under severe stress. Soon, 50 per cent of our population would be residing in urban areas. Taking urbanization as an opportunity rather than a challenge, the government will build 100 Cities focussed on specialized domains and equipped with world class amenities. Integrated infrastructure will be rolled out in model towns to focus on cleanliness and sanitation. By the time the nation completes 75 years of its Independence, every family will have a pucca house with water connection, toilet facilities, 24x7 electricity supply and access.

While putting the country on a high growth path, my government will keep sustainability at the core of our planning process. My Government strongly believes that environmental conservation can go hand in hand with development. To achieve this, environment and forest clearance systems will be made more predictable, transparent and time-bound. Simultaneously, an effective system will be developed for sound appraisal processes and strict compliance of clearance conditions, especially those relating to rehabilitation of displaced communities and regeneration of forests. Cleaner fuels will be promoted to bring down pollution levels in our cities. The government will earnestly take up mitigation works to meet the challenges posed by climate change and will closely work with the global community in this regard. Conservation of Himalayan ecology will be a priority area for my government. A National Mission on Himalayas will be launched.

In the recent past, serious concerns have been expressed regarding use of discretionary powers in allocation of our precious natural resources. The government will formulate clear and transparent policies on allocation of critical natural resources such as coal, minerals and spectrum.

River Ganga is a part of our rich cultural heritage, a symbol of faith and the lifeline for millions. However, Ganga continues to remain polluted with many stretches of the river becoming dry in lean season. My Government will take all necessary steps to ensure a perennial, clean and pristine Ganga.

Our rich cultural heritage is the very foundation on which rests the unity of our diverse nation. Indian languages are repositories of our rich

literature, history, culture, art and other achievements. My Government will launch a national mission “e-Bhasha” that will develop digital vernacular content and disseminate our classic literature in different languages. My government will also provide the required resources for the maintenance and restoration of national heritage sites.

India has a vast untapped potential for tourism which can play a special role in our socio-economic progress. The government will initiate a mission mode project to create 50 tourist circuits that are built around specific themes. With a view to encouraging pilgrimage tourism, a National Mission for beautifying and improving the amenities and infrastructure at pilgrimage centres of all faiths will be launched.

My Government recognises the central role of Science and Technology in raising the quality of life. It will encourage and incentivise private sector investments, both domestic and foreign, in science and technology and in high-end research aimed at nurturing innovation. My government will build world class research centres in the fields of nanotechnology, material sciences, thorium technology, brain research, stem cells, etc. The government will also establish institutes of Technology for Rural Development and a Central University of Himalayan Studies.

The government will maintain utmost vigil in the area of internal security. A policy of zero tolerance towards terrorism, extremism, riots and crime will be pursued. The States will be assisted for modernizing police infrastructure and equipment to tackle new forms of terrorism including narco terrorism and cyber threats. A national plan will be chalked out in consultation with the state governments to effectively curb incidents of communal violence and the challenges posed by left wing extremism. My government will take steps to equip the security forces with the latest technology and to improve their working conditions.

My Government will carry out reforms in defence procurement to increase efficiency and economy. It will encourage domestic industry, including the private sector; to have a larger share in design and production of defence equipment. We will introduce policies to strengthen technology transfer, including through liberalised FDI in defence production. With readily available skilled human resource, India can emerge as a global platform for defence manufacturing including software, which will strengthen our defence and spur industrial development as well as exports.

The country is proud of its Armed Forces. They serve the nation with professionalism, dedication and valour; securing our nation and supporting relief and rescue operations in the wake of disasters and calamities. We will strengthen defence preparedness by modernising our Armed Forces and addressing the shortage of manpower on priority. Recognising the importance of coastal security, my government will set up a National Maritime Authority.

My Government will do everything to repay the debt of our brave and selfless soldiers. It will appoint a Veterans Commission to address their grievances, so that they know that we don't stop caring for them when they retire from active service. The government will build a National War Memorial to honour the gallantry of our soldiers. One Rank, One Pension scheme will be implemented.

India's foreign policy, with its civilizational roots and heritage, is based on the principles of developing peaceful and friendly relations with all countries. We will pursue our international engagement based on enlightened national interest, combining the strength of our values with pragmatism, leading to a doctrine of mutually beneficial relationships. My Government is committed to building a strong, self-reliant and self-confident India; regaining its rightful place in the comity of nations.

My Government sent a unique and bold signal to the South Asian region and the world, by inviting for the first time in independent India, leaders of all South Asian neighbours to the swearing-in ceremony of the new Council of Ministers on May 26. We are grateful to them for accepting the invitation at such a short notice. Their participation, as also the gracious presence of the Prime Minister of Mauritius; not only added sheen to the ceremony, but also represented a celebration of democracy in the region and convergence of our shared hopes and aspirations. This shows my government's commitment and determination to work towards building a peaceful, stable and economically inter-linked neighbourhood which is essential for the collective development and prosperity of the South Asian Region. We will further work together with South Asian leaders to revitalise SAARC as an effective instrument for regional cooperation and as a united voice on global issues.

At the same time, we will never shy away from raising issues of concern to us at a bilateral level. We emphasize that the future of shared prosperity can only be built on the foundation of stability in the region, which requires sensitivity to security concerns and an end to export of terrorism to neighbours.

My Government will engage energetically with other neighbours in our region, including China, with whom we will work to further develop our Strategic and Cooperative Partnership. We will strive to make progress in the many initiatives that are ongoing with Japan, especially in the field of building modern infrastructure in our country. Russia remains a privileged and strategic partner and my government will build further on the firm foundations of this relationship.

India and the United States have made significant progress in developing strategic partnership over the years. My government will bring a renewed vigour to our engagement and intensify it in all areas, including trade,

investment, science and technology, energy and education. India also values its broad-based cooperation with Europe. The government will make concerted efforts to achieve progress in key areas with the European Union as well as its leading members.

To fully realize our softpower potential; there is a need to integrate it into our external interchange, with particular emphasis on our rich spiritual, cultural and philosophical heritage. The government will revive Brand India riding on our strengths of 5T's: Tradition, Talent, Tourism, Trade and Technology.

Across the world, we have a vibrant, talented and industrious Indian Diaspora that is a source of great pride for us. They have done pioneering work in diverse fields, held the highest public offices and have worked hard to support their localities and families in India. While they have contributed immensely to their adopted country, they also carry a little flame of India in their hearts that can light up the promise of change in our country. A hundred years ago, in 1915, India's greatest Pravasi Bharatiya, Mahatma Gandhi, returned home and transformed the nation's destiny. The next Pravasi Bharatiya Diwas in January 2015 will thus be a special occasion. As we celebrate the centenary of Gandhiji's return to India, we would also take steps that would deepen every Pravasi Bharatiya's connection with India and involve them in India's development.

The people of India have given a clear mandate. They want to see a vibrant, dynamic and prosperous India. They want to see a resurgent India regaining the admiration and respect of the international community. Brimming with hope and expectation, they want quick results. With three Ds of Democracy, Demography and Demand on our side, India is poised to actualize these aspirations. We must rise to the occasion to fulfill these great expectations. In 60 months from now, we should be able to say with confidence and pride that we have done it.

Jai Hind.

ADDRESS TO PARLIAMENT—23 FEBRUARY 2015

Lok Sabha	—	Sixteenth Lok Sabha
Session	—	First Session of the year
President of India	—	Shri Pranab Mukherjee
Vice-President of India	—	Mohammad Hamid Ansari
Prime Minister of India	—	Shri Narendra Modi
Speaker, Lok Sabha	—	Smt. Sumitra Mahajan

HONOURABLE MEMBERS,

In this New Year full of aspirations and hope, I welcome you to the Joint Sitting of the Two Houses of the Parliament with the belief that your deliberations will be productive and useful.

Dr. Shyama Prasad Mukherjee had said, “the greatest strength of India is her rich spiritual and civilizational heritage”. The core values of our civilization emphasize universal good—welfare of all human beings. The fundamental tenet of my Government is Sabka Saath Sabka Vikas—All Together, Development of All. Within a span of nine months, my Government has articulated and embarked on a comprehensive strategy for unleashing the full potential of our country and its precious resource of 125 crore people. Measures have been initiated to stir action in a range of fields from sanitation to smart cities, poverty elimination to creation of wealth, skill development to conquering space, tapping demographic dividend to diplomatic initiatives, enhancing ease of doing business to putting in place a stable policy framework, empowering individuals to ensuring quality infrastructure, ending financial untouchability to making the country a manufacturing hub, containing inflation to stimulating economy, igniting minds to ensuring inclusive growth, promoting cooperative federalism to encouraging a competitive spirit among the states. A strong beginning has been made. A promising future awaits us.

Poverty is a bane to dignified human existence. Development is actualized only when the last person gets a sense of fulfillment, especially, regarding his minimum needs. Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya had laid emphasis on holistic development of each and every human being – Ekam Manavata Darshan (Integral Humanism). My Government is pledged to work for the welfare of the poor, the marginalized and the vulnerable sections of the society.

Financial inclusion is critical to poverty elimination. My Government launched an ambitious Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana to provide universal access to banking facilities – a bank account, having in-built accidental insurance with a Rupay debit card. I am happy to state that the coverage under the scheme is close to 100 per cent with a record 13.2 crore new bank accounts being opened, 11.5 crore Rupay debit cards being issued and over ₹ 11,000 crore being deposited. This unprecedented target was achieved in less than six months, making it the largest such programme globally.

To ensure that the benefits of developmental programmes reach the last intended beneficiary without leakages and impediments, Direct Benefit Transfer Programme is being implemented with renewed vigour. The biggest Direct Cash Transfer programme in the world, PAHAL, for transfer of LPG subsidy, has been extended across the country from 1st January, 2015, so far covering 75 per cent of the user-households. In all, 35 schemes have been brought under Direct Benefit Transfer architecture. Special emphasis is attached to make Aadhar enrolment coverage universal.

Swachhata is an article of faith for my Government. Swachhata will have an overarching impact on the overall quality of life and well-being of a person, particularly the poor. Swachh Bharat Mission has been launched to achieve a Clean and Open Defecation Free India by October, 2019. Government has rolled out ‘Swachh Vidyalaya’ programme and is committed to construct a toilet in every school before 15th August, 2015. Swachhata has a cascading impact on national development and the potential to generate wealth from waste. Sanitation and the idea of Swachhata require changing the mindset of the people. My Government exhorts each and every individual to be an active participant in this mission. I appeal to all honourable Members of Parliament to spend at least fifty per cent of their MPLADS funds on Swachh Bharat Mission.

India lives in her villages. My Government attaches the highest priority to sustainable socio-economic growth of rural areas. MGNREGS can be a powerful weapon to combat rural poverty. While implementing MGNREGS with renewed vigour, emphasis is being placed on improving quality and durability of assets under the programme, besides mandating that at least sixty per cent of expenditure be directed for creation of agricultural infrastructure. In keeping with my Government’s focus on “Skill India”, “Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushal Yojana” and “Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Antyodaya Yojana” have been announced. Saansad Adarsh Gram Yojana launched in October 2014, focuses on integrated and holistic development of our villages with active involvement of Members of Parliament.

Housing is a fundamental requirement for dignified living. My Government is steadfast in fulfilling the aspirations of all households, particularly the poorest of the poor, to have a dwelling unit under the Mission “Housing for All” by 2022, marking 75 years of our independence. A set of fiscal and

non-fiscal incentives have been devised to leverage the value of land holding with government and to afford flexibility to State Governments in designing their own customized housing programmes. To aid investment in housing sector, my government has liberalized FDI policy; increased tax incentives for housing loans and enhanced the corpus of National Housing Bank.

My Government attaches paramount importance to safeguard the interest of farmers and families affected by land acquisition. While taking utmost care to protect the interest of farmers, including their compensation entitlements, the Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act has been suitably refined to minimize certain procedural difficulties in acquisition of land inevitably required for critical public projects of infrastructure and for creation of basic amenities like rural housing, schools and hospitals, particularly in remote areas.

Kisan is the sentinel of our food security. Annadaata Sukhibhava has been one of our fundamental civilizational values. My Government attaches enormous importance to the wellbeing of farmers. This will need value-added agriculture, market reform, use of technology and improving productivity in areas with untapped potential. The year 2015 has been designated as International Year of Soils. In view of the critical role of soil for productivity and farm output, a Soil Health Card Scheme has been launched. Price stabilization fund with a corpus of ₹ 500 crore has been set up for perishable commodities. To address the irrigation requirements of every village in an effective and sustainable manner, Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchai Yojana, is being launched. Extension programmes have been devised targeting resource-poor, small and marginal farmers, particularly focusing on organic farming and green house technology. Rashtriya Gokul Mission has been launched with the objective of conserving and developing indigenous cattle breeds.

Food Processing has immense potential for generating employment in rural areas, particularly for the landless poor, besides guaranteeing remunerative price for the farm-produce. Creating infrastructure in rural areas to minimize supply chain losses is a priority. A special fund of ₹ 2000 crore to provide affordable credit to the units in 72 notified food parks has been made operational. Two Mega Food Parks, at Tumkur and Fazilka, each to provide direct/indirect employment to 30,000 people have been commissioned in the last 6 months.

Former Prime Minister Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee had said and I quote: "Poverty has multiple effects. Besides impacting our economy, it corrodes our democracy". Inclusive growth covering the poorest of poor from the most vulnerable and disadvantaged sections of our society is my Government's topmost priority. Thrust has been given to streamlining scholarships schemes

for students from SC, ST, OBC, and minority communities to ensure timely disbursement to the beneficiaries. Government has set up a new Venture Capital Fund for SC entrepreneurs. To upgrade skill and training in traditional arts/crafts of minorities, a new scheme “Upgrading the Skill and Training in Traditional Arts/Crafts for Development (USTTAD)” is being launched. Outcome based integrated approach has been adopted for tribal development under the Van Bandhu Kalyan Yojana. Nanaji Deshmukh Scheme is being launched for construction of Hostels for Denotified, Nomadic and Semi-Nomadic Tribes.

Education is the priority of priorities for my Government. ‘Padhe Bharat Badhe Bharat’ has been launched to improve foundational learning outcomes. An initiative to map the entire country on a GIS platform to identify habitations without schools, has been taken. Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya National Mission on Teachers and Teacher Training has been launched to empower and increase the capacity of teachers. The Rashtriya Avishkar Abhiyan has been announced to imbibe scientific temper among students. To ensure access to education in the remotest areas, Ishan Vikas and Ishan Uday schemes have been started with focus on students of North-Eastern regions. My Government has formulated National Sports Talent Search Scheme for encouraging sporting talent amongst children in the age group of 8 to 12 through National Sports Development Fund and Target Olympic Podium.

India has the largest population of youth in the world. Majority of her population is already in the working age group. To tap this demographic dividend and to bridge the demand-supply gap in skilled workforce, my Government has created a new Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship with the theme “Hunar hai to Kalyan hai”. A new “National Policy for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship” is on the anvil to align skilling initiatives with global standards. Focus will be on the youth from deprived households in rural areas. Public-Private-Partnership is being fostered to create skill development models and channelize CSR funds into skilling activities.

My Government is committed to providing affordable and accessible health care to all its citizens, particularly the vulnerable sections, in an efficient and equitable manner. To reduce preventable deaths, India New Born Action Plan has been initiated and four new vaccines have been approved. ‘Mission Indradhanush’ has been launched to achieve universal immunization with special focus on 184 high priority districts across the country. To create an inclusive, enabling and empowering environment for Persons with Disabilities, my Government has launched new scholarship schemes for students with disabilities. A national help line with toll free number has been launched for those who need help against drug de-addiction and for rehabilitation.

My Government has recently elevated the erstwhile department of AYUSH to a full-fledged Ministry with an objective to increase the global and local footprint of the traditional systems of healthcare, duly recognizing that our villages have been the repositories of our rich Ayurvedic heritage. National AYUSH Mission has been launched to promote cost effective AYUSH services, strengthen the education system and facilitate availability of quality AYUSH drugs.

Women have had a place of reverence in our society since time immemorial. My Government has taken several measures to empower and protect the dignity of women. To provide complete support to women affected by violence, One Stop Crisis Centres, one in every State, are being set up for provision of integrated services including medical aid, police assistance, temporary shelter, and legal and psycho-social counseling. Another initiative has been the launch of Himmat, a mobile based application, to ensure women's safety in Delhi.

The unabated decline in Child Sex Ratio since 1961 is a matter of grave concern. This trend has to be reversed. To ensure survival, protection and education of the girl child, my Government has launched Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao Abhiyaan, which seeks to change mindsets to celebrate the girl child. A new small saving scheme 'Sukanya Samriddhi Account' has been notified for enabling the education of the girl child. A Bill to amend Juvenile Justice Act has been introduced in Parliament to reform the law relating to juvenile offences.

Shramik is the backbone of our economy. My Government believes in Shrameve Jayate and has taken several labour welfare measures. Apprentice Protsahan Yojana has been launched to promote apprentices in Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises in manufacturing sector. EPF subscriptions have been made portable benefiting casual workers in the unorganized sector. Under the Employees Provident Fund Act, the statutory wage ceiling and the minimum pension have been enhanced to ₹ 15,000/- and ₹ 1,000/- respectively. While my Government is fully committed to expand the job market and to promote the welfare of workers, it is also committed to bringing in transparency and accountability in enforcement of labour-related regulations. To this end, the Shram Suvidha Portal has been launched to ensure ease of doing business by allowing industry to register online and file a single online return instead of 16 separate returns. A transparent online inspection scheme has been launched. Recent amendments to the Apprentices Act, 1961 have made the legal framework friendly to both industry and employable youth.

Legal reform is one of the priorities of my Government. My Government believes that Governance and reforms are a combined effort of Team India, consisting of the Parliament, Union Government, State Legislatures, State Governments and the People of India. An example of this collaborative

effort is the reform in the process of appointment of Judges to the High Courts and Supreme Court and the legislation to set up National Judicial Appointments Commission. The Government is also committed to repeal the obsolete and redundant laws. A Committee constituted for this purpose has identified 1741 Central Acts for repeal under various categories.

Maximum Governance Minimum Government is the guiding principle of my Government. With an aim to take Governance to the doorstep of the poorest of the poor in remotest areas, focus is on simplification of official procedures and reducing the decision-making levels in Government by leveraging technology. The system of Group of Ministers has been dispensed with and emphasis is on swift decision-making. While introducing stricter and sterner measures to deal with corruption; effort is being made to ensure that sufficient safeguards are in place to protect *bona fide* decisions taken in public interest and to inspire confidence in the civil service.

My Government is firmly committed to engage people in the process of Governance and policy-making. My Gov Online Platform, a path breaking initiative, has been launched. This platform has ensured public participation in decision-making and ideation of various national flagship programmes like Swachh Bharat Mission, Namami Gange, Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana and NITI Aayog.

My Government has envisioned an ambitious umbrella programme, Digital India, to prepare India for technology based transformation and citizen centric transparent Governance with service orientation. Aadhar based attendance system and Jeevan Praman, Aadhar based Digital Life Certificate Portal, have shown that innovative use of technology can make enormous difference. Measures are being taken to accomplish digital inclusion in rural areas, small towns, north-east and other remote areas, opening up immense job opportunities in these areas. Promoting manufacturing of electronic goods has been an area of thrust.

My Government is pledged to decentralization of power and as an important step in this direction, the Planning Commission has been replaced with a new body—The National Institution for Transforming India—NITI Aayog. The underlying spirit of NITI Aayog is to foster the spirit of cooperative federalism so that Union and State Governments come on a platform to forge a common national agenda for development, with thrust on empowering the impoverished.

As a result of my Government's sustained efforts and series of policy initiatives, our economy is again on the high growth trajectory. According to the latest estimates, our GDP is growing at 7.4 per cent, which makes India the fastest growing large economy in the world. Inflation and Food inflation, in particular, are at a record low due to a number of decisive measures taken by the Government. Fixed capital formation, which faced

a near stagnation in the last few years, has increased. Capital Markets are upbeat. Our external sector is now far more resilient, particularly with a moderate current account deficit and a broadly stable rupee. Our foreign exchange reserves have been substantially augmented.

While my Government has intensified efforts to bring greater efficiency and equity into the tax system, prudence in expenditure management is also high on the agenda of my Government. A Constitutional (Amendment) Bill has been introduced to bring in Goods and Services Tax that will simplify the indirect tax regime, broaden the tax base and result in better tax compliance.

My Government is committed to taking all possible measures to stop generation of black money, both domestically and internationally. These measures include putting in place robust legislative and administrative frameworks, systems and process with due focus on capacity building, integration of information through technology, and fast tracking prosecution.

Financial Sector institutional restructuring is a priority area. My Government will expedite implementation of the recommendations of the Financial Sector Legislative Reforms Commission. SEBI's new Foreign Portfolio Investment Regulations have established a unified, simple regulatory framework. The Insurance Laws (Amendment) Ordinance, 2014 was promulgated enhancing the foreign equity cap from 26 per cent to 49 per cent while safeguarding Indian ownership and control. This will enhance capital availability and ensure better access to insurance services, especially in rural areas and for economically weaker sections. Small Banks and Payments Banks are being permitted to expand the reach of the banking system.

My Government has taken major initiatives for improving 'Ease of Doing Business' through simplification and rationalization of existing rules and procedures. Leveraging IT and use of modern technologies is a key strategy. Single window in a **Hub - Spoke** model is being made a reality. Applying for Industrial License and Industrial Entrepreneur Memorandum can now be done online on 24x7 basis on the eBiz website. A number of entry and exit regulations have been eased out.

My Government has launched the "Make in India" programme which aims to create a wholesome eco-system to transform India into a manufacturing hub. FDI in Railways has been opened up selectively to bring in much needed capital, state-of-the-art technology and global best practices. FDI in Defence has been increased to 49 per cent subject to certain conditions. FDI norms in Construction & Development sector have been relaxed. Continuous evaluation of Inverted duties is being undertaken to make Indian industries competitive. Stress is being laid on research and innovation. While focusing our attention on manufacturing for creating more jobs, my Government will continue to work on our formidable strength in the service sector.

My Government is committed to realizing the true potential of entrepreneurs of India by nurturing the MSME sector. 21 MSME clusters are being supported by providing soft skills and common facilities through 965 interventions. Khadi and Village Industries and traditional industries clusters are initiated in border, hill and poverty-stricken areas of the country. Focus is on technology upgradation, better financial access and market linkages to MSME units.

Textiles sector is the second largest employer after agriculture, providing direct employment to over 4.5 crore people. The sector also contributes one seventh of industrial production and brings more than one fourth of country's foreign exchange inflows. The growth and all round development of this sector has a direct bearing on the improvement of our economy, particularly the poor artisans. Recent initiatives like setting up of trade facilitation centres in different parts of India, bringing textile marketing on-line, incentives for technical textiles, promotion of Pashmina, special focus on increasing the coverage in North-Eastern part of the country would lead to advancement of this sector.

Cities are the engines of economic growth. My Government is committed to building modern amenities and infrastructure in our urban areas. The National Urban Development Mission is being finalized, particularly focusing on water and solid waste management infrastructure. After extensive stakeholder consultations, the Smart City programme is close to finalization. These two programmes are interlinked and will prepare our nation for an increasingly urban future.

Robust infrastructure is critical for accelerating economic development and reviving economic growth. Indian Railways are the arteries of our economy. My Government is committed to reform and infuse new vitality into this sector through better services, improved passenger-safety, and increased movement of freight. Two Dedicated Freight Corridors (DFCs), namely, Eastern DFC and Western DFC are likely to be commissioned by 2019. Action for conducting feasibility studies for the Diamond Quadrilateral project of High Speed Trains connecting Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai and Kolkata has been taken up. Metro Rail projects have been sanctioned for Ahmadabad and Nagpur.

Several policy initiatives to revive the Highway sector have been taken. "National Highways Infrastructure Development Corporation Limited" has been set up for creation of infrastructure in the North-Eastern States and border regions of the country. New standards have been set to improve quality of roads, both on highways and in rural areas and electronic tolling has been introduced for hassle-free traffic on selected highways. e-Rickshaw and e-Card have been introduced as a separate category under the Motor Vehicles Act 1988, enhancing convenience of passengers and generating thousands of jobs.

My Government has taken proactive steps to promote shipping industry. These include giving life-time licenses to Indian ships, allowing Indian ships to flag out of country's waters freely, reduction of excise duty on bunker fuel and reduction of customs duty on the steel scrap of ship breaking. Government has also formulated "Sagar Mala" Project to promote Port-led development of the coastal regions and communities. As part of "Make in India" initiative, ship designing capabilities, ship-building and ship-repair activities will be strengthened. An environment is being created to increase the Indian shipping tonnage and to reduce the transaction time on ports. An institutional arrangement for comprehensive development of National Waterways for transportation has been envisaged through the 'Jal Marg Vikas' Project.

Power sector has made commendable progress achieving 76 per cent capacity addition by January, 2015 against the 2014-15 target of 17,830 MW. In order to provide 24x7 quality power in rural and urban areas, the Deendayal Upadhyaya Gram Jyoti Yojana with an outlay of more than ₹ 43,000 crore and the Integrated Power Development Scheme with an outlay of more than ₹ 32,600 crore, have been launched. Special attention is being paid to the unelectrified villages in remote areas. My Government has started major project for improving transmission and distribution system in the North Eastern States. We will focus on developing and strengthening the National Grid by developing high capacity power corridors. To deepen the reforms in the Electricity sector, the Electricity (Amendment) Bill 2014 has been introduced. The ambitious National Smart Grid Mission and Energy Saving Schemes have been started.

My Government lays enormous emphasis on clean energy. The share of renewable energy in electricity generation is being significantly enhanced from 6 per cent to 15 per cent of the energy mix in the next 7 years. The scheme for setting up 25 mega Solar Parks has been approved. The implementation of the Green Energy Corridor Scheme has been accelerated. Setting up of solar generating capacities along the international borders will be a key area of attention. My Government has made successful efforts in attracting the Global investors in this sector. Similar attention is being paid to bio-mass and hydro-energy. Government will further expand India's nuclear power capacity with the highest global standards of safety and technological standards.

The petroleum sector has seen major reforms. Diesel prices have been deregulated and are now market driven. The price of petrol has also been decreased by more than ₹ 17 per litre. The Government has put to rest all speculation regarding the long pending issue of revising gas prices and put in place a prudent policy in national interest. The ethanol policy has been revised to promote use of ethanol in petrol and help sugarcane farmers.

My Government is committed to optimum utilization and transparency in allocation of natural resources. The process for auction of coal blocks has been started in a manner which will reduce the power costs in the country, provide adequate fuel to increase power generation, enhance production of steel, cement, aluminium and other essential materials. This will also provide huge resources from allotment of mines to the mineral and coal bearing States particularly in eastern areas for accelerated development of the region. The swift and timely action taken by my government in this regard prevented the closure of mines which otherwise would have rendered thousands jobless. In coming years, my Government would make focussed efforts to expand exploration capacity and to increase domestic coal production to 1000 MTPA.

Water is the lifeline of human civilization. River Ganga has a very special place in the collective consciousness of our country. “Namami Gange”, an Integrated Ganga Conservation Mission has been set-up with budgetary allocation of more than ₹ 2000 crore. The Government is fully committed to the implementation of Interlinking of Rivers Project with due consultation process.

My Government took several proactive steps for protecting wildlife and for promoting cleaner environment. Stringent emission norms for cement industry were prescribed. Real-time online monitoring of industrial units in 17 critically polluting sectors was started and National Air Quality Index launched. Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority (CAMPA) would be strengthened and adequate funds released to States/UTs for aggressive afforestation and wildlife protection. Government has taken significant steps to streamline clearance processes in environmental sector by bringing in transparency and by empowering State Governments. Online application processes for Environment, Forest and CRZ Clearances were introduced from July, 2014.

To harness the enormous potential in the tourism sector, a new Tourism policy for growth and sustainability of tourism is on the anvil. “Tourist Visa on Arrival” enabled with Electronic Travel Authorization, has been expanded to 44 countries. Infrastructure and amenities are being upgraded in major tourist and pilgrimage destinations. River Ghats in several pilgrim destinations are being renovated. A special initiative for protecting and preserving the sanctity of our tourist destinations and monuments of national heritage has been launched. Dedicated tourist trains covering Jyotirling Circuits, Sukhmangal Circuit and Dakshin Dham Circuit have been started. A new scheme has been launched for development of tourist circuits called “Swadesh Darshan”, which includes Krishna Circuit, Himalayan Circuit, Coastal Circuit, Buddha Circuit and North East Circuits. A Statue of Unity is being constructed to commemorate the memory of Sardar Patel.

My Government is committed to restore and rejuvenate the soul of cities that are home to rich cultural heritage of our country. A scheme ‘Heritage Development and Augmentation Yojana’ (HRIDAY) covering 12 cities in the first phase has been launched with the predominant objective of preserving the tangible and intangible cultural assets of these cities. A special scheme called “PRASAD” – Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spirituality Augmentation Drive” – has been announced for rejuvenation of 12 pilgrim centres in convergence with “HRIDAY”.

Terrorism and Left Wing Extremism pose a grave challenge to the internal security of our nation. My Government is firmly committed to deal with these challenges in cohesive collaboration with the affected people and Governments of the affected States in a holistic manner.

Jammu and Kashmir occupies a place of enormous importance in the agenda of my Government. Government has endeavoured to create a conducive and enabling environment in the State of Jammu and Kashmir, especially for the various displaced segments of its population. This includes facilitating the rehabilitation of over 60,000 Kashmiri Pandits families. The Government has taken effective steps in this regard. These include, *inter alia*, providing Government jobs, economic opportunities and security. During the recent unprecedented flood situation in the State, my Government made special efforts in collaboration with the State Government to minimize the impact of disaster and augment rehabilitation measures. The nation is deeply indebted to our armed forces and paramilitary forces for the outstanding service rendered during the relief operations to flood affected people in Jammu and Kashmir.

A high state of Disaster preparedness is the key to contain loss of life and damage to the property due to any natural disaster. This has been amply demonstrated during the response to the very severe cyclone ‘HUDHUD’, by the State Governments of Andhra Pradesh and Odisha together with the Central Government.

My Government is committed to implement the idea of SMART Police (Smart but Sensitive, Modern and Mobile, Alert and Accountable, Reliable and Responsive, Tech-savvy and well Trained) to provide efficient, courteous and effective citizen services and meet the operational needs of the police personnel including women police personnel.

Government is accelerating the modernization of our Armed Forces, with a strong emphasis on “Make in India” in defence acquisition plans. Several initiatives have been taken to expand domestic defence industry, including liberalization of FDI for the defence sector; a new Defence Exports Strategy; a liberalized process for issuing clearances for defence exports; and a Technology Development Fund. To encourage domestic manufacturing of defence equipments and decrease import dependency, the list of Defence items which require industrial licensing has been pruned.

Our Space journey continues to make impressive progress. On 24 September 2014, *Mangalyaan* was successfully placed in the Mars Orbit, making India the first country to do so in the first attempt. We successfully launched the first experimental flight of GSLV Mark-III on 19 December 2014, which will enable us to launch heavier satellites in the near future. My Government is committed to use space technology and its applications in governance, social and economic development and resource management. My Government has also decided to launch a satellite for the use of SAARC countries to foster greater partnership and development of South Asian Region.

My Government is committed to deeper penetration of electronic media in remote and distant areas. Auctions will be conducted for 135 vacant channels in 69 existing cities of FM Phase-II as part of first batch of FM Phase-III. It will also facilitate migration of FM Phase-II to FM Phase-III. This will take private FM radio to cities having population of more than one lakh and border towns of Jammu and Kashmir, North-eastern region and island territories in a phased manner.

Our developmental challenges will continue to shape the strategic priorities in science, technology and innovation. Steps are being taken to channelize more resources for research and development in India; build world class research centres; nurture young talent and, promote international collaboration, including in the world's largest optical 'Thirty Meter Telescope'.

Recognizing that our destiny is linked with our neighbourhood, my Government has reinvigorated our relations with our neighbours and is promoting greater cooperation and integration in South Asia. At the same time, we speak clearly about our interests and are fully prepared to defend our borders and secure our people.

With the visit of Chinese President Xi Jinping, we have significantly expanded our relations with our largest neighbour, China, based on mutual respect and sensitivity to each other's concerns and interests. We have restored confidence and momentum in our time-tested strategic partnership with Russia with President Vladimir Putin's visit. The historic visit of U.S. President Barack Obama as the Chief Guest of the Republic Day has elevated our relations with the United States to a new level. In the coming months, we intend to further deepen our cooperation with Europe. With Japan, a deeper political, economic and security relationship is at the forefront of a more active and purposeful Act-East-Policy, which is anchored in our relations with Southeast Asia and now extends to Australia and the Pacific Islands. We are also committed to deeper engagement with West Asia, Central Asia, Africa and South Americas.

My Government will continue to work with others to reform multilateral institutions, including the United Nations and seek India's rightful place in these institutions. We will also participate actively in regional and international groupings.

My Government's efforts have enhanced global recognition for India's rich cultural heritage and traditions. On 11th December 2014, the United Nations, with a record co-sponsorship of 177 out of 193 member countries, took the historic decision to declare 21 June as 'International Yoga Day', exactly within 75 days of Prime Minister's call at the United Nations General Assembly.

My Government has made an unprecedented effort to reach out to the Indian community abroad, which today not only feels more connected to India, but has responded enthusiastically to the call to participate in India's transformation, inspired by Mahatma Gandhi, whose 100th anniversary of return to India was commemorated at this year's Pravasi Bharatiya Diwas. Our decisions on PIO and OCI card-holders have been widely welcomed by the Indian community abroad.

Our Parliament is the sanctum sanctorum of Democracy. The people of India, particularly the poorest of the poor in remotest areas, have reposed unflinching faith in this institution for fulfillment of their hopes and expectations. My Government will constantly endeavour for smooth conduct of legislative business and enactment of progressive laws in the Parliament which reflects the will and aspirations of the people. I urge all Members of the Parliament to discharge their solemn responsibility in a spirit of cooperation and mutual accommodation. By channelizing the patriotic energies of every citizen, we all collectively must work towards building a strong and modern India. *Ek Bharat Shresth Bharat.*

Jai Hind.

ADDRESS TO PARLIAMENT — 23 FEBRUARY 2016

Lok Sabha	—	Sixteenth Lok Sabha
Session	—	First Session of the year
President of India	—	Shri Pranab Mukherjee
Vice-President of India	—	Mohammad Hamid Ansari
Prime Minister of India	—	Shri Narendra Modi
Speaker, Lok Sabha	—	Smt. Sumitra Mahajan

HONOURABLE MEMBERS,

In this Basant season of renewal and growth, I welcome you all to the Joint Sitting of the Two Houses of the Parliament. I am confident that your deliberations will live up to the trust reposed in us by our fellow citizens, and going forth, we will all be partners in the progress and development of our great country.

During my address to the Joint Sitting last year, I had outlined the visionary initiatives undertaken by my Government towards building an India that strides into the future with confidence. A strong and forward-looking India that places within the reach of its people the opportunities and development promised by our Constitution. This development philosophy is captured in Sabka Sath Sabka Vikas, the fundamental tenet, which guides my Government.

Deen Dayal Upadhyaya spoke of Ekatma Manavata Darshan which envisages Antyodaya, where the empowering rays of opportunity reach the last person. This principle guides all the programmes of my Government. My Government, in particular is focused on “Garibon ki Unnati” (Poverty Eradication), “Kisaano ki Samridhhi” (Farmers’ Prosperity) and “Yuvaon ko Rojgaar” (Massive Employment Generation).

The overriding goal for my Government is poverty eradication. Gandhiji said and I quote “Poverty is the worst form of violence” (unquote). The essence of progress lies in bringing a sense of fulfillment to the poor and the deprived, the marginalized and vulnerable sections of the society. The

poorest of the poor are entitled to the first charge on the nation's resources. Removing the scourge of poverty and destitution is our most sacred moral responsibility.

My Government is pledged to making this goal possible through financial inclusion and social security, the two wings on which human aspiration takes flight. To this end, my Government has placed great emphasis on food security, Housing for All and subsidies that reach those who need them the most, when they need them the most. Last year, I had spoken of the ambitious *Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana*. Today, I am proud to say that it is the world's most successful financial inclusion programme. Under the programme, out of over twenty one crore accounts opened, fifteen crore accounts are operational with an aggregate deposit of over Rupees thirty two thousand crore. The programme has gone beyond mere opening of bank accounts, to becoming a platform for poverty eradication, by offering basic financial services and security to the poor.

To universalise social security, my Government has launched three new insurance and pension schemes; namely, the *Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana*, the *Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana* and the *Atal Pension Yojana*, which afford insurance cover to hitherto uncovered sections of society.

Government is committed to provide Housing for All by 2022. The *Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana*, launched on June 25, 2015, envisages construction of about 2 crore houses to benefit primarily slum dwellers, urban poor and people from economically weaker sections and lower income groups of society. The Mission intends to cover all 4041 statutory towns in coming 5 years. In its first year alone, 2011 towns/cities in 27 states have been included under this Mission. A total of over four lakh twenty five thousand houses have been sanctioned with a project cost of over rupees twenty four thousand six hundred crore.

Targeted subsidies ensure that benefits reach the deserving. Direct Benefit Transfer has so far been extended to 42 schemes funded by my Government. *PAHAL* has become the largest direct cash transfer program of its kind in the world, with nearly 15 crore beneficiaries. Since June 2014, the food security coverage has more than doubled to cover over 68 crore persons.

The Give-it-Up campaign in tandem with the Give Back programme has released subsidized fresh connections to 50 lakh BPL families. More than 62 lakh LPG consumers have voluntarily surrendered their LPG subsidy under

the campaign. The highest number of new cooking gas connections to the rural poor were distributed in 2015.

Dr. Ambedkar had said and I quote “*Political Democracy cannot last unless there lies at the base of it a social democracy*” (unquote). Social justice with inclusion is the first promise of our Constitution and the poor and the backward are the focus of my Government. The Scheduled Castes and The Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act has been further strengthened by suitable amendments. The 125th Birth Anniversary of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar is being celebrated across the country to foster the spirit of social inclusion. 26th of November, the day on which the Constitution was adopted, is now celebrated as *Constitution Day* to deepen Constitutional values amongst the citizens of the country. My Government is working to preserve the *Panchatirthas*, the five sites of Dr. Ambedkar’s legacy.

Education empowers people and to serve this end, my Government has allocated more than 50% of the Ministry of Minority Affairs budget to scholarship funds. Two new schemes; *Nai Manzil* and *USTAAD* aimed to empower the minorities, have been launched. Currently about 20,000 madarasa children are undergoing skill training under the *Nai Manzil* scheme. *Everlasting Flame*, an exhibition to showcase the life, history and the culture of the Parsi community is being organized next month.

“Kisaano ki Samridhi”, the well-being of farmers is vital to the nation’s prosperity. Acknowledging this fundamental reality, my Government has renamed the ‘Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperation’ as the ‘Ministry of Agriculture, Cooperation and Farmers Welfare’ and taken several measures for the same. My Government has recently launched the farmer-friendly *Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana*, with the biggest-ever Government’s contribution to crop insurance and with lowest-ever premium rates for farmers. It has many firsts to its credit like national coverage of post-harvest losses due to inundation and unseasonal rains, no capping on Government subsidy, and use of technology for early and accurate settlement of claims. Assistance to farmers afflicted by natural calamity has been increased by 50% and eligibility norms have been relaxed.

Soil Health Cards will be distributed to all 14 crore farm-holdings by March, 2017 and will result in judicious application of fertilizers, lowering input costs and bettering soil health. To promote organic farming, *Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana* is being implemented under which 8,000 clusters have been developed so far.

The *Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchai Yojana* promises assured irrigation, expanding cultivated areas by improving water use efficiency and enabling drought proofing. My Government is committed to the philosophy of “Per Drop More Crop” and “*Jal Sanchay for Jal Sinchan*”.

To provide the best market price to farmers, the unified National Agriculture Market is working towards setting up a common e-market platform to connect 585 regulated wholesale markets, thereby making India One food zone, One Country, One Market. This will immensely benefit our farmers in getting fair and remunerative prices. Targeted policy interventions in the last year have brought down sugarcane arrears from over Rs. 21,000 crore to Rs. 720 crore.

My Government notified the New Urea Policy-2015 with the objective of maximizing indigenous production and improving energy efficiency. The policy will lead to additional production of 17 Lakh metric tonnes annually in the next three years. Providing 100% neem-coated urea has not only improved efficiency but has also helped in plugging subsidy leakages by preventing illegal diversion of subsidized urea to non-agricultural use. The highest ever urea fertilizer production was achieved in 2015.

My Government recognizes the important role of Animal Husbandry, Dairy and Fisheries sectors in the socio-economic development of the country. India continues to be the biggest milk producing country with an impressive growth rate of 6.3%. Implementation of Poultry Venture Capital Fund and Rural Backyard Poultry Development has led to highest ever egg production. A Blue Revolution is underway to ensure the integrated development and management of fisheries, with a central outlay of Rupees three thousand crore.

To fully harness the agricultural potential of eastern States, the Government is taking several steps to usher in Second Green Revolution in the region. My Government has taken steps for strengthening agricultural higher education, setting up 109 new KVKs and three new Agricultural Technology Application Research Institutes. A 24x7 Kisan Channel has been launched to provide information on policy initiatives, prices and other agriculture related subjects for the benefit of farmers.

The food processing sector helps increase farmers' income. The Food Processing Fund has been operationalized last year to provide affordable credit to designated Food Parks. In the last 19 months, five new Mega Food

Parks have been operationalized. Under the Cold Chain Scheme, 33 projects have been made operational during the last 18 months.

Rural development is one of our top priorities. The grant of over Rupees two lakh crores by the 14th Finance Commission over a five year period from 2015-16, exclusively for Gram Panchayats has been received with great enthusiasm by the States. This will move development activity closer to the people and enable them to decide how they want to improve their villages and wards. Shyama Prasad Mukherji Rurban Mission has also been launched for 300 rural growth clusters for developing skills & local entrepreneurship and providing infrastructure amenities.

Youth are the future of our country and ensuring *Yuvaon ko Rojgaar* through massive employment generation is a top goal for my Government. We are driving job creation through an integrated set of initiatives including Make in India, Start-up India, Mudra, Skill India, etc.

My Government's innovative initiatives have helped India jump up 12 places in the latest rankings by the World Bank on Ease of Doing Business. Notably, the Make in India initiative has achieved a 39% increase in FDI inflow despite an adverse global investment climate.

My Government has fostered competitive cooperation among various States to enhance Ease of Doing Business. State Governments are being encouraged and supported to simplify procedures, introduce e-enabled processes and invest in infrastructure to improve investment climate. Procedures have been simplified to enhance ease of approvals/clearances. Dedicated Commercial Courts and Commercial Division in High Courts have been established. For speedy resolution of commercial disputes, the long overdue amendments to the Arbitration Act have been made.

Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises provide large-scale employment. Banks have cumulatively disbursed over Rupees one lakh crore to more than 2.6 crore borrowers under the PM's *Mudra Yojana*, of which 2.07 crore are women entrepreneurs. *Udyog Aadhar Portal* has been set up to facilitate online registration of MSMEs. My Government has decided to set up rural livelihood and technology business incubators to boost entrepreneurship in the agriculture and rural sector. The Start-up Village Entrepreneurship Programme is a new vertical to strengthen the livelihoods of artisans and weavers. In its first phase, about 1.82 lakh village enterprises will be created and strengthened in 125 Blocks across 24 States creating employment for about 3.78 lakh persons.

To strengthen the employment intensive segments of textile industry, my Government has launched an Amended Technology Upgradation Fund Scheme with an allocation of about Rupees eighteen thousand crore over a 7 year period.

A series of reforms have been initiated to help convert job seekers into job creators. My Government has launched the Start-Up India campaign which would deepen, expand and support the innovation eco system in the country.

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme has been revamped to ensure the efficient disbursements of wages, increased transparency and creation of productive assets. Mission *Antyodaya* — an intensive Participatory Planning Exercise has reached 2569 most backward blocks, to identify the kind of assets to be created.

My Government's mission of skilling India has gained momentum and during the last year about 76 lakh people have been trained.

My Government aims to create a *Shikshit Swasth Swachh Bharat*, an educated, healthy and clean India. In a reflection of how the spirit of Swachh Bharat has manifested in our primary schools, over four lakh seventeen thousand functional toilets for girls and boys have been constructed.

New Institutes of excellence in higher education have been set up. Two Indian Institutes of Technology, six Indian Institutes of Management, one Indian Institute of Science Education and Research and one National Institute of Technology have started functioning. My Government has given impetus to research through the launch of IMPRINT India whereby scientific goalposts have been identified in 10 fields of research ranging from Defence to Sustainable Living. To enable increased interaction between foreign faculty and our students, under the aegis of GIAN, my Government has in the first cycle invited 400 foreign academicians to 'Teach in India'. National Institutional Ranking Framework has been launched for higher educational institutions. The National Scholarship Portal provides a one-stop platform for applications of all scholarships.

Sports is the best way to *Swasth India*. My Government successfully hosted the 12th South Asian Games from 5–16 February, 2016 at Guwahati and Shillong, in which more than 3500 sports persons from all the SAARC countries participated. The games were the biggest ever sporting event in North East India.

I am happy to inform that we have successfully eliminated Maternal and Neonatal Tetanus well before the global targeted timeline of December,

2015. The largest number of children ever fully immunized in a single year was in 2015.

My Government is leveraging *KAYAKALP*, an inter-institution ranking system to bring about extensive improvement in cleanliness in our health institutions, reduction of hospital-acquired infections and better service delivery.

My Government has placed strong focus on holistic healthcare, strengthening Ayurveda, Yoga & Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha & Sowa-Rigpa and Homoeopathy systems of medicine. The first International Day of Yoga was celebrated on 21st June, 2015 world over with immense enthusiasm.

To address the problems of malnutrition in a holistic manner, my Government is ensuring convergence of the actions of various Ministries and programmes with a clear focus on measurable outcomes. Infrastructure required for effective implementation of the Integrated Child Development Scheme is being strengthened in convergence with other programmes. Two lakh *Anganwadi* buildings are being constructed in 2,534 most backward Blocks under Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme over a period of four years.

My Government has launched the *Sugamya Bharat Abhiyan* as a nation-wide campaign for achieving universal accessibility for ensuring that persons with disabilities (*divyang*) participate in all areas of community life. During the last year, 342 camps were conducted, aids and assistive devices have been distributed to over 1.7 lakh persons with disabilities (*divyangs*).

The *Swachh Bharat Mission*, with its focus on behavioral change is becoming a community movement to herald an overall change in the quality of life and well-being of the people, particularly the poor. Focusing on generating wealth from waste, my Government has formulated policies on mandatory procurement of power from waste to energy plants, co-marketing of compost by chemicals and fertilizer companies, and use of construction and demolition waste.

My Government firmly believes that economic development and environmental protection can co-exist. At the crucial Climate Summit in Paris, India's position for climate justice, sustainable lifestyles and clean development was widely supported. Real time online monitoring of 1487 industries and industrial units in seventeen highly polluting categories and of Ganga Water Quality has started. To reduce air pollution, target for emission standards for motor vehicles have been drastically brought forward to achieve Bharat Stage -VI norm by 2021. The Project Tiger coverage has

been expanded and the latest estimation shows an increase of 30% over the last count.

My Government has launched *Jal Kranti Abhiyan*, a people-centric program to spread awareness on water conservation and management involving all stakeholders including Gram Panchayats. As part of the *Namami Gange Programme*, my Government is implementing several projects in all 118 cities and complete sanitation solutions for 1,649 gram panchayats, on the banks of the holy Ganga.

My Government has taken several measures to improve the quality of governance. Significant steps have been taken to reform institutions, simplify procedures and repeal obsolete laws. Close to 1800 obsolete legislations are at various stages of repeal. NITI Aayog is actively engaging with States in policy formulation in the true spirit of cooperative federalism. People's participation in policy making through initiatives like MyGov has now taken firm roots. My Government has taken up an initiative for providing 500 e-governance services through Public Private-Partnership in 12 States of the country. My Government has dispensed with interviews for posts at junior levels in Government of India to ensure absolute transparency in recruitment to Government jobs.

While on the one hand, my Government has taken measures to eliminate the scope for corruption, on the other hand, it has been unsparing in punishing those who are found guilty of corruption. Stringent amendments to the Prevention of Corruption Act are also on the anvil to address the perceived gaps in anti-corruption law.

Robust infrastructure development unlocks opportunities for all. My Government has initiated the Smart Cities programme, envisaging city development in a challenge mode. In the first phase of the Smart City programme, twenty cities have been selected after intense competition among ninety eight cities. Second and third phases of the programme are on the anvil.

To enhance the availability of clean energy, my Government has envisaged increasing the renewable energy capacity manifold to 175 GW by 2022 by encouraging various initiatives, including offshore wind energy policy, bundling of thermal power with solar power, setting up solar parks in States, etc. Installed solar capacity has almost doubled in the last 20 months and crossed 5000 MW. Today under my Government, solar power is affordable and accessible to thousands of people.

Since the Government assumed office, energy shortages have been reduced from 4 to 2.3%. My Government is committed to providing electricity

to all the census villages by May 2018. My Government has launched the Ujjwal DISCOM Assurance Yojana (UDAY) for financial turn around of Power Distribution Companies of States/ UTs. Eighty-three per cent of the capacity addition target of 88,537 MW for 12th Plan period has already been achieved.

My Government has focused on commissioning major transmission projects for reducing congestion in transmission. I am happy to share that Available Transfer Capacity for South India has increased by 71% from May, 2014 to December, 2015. This has resulted in cheaper and abundant power in South India, finally moving towards the goal of One Nation, One Grid, One Price. To revive gas based power generation capacity, my Government implemented a new initiative of supply of Refined LNG. This has ensured revival of stranded gas plants with installed capacity of 11,717 MW. In the year 2015 India witnessed the highest ever generation of electricity.

My Government has introduced critical amendments in the Tariff Policy for ensuring availability of electricity to consumers at reasonable and competitive rates. Two ambitious National LED Programmes have been launched for cities for Street Lighting and LED bulbs for Domestic Lighting. Over 6 crore LED bulbs have already been distributed. Through a bulk procurement strategy, the cost of LED bulb has been brought down from Rs. 310 in January 2014 to Rs. 64 in January 2015.

My Government has introduced dynamic and comprehensive reforms in the Coal sector and conducted transparent auction/ allocation of over 70 coal blocks. These will immensely benefit the eastern States in the years to come. Strong emphasis on increasing coal production has resulted in a record 9.8% growth in CIL's coal production and highest ever output of coal. This has also led to reduced imports of coal.

To give a boost to the mining sector and to bring in transparency in the allocation of mineral resources, the Mines and Minerals Development and Regulation Act, 1957 was amended and auction of mines has commenced. For systematic exploration in potential mineral bearing areas using state-of-the-art techniques, National Mineral Exploration Trust has been established. *Pradhan Mantri Khanij Kshetra Kalyan Yojana* will implement developmental and welfare projects in mining affected areas for minimizing adverse impacts and ensuring sustainable livelihoods for the affected people.

My Government has recently dedicated to the nation the Assam Gas Cracker Project with an estimated cost of more than Rupees nine thousand nine hundred crore. The project is expected to generate employment for about one lakh persons, both direct and indirect.

My Government has initiated several ambitious measures for improving sanitation standards at Railway Stations and Trains. “Samman” guides us in our *endeavor* to phase out the open discharge of sewage from trains and combat manual scavenging. All new coaches are now being fitted with bio-toilets. Focus has also been on Doubling, Gauge Conversion and capacity enhancement works in Railways. Commissioning of Broad Gauge and electrification have been at all-time record levels. The highest ever increase in railway capital expenditure was achieved in 2015.

A landmark agreement with Government of Japan will make the Mumbai-Ahmedabad high speed rail corridor a reality. My Government also awarded two mega projects for setting up diesel and electric locomotive factories at Marhaura and Madhepura, respectively.

By March 2019, under the *Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana*, one lakh seventy eight thousand rural habitations will be connected with all weather roads. My Government has revived a majority of the 73 stalled road projects, completed construction of 7,200 km of highways and awarded 12,900 km of highway projects which is the highest ever number of new highway kilometers awarded.

My Government has formulated an umbrella scheme, Bharatmala at an estimated cost of over Rupees two lakh sixty seven thousand crore for development of national highways. To ensure connectivity to Chardham during all seasons, a project of over rupees twelve thousand crore has been taken up. A special Green Highways Policy 2015 has been launched for making highways green and a pilot policy for conversion of diesel buses into electrical buses has been taken up. The country recorded the highest ever production of motor vehicles in 2015. Guidelines have been issued for protection of Good Samaritans from harassment in road accident cases.

To rejuvenate the Shipping sector with focus on Make in India, my Government has launched a scheme for financial assistance to domestic shipyards. Several steps for improving the operational efficiency of major ports and for simplifying rules and processes have been initiated. In 2015, India achieved the fastest average turnaround time in ports and the highest ever quantity of cargo handled by major ports. My Government is keen on promoting extensive use of inland waterways and coastal shipping as an alternative mode of transport.

My Government is also working on a new Civil Aviation Policy with thrust on connectivity to small cities. Domestic Air Passenger traffic has registered a substantial growth during the year.

Setting up world-class infrastructure for Electronics manufacturing across the country remains a priority for my Government. Twenty nine Electronic Manufacturing Clusters are under development. The recent interventions and subsequent rationalization of duty structure in mobile handset manufacturing industry has led to near doubling of mobile handset production in the current year. Transparent and efficient auction of spectrum has fetched highest ever price of about Rupees one lakh ten thousand crore. Policies like Spectrum trading and sharing have been finalized for optimum utilization of resources.

The country recorded the highest ever software exports during 2015. Under BharatNet, the architecture and design of the National Optical Fiber Network is being revamped to rapidly take broadband connectivity to our villages. By spreading the network of Common Service Centers and setting up BPOs in small towns and linking land record modernization with the use of space technology, my Government is taking the benefits of Digital India to common citizens. The Digital India Programme will give a big boost to citizen empowerment and knowledge economy.

The IT Modernization Project involving computerization and networking of 1,55,000 Post Offices in the country, will be completed by 2017. The proposed Postal Payment Bank of India will further boost financial inclusion.

My Government has embarked on several significant projects such as National Supercomputing Mission, Improving Fuel Efficiency and Controlling Emissions. My Government has launched Science & Technology of Yoga and Meditation (SATYAM) initiative to explore the modern scientific roots of our traditional wisdom.

Building upon the success over the past year, my Government's endeavour is to scale new heights in Space. Focus will be on completing the constellation of the Indian navigational satellites in 2016 to cater to indigenous navigation and location-based services.

Varanasi and Jaipur have been declared as the first two Indian cities to be part of the UNESCO Creative Cities network. Thirteen Circuits and thirteen pilgrimage sites have been identified for development under *Swadesh Darshan* Scheme and *PRASAD* Scheme respectively.

Radio has once again emerged as the people's medium. Establishment of new radio stations has received a fresh impetus. The good response to the successful and transparent bidding for the first batch of private FM Radio for phase-III comprising 135 channels in 69 cities augurs well for the medium.

India is a heaven of stability in an increasingly turbulent global economy. GDP growth has increased making India the world's fastest growing economy among large economies. Inflation, fiscal deficit and current account deficit have all decreased. India recorded the highest ever foreign exchange reserves in 2015.

The *Indradhanush Programme* has been launched to revitalize public sector banks and ensure credit flow in the economy, with committed minimum recapitalization of Rupees seventy thousand crore. In addition, we have undertaken major governance reforms, brought in private sector talent and moved to a fully transparent and meritocratic recruiting process. We have also issued 23 banking licenses after a long hiatus of ten years.

The Government's concerted efforts to tackle the menace of black money have started yielding results. With the enactment of the Black Money (Undisclosed Foreign Income and Assets) and Imposition of Tax Act, 2015, a stringent legislative framework has been put in place to combat the menace.

The Government has launched the Gold Monetization Scheme and Sovereign Gold Bond Scheme in November 2015 to ensure productive utilization of idle assets.

The Government has taken a number of measures to put in place a simplified, progressive and non-adversarial tax regime by incorporating internationally prevalent best practices in tax administration. A gamut of taxpayer facilities, *viz.*, e-filing of returns and various forms, electronic processing and retrieval of documents and online grievance redressal are now available to the citizen.

My Government is fully committed to firmly deal with all challenges concerning the security of the country. Terrorism is a global threat and strong counter-terrorism measures are necessary worldwide to eradicate it completely. Let me congratulate the security forces in successfully foiling the recent attack at the Pathankot airbase by terrorists. Firm and effective steps will be taken to deal with any situation arising out of cross-border terrorism.

There has been significant improvement in the overall security situation in the North-Eastern States and Left Wing Extremism affected States. This has been made possible through sustained efforts and measures taken by the intelligence agencies and security forces in collaboration with the State Governments.

The country had to face severe drought and floods in some States. The unprecedented floods that submerged Chennai in December last year

brought untold human suffering and economic loss. My Government stands with the people who have faced natural calamities and has immediately forwarded physical and financial resources to the States to handle such disasters. An amount of more than Rupees thirteen thousand crore has been released under State and National Disaster Response Fund.

Defence procurement procedure has been streamlined with a focus on indigenously designed, developed and manufactured weapon systems. We are working to ensure that our Armed Forces will be equipped with the most capable and sophisticated armaments in the world.

In our country "*Shakti*", which means power, is the manifestation of female energy. This Shakti defines our strength. My Government has approved the induction of women as Short Service Commission officers and as fighter pilots in the IAF. In the future, my Government will induct women in all the fighter streams of our Armed Forces. My Government has initiated several measures to ensure safety and security of women which include nationwide Emergency Response Systems, a Central Victim Compensation Fund, Cyber Crime Prevention against Women and Children, and Organized Crime Investigative Agency and an Integrated Emergency Response Management System for women's safety on the railways.

We are indebted to those who inspire by their selfless service and their supreme sacrifice in the line of duty. Acknowledgement must not hinge on ceremony or noble gestures of gratitude alone. In spite of huge financial implication of more than Rupees seven thousand crore per annum, my Government has fulfilled its commitment to implement four decades old demand of One Rank One Pension.

My Government has continued to pursue a bold and proactive foreign policy. The primary objective has been to accelerate national development with emphasis on improving India's access to capital, technology, resources, energy and skills. States have been made partners in our diplomatic efforts.

Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam: the world is one family. My Government is committed to this principle and its expression is most resonant in the steps we have taken in reaching out to our neighbours. Last year, my Government adopted the historic Land Boundary Agreement with Bangladesh, leading to the peaceful exchange of disputed territories between our two countries. The signing of the Motor Vehicles Agreement between Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal, will provide seamless connectivity and further strengthen ties. We have been a friend in need to Nepal during the devastating earthquake of April 2015. We opened our skies, became a key transit hub and essential enabler so that assistance from other countries could reach

Nepal in its hour of need. My Government is committed to forging a mutually respectful relationship with Pakistan and in creating an environment of co-operation in combating cross border terrorism. My Government believes in a secure and prosperous future for our neighbourhood. India remains committed to providing support to the people of Afghanistan in realising their dream of building a stable, inclusive and democratic nation. Dedication of the Afghanistan Parliament to its people by Prime Minister Modi was our contribution to Afghanistan's pursuit of peace and prosperity.

We reached out to the world, both on land and sea. Of 54 participating nations, the India-Africa Summit, attended by Heads of States and Governments from 41 countries, has rejuvenated India's relations with the continent, ushering in a new era of engagement and fraternity. My Government will not let oceans separate us and has activated engagement with the 14 Pacific Island countries and revitalized civilizational links with our vibrant Act East Policy. India's second International Fleet Review, attended by 50 foreign navies, reinforced our cultural, commercial and strategic connect with our immediate and extended maritime neighbourhood.

My Government has played a proactive role in addressing climate change by launching an International Solar Alliance that has been universally acknowledged. We remain at the forefront of the global fight against terrorism. Sustained Indian efforts have led to concrete action for reforming the UN Security Council. India has also provided strong leadership and new vision to regional and international groupings like BRICS, G-20, WTO, East Asia Summit, ASEAN and the SCO.

My Government has enhanced NRI and PIO engagement by making it easier for them to get passports and offered Visa on Arrival by extending Electronic Travel Authorization facility to a large number of countries. Today, our citizens living and working abroad know that the Government is committed to protecting their interests and helping them in distress. This was manifested in Operation Rahat, in which we successfully evacuated 4,748 Indians from Yemen. We also extended our assistance to other nationalities. We evacuated 1,962 Foreigners belonging to 48 countries.

My Government is focused on *Sabka Vikas*, beyond just the economic advancements that dominate headlines. To realise *Sabka Vikas*, we must ensure that the poor and deprived are truly empowered to take advantage of opportunities to improve their lives. *Sabka Vikas* means that backward sections of society are equally valued and are genuine stakeholders in the

country's progress. *Sabka Vikas* implies that we tackle the pollution, traffic, and garbage problems that plague our cities. And, lastly, *Sabka Vikas* is Development for the entire world, which is why we have to be a responsible member of the global comity of nations helping all humanity solve major challenges such as terrorism, climate change, and financial instability.

Our Parliament reflects the supreme will of the people. Democratic temper calls for debate and discussion, and not disruption or obstruction. *Aa No Bhadra Kratvo Yantu Viswataha* — let noble thoughts come from all directions, should be the spirit behind debate in this temple of democracy. Being a member of this great institution bestows great honour as well as important responsibilities. My Government will constantly strive for smooth and constructive conduct of Parliamentary business. I urge all Members of the Parliament to discharge their solemn responsibilities in a spirit of cooperation and mutual accommodation. Let us all collectively endeavour to build a flourishing and prosperous India.

We owe a great debt to our freedom fighters. It is time to repay that debt, by building the country that they envisioned and fought for. In the words of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose, "Nationalism is inspired by the highest ideals of the human race, *Satyam, Shivam, Sundaram*", let us embrace those ideals as we stake our claim on the future.

Jai Hind.

ADDRESS TO PARLIAMENT — 31 JANUARY 2017

Lok Sabha	—	Sixteenth Lok Sabha
Session	—	First Session of the year
President of India	—	Shri Pranab Mukherjee
Vice-President of India	—	Mohammad Hamid Ansari
Prime Minister of India	—	Shri Narendra Modi
Speaker, Lok Sabha	—	Smt. Sumitra Mahajan

HONOURABLE MEMBERS,

In this *Basant* season of renewal and resurgence, I welcome you all to this Joint Session of both Houses of Parliament. This is a historic session heralding the advancement of the Budget cycle and merger of the Railway Budget with the General Budget for the first time in independent India. We gather once again to celebrate democracy, a cherished value and culture that has prospered throughout the long history of our nation. Indeed, a culture that guides my Government towards *Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas*.

The ideal of *saha na vavatu, saha nau bhunaktu*—May we be protected together and blessed together with bliss—has inspired our civilisation from time immemorial. This year marks the 350th birth anniversary of the great *Sikh Guru—Guru Gobind Singhji*. We are also observing the one thousandth birth anniversary of the great saint-philosopher *Ramanujacharya*. The luminous path of social transformation and reform shown by them serves as a beacon for all, and is an inspiration to my Government.

This year marks the Centenary year of *Champaran Satyagraha*, which gave a new direction to our freedom struggle and channelised *janashakti* in the fight against colonial power. Mahatma Gandhi's ideals of *Satyagraha* instilled in every Indian an indomitable self-belief, and spirit of sacrifice for the larger good. This *janashakti* is today our greatest strength.

The resilience and forbearance demonstrated by our countrymen, particularly the poor, recently in the fight against black money and corruption, is remarkable. The same spirit has driven the LPG "Give It Up

Campaign". Over 1.2 crore consumers have voluntarily given up their LPG subsidy, which has helped the underprivileged in accessing LPG connections. This *janashakti* has transformed *Swachh Bharat Mission* into a *jan-andolan*. 1.4 lakh villages, over 450 cities, 77 districts and 3 states have declared themselves Open Defecation Free. My Government salutes the strength of *janashakti* and pledges to constructively utilise it in *Rashtra Nirman*.

At the core of all my Government's policies is the welfare of the *garib, dalit, peedit, shoshit, vanchit, kisan, shramik* and *yuva*. My Government is guided by the Antyodaya philosophy of Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya. His centenary year is being observed as *Garib Kalyan Varsh*.

Financial inclusion is key to poverty alleviation. An unprecedented 26 crore plus *Jan Dhan* accounts have been opened for the unbanked. Over 20 crore RUPAY debit cards have been issued to enable cashless payments. Moving swiftly from "Jan Dhan to Jan Suraksha" close to 13 crore poor have been covered under various social security schemes.

To take the banking system to the doorstep of the poor and the unbanked, the Indian Postal Payment Bank has been started. The postal network with wider reach and deep penetration of over 1.5 lakh post offices will also function as postal banks. Besides the over 1 lakh *bank-mitras* appointed by banks, over 2.5 lakh *Gram-Dak-Sewaks* will also function as banking correspondents.

Over Rs. 2 Lakh Crore has been provided through 5.6 crore loans sanctioned under *Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana* to ensure collateral-free bank financing for the unfunded and to promote small businesses. Seventy percent of this has been availed of by women entrepreneurs.

Under the *Deen Dayal Antyodaya Yojana*, which aims to empower women, particularly from the deprived sections, over Rs. Sixteen Thousand crore have been made available to Self Help Groups in the current Financial Year. The scheme aims to reach out to nearly 5 crore women soon.

My Government has taken many initiatives to improve the quality of life of the poor through assured housing, affordable healthcare, safe drinking water and sanitation, and access to clean energy.

My Government is committed to provide shelter to every houseless poor household through the *Pradhan Mantri Aawas Yojana* with appropriate interest subvention on housing credit.

Poor sanitation further weakens the economic wherewithal of a poor household. *Swachh Bharat Abhiyan* aims to ensure health and sanitation,

particularly for the poor. Under this mission, more than 3 crore toilets have been constructed.

The *Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana* will make clean energy accessible to the poor. This scheme aims to safeguard the health of women and children by providing them with a clean cooking fuel – LPG, liberating them from the ill-effects of smoky kitchens, and long hours of collecting firewood. Free gas connections are being provided to 5 crore poor households. Already 1.5 crore connections have been provided in the current financial year. It is noteworthy that 37 percent of the *Ujjwala* beneficiaries belong to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

Under *Deen Dayal Upadhyay Gram Jyoti Yojana*, out of the over 18,000 villages which have been in darkness since independence, over 11,000 have been electrified in a record time. Under UJALA (Unnat Jyoti by Affordable LEDs for All) programme, over 20 crore LED bulbs have been distributed, resulting in savings of more than Rs. Ten thousand crore in the electricity bills of consumers, majority of whom are poor.

Several steps have been taken to make healthcare affordable and accessible to every citizen of our country, particularly the poor. Mission *Indradhanush* commits to vaccinate “every child everywhere” against preventable diseases. It has so far benefited 55 lakh children. *Pradhan Mantri Bharatiya Jan Aushadi Pariyojana* has been launched to ensure that the poor have access to quality medicines at affordable prices. Special facilities created to control the endemic Japanese encephalitis have yielded encouraging results in significantly reducing mortality due to this disease.

In Kisan’s welfare lies the nation’s prosperity. A favourable monsoon after consecutive years of drought, supplemented by farmer-oriented schemes has increased the acreage and yield of most *Kharif* crops. The sown area in the current *Rabi* season has shown six percent increase in comparison to last year.

My Government has taken various steps to transform the lives of our farmers. Focus has been on holistic development of agriculture sector—making available affordable credit, ensuring assured supply of seeds and fertilizers, improving irrigation facilities, comprehensive risk coverage, improving productivity through Soil Health Cards, assured market and remunerative prices for the produce through e-NAM (National Agriculture Market).

Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana expanded the ambit of risk-coverage, doubled the sum insured, and facilitated lowest-ever premium

for the farmers. During *Kharif* 2016, around 3.66 crore farmers were insured for a sum of Rs. 1.4 lakh crore.

With the objective of digitisation of all the live *Kisan* Credit Cards, another three crore cards will be converted into *RUPAY* debit cards soon. The corpus of NABARD fund has been doubled to Rs. Forty One Thousand crore to ensure easy credit access to farmers.

With focus on Per Drop More Crop and "*Har Khet ko Pani*", coverage under *Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana* has been expanded. More than 12.7 lakh hectares have been brought under micro irrigation in the last two years.

Honourable Members may recall that soaring prices of pulses was a matter of grave concern around this time last year. My Government has taken proactive steps and prices of pulses are now under control. To ensure fair price for farmers and to protect consumers, a buffer stock of 20 lakh tonnes of pulses has been envisaged against which 8 lakh tonnes of pulses have already been procured.

My Government is making *Nari Shakti* an integral part of our development journey. Our women deserve equal opportunity. The Rio Olympics, where we took great pride in the performance of P.V. Sindhu, Sakshi Malik, Deepa Karmakar and others, illustrates the strength of our women. Women are being inducted in combat streams of our Armed Forces. The nation is proud of its first three women fighter pilots. This reminds us of what we can achieve, as a nation, if women are fully empowered, and if their skills and talent are optimally utilised.

The *Beti Bachao Beti Padhao* scheme that addresses the issue of declining Child Sex Ratio, is yielding encouraging results. Under the *Sukanya Samridhi Yojana*, launched with an objective of ensuring a secure future to our girl child, over one crore accounts have been opened and an amount of over Rs. eleven thousand crore has been deposited. The *Pradhan Mantri Surakshit Matritva Abhiyan* will provide comprehensive ante-natal care by a qualified medical practitioner to all pregnant women. The revision of Maternity Benefit Act and enhancement of maternity leave from 12 weeks to 26 weeks will support pregnant women at the workplace.

65 per cent of our population today is below the age of 35. Our youth is our greatest strength and *yuva urja* needs to be effectively channelised. With the motto of "*Har Haath ko Hunar*", my government has taken several steps for skilling the youth and improving their employability. The work of skill development, that was earlier spread across 21 ministries and

50 departments, has been brought under one umbrella Ministry. The *Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana* has been launched with a budget outlay of Rs. Twelve thousand crore, to train One crore youth over the next four years. Over 20 lakh youth have already benefited. National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme has been launched with a budget outlay of Rs. Ten thousand crore. 978 employment exchanges spread across the country have been integrated as part of the National Career Service Portal.

My Government has opened new avenues and made higher technical education more accessible to students from economically weaker sections. For the first time, ITI trainees have been provided with academic equivalence at matriculation and higher secondary level through bridge courses to enable them to pursue higher education. With the objective of providing training of international standards to youth, a nation-wide network of 50 India International Skill Centres is being established. The *Pradhan Mantri YUVA Yojana* has been launched for promoting entrepreneurship education and training amongst 7 lakh students.

My Government has announced a package of Rs. Six thousand crore to boost employment generation and exports in the apparel and made-ups sector. This package is expected to generate over 1.1 crore jobs, mostly for women.

Shram-eva jayate (श्रमेव जयते) is one of the foremost guiding principles of my Government and several measures have been taken for the welfare of the *shramik*. For the first time ever, minimum wages have been increased by 42 percent in both agricultural and non-agricultural sectors. For bonus coverage, the calculation ceiling limit has been doubled to Rs. Seven thousand, and the eligibility limit increased from Rs. Ten thousand to Rs. Twenty One thousand. This will directly benefit an additional 55 lakh workers. The Universal Account Number has ensured portability of EPF accounts and has safeguarded the interest of crores of workers.

Workers employed in the informal sector will benefit the most from my Government's decision to enable employers to pay wages to their employees through banks. This will increase compliance of payment of minimum wages. It shall ensure that workers in the unorganized sector also enjoy health benefits under Employees State Insurance Corporation and social security through Provident Fund.

Implementation of the 7th Pay Commission has benefited 50 lakh employees and 35 lakh pensioners. To protect senior citizens from the impact of interest rate fluctuations, interest rate for senior citizens has been fixed at 8 percent payable monthly for a period of 10 years.

Social and economic equality for the deprived and disempowered sections is the first promise of our constitution. My Government is committed to fulfil this promise.

Through the Stand-up India initiative, my Government plans to empower over two and a half lakh Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and women entrepreneurs. For promoting entrepreneurship, the National Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes Hub has been launched, with an initial allocation of Rs. 490 crore.

Under the Forest Rights Act, about 16.5 lakh Individual Forest Rights titles have been granted over an area of 55.4 lakh acres of forest land. Further, Community Forest Rights titles have been distributed over an area of about 47 lakh acres of forest land.

The location of our mineral wealth largely coincides with tribal habitations in our country. The *Pradhan Mantri Khanij Kshetra Kalyan Yojana* will serve the dual purpose of ensuring sustainable mining activity as well as local area development for the betterment of the tribals and the poor inhabitants in the mining areas. District Mineral Foundation is a novel initiative in this regard.

My Government has increased the allocation under the Tribal sub-plan. Fourteen different sectors have been identified under the *Vanbandhu Kalyan Yojana* for the empowerment of tribals. 100 out of the 300 clusters envisaged under the Shyama Prasad Mukherjee Rurban Mission, will be developed in tribal areas.

The success of the Indian cricket team at the World cup for the Blind, 2014 and the Indian Paralympics contingent at Rio 2016 demonstrates that our *Divyangjan* can scale great heights, if afforded an opportunity. My Government is committed to providing the *Divyangjan* equal opportunities for development. Besides increasing the percentage of reservation for *Divyangjan* from 3 to 4 percent in Government jobs, my Government has accelerated filling up of backlog vacancies. Over 6 lakh *Divyangjan* have so far benefitted from 4700 special assistance camps organised across the country since May 2014.

The *Sugamya Bharat Abhiyan* is improving accessibility for the *Divyangjan* at public places. For the first time, Speech and Language Disability, and Specific Learning Disability have been included in The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016. A common sign language is being developed for the entire country. The Niramaya Swasthya Bima Yojana provides *Divyangjan* affected by autism, cerebral palsy, mental retardation,

and those with multiple disabilities, a health insurance cover of up to One lakh rupees.

Like the strings of *sitar*, which produce different notes but come together to create a beautiful melody, people professing different faiths and religions constitute the spirit of India and contribute to the strength of the nation. The courage and sacrifice of Baba Banda Singh Bahadur, whose 300th martyrdom anniversary we observe this year; and the spirit of selfless service of Mother Teresa, who was canonised recently, inspire us in equal measure. My Government has taken several measures to ensure that the aspirations of people from all communities are fulfilled, and a more focussed approach has been taken towards inclusive development of the notified minority communities, namely Muslims, Christians, Buddhists, Sikhs, Parsis and Jains. While scholarship and fellowship schemes have encouraged their educational empowerment; skill development schemes like *Seekho aur kamao*, *Ustad* and *Nai Manzil* have enabled their economic empowerment.

Just as all the drops of rainwater and streams converge in an ocean, all the policies of my Government converge for the welfare of the poor, deprived and the underprivileged. From giving house to the shelter less to electrifying un-electrified villages, from giving free LPG connections to supplying LED bulbs to the poor, from *Jan Dhan* to *Jan Suraksha*, from making available affordable health care to providing quality education to the poor—central to all the policies of my government is the welfare of the poor.

Balanced and equitable development of all regions is vital to India's progress. Under its proactive "Act East" policy, my Government is focussing on reducing the isolation of the Eastern region and North-east by improving connectivity through road, rail, air, telecom, power and waterways.

My Government has started the *Pradhan Mantri Urja Ganga* with the execution of Two Thousand Five Hundred kilometres long Jagdishpur-Haldia-Bokaro-Dhamra Natural Gas Pipeline Project. With an investment of around Rs. Twelve thousand Five hundred crore, this project will cater to energy requirements of five States, covering 40 districts and 2,600 villages. This project will also lead to the revival of three large fertilizer plants, industrialization of more than 20 cities and city gas network development in 7 cities.

My Government sees the North Eastern States as the *Ashtalakshmi* that can take India to new heights. The North East is the gateway to South East Asia. We are opening up road and rail routes to our neighbouring countries to boost the economic development of the region.

To ensure unhindered support and development of North Eastern States, my Government is continuing with the special dispensation in the assistance pattern to the North-Eastern States, and is providing assistance in the ratio of 90:10 for core central schemes and 80:20 for non-core schemes to these States.

By the end of the year, all Meter-Gauge tracks in the North-Eastern states will be converted to Broad-Gauge. The railways have undertaken a major expansion in the region at a cost of around Rs. Ten thousand crore. Arunachal Pradesh and Meghalaya have been put on the rail map, Agartala in Tripura has been connected with broad gauge line.

The Brahmaputra Cracker and Polymer Limited and Numaligarh Refinery Limited's wax unit are big projects that will create huge employment opportunities in the North East region. The Government has approved North East BPO promotion scheme in the Digital India programme for creation of employment opportunities.

The beauty and diversity of the North East makes it a natural hub for tourism. The Ministry of Tourism has identified a thematic circuit for the North East region.

My Government has provided special financial assistance to mitigate the damages caused by unprecedented floods in the hilly and other areas of the country.

From highways to i-ways; from railways to waterways; from seaports to airports; from water pipelines to gas pipelines; from earth sciences to satellites; from rural infrastructure to smart cities; creation of vital next-generation infrastructure has received special attention of my Government.

For modernization of Railways, the highest-ever capital outlay of Rs. 1.21 lakh crore has been provided. My Government aims to connect all rural habitations with all weather roads. 73,000 kilometres of road has been built so far in rural areas. More than five thousand kilometres of roads in 44 Left Wing Extremism affected districts are being upgraded. The National Civil Aviation Policy, will give a major boost to air connectivity in the smaller cities and towns. Under the *BharatNet Project*, Optical Fibre Cables now cover over 75,700 Gram Panchayats, up from only 59 in May 2014.

India has launched 8 operational missions covering meteorological, navigation, and earth observation and communication satellites. ISRO completed the seven-satellite constellation of Indian Regional Navigational Satellite Systems, *Navic*. ISRO added another feather to its cap this year by successfully launching 20 satellites in a highest-ever single launch.

My Government is committed to optimally harness our marine wealth and give a new impetus to ocean-led development. Under the *Sagarmala* programme on port-led development, a total of 199 projects with an outlay of over Rs. Three lakh crore have been identified for implementation in the next three years. Of these, projects of more than Rs. One lakh crore are already under implementation. The seas surrounding the Indian Peninsula contain One thousand Three hundred and Eighty Two of our islands, out of which, to begin with, 26 have been earmarked for integrated development. The Blue Economy, with focus on sustainable development of fisheries will continue to receive our special attention.

As a reaffirmation of our commitment to clean energy, My Government has taken giant strides in increasing our renewable energy capacity to 47 Giga Watts so far, against our target of 175 Giga Watts.

Placing fresh impetus on rural infrastructure, untied financial resources of over Rs. Two lakh crore are being transferred to *Gram Panchayats* during 2015-20. The allocation to *Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme* in 2016-17 has been over Rs. Forty Seven thousand crore which is the highest ever since the inception of the programme and the focus is now on creation of durable assets and rural infrastructure.

Giving a major boost to creation of urban infrastructure, annual action plan for 500 cities with an outlay of Rs. Fifty thousand crore has been approved. Metro Rail Projects have been sanctioned for four cities including Ahmedabad, Nagpur and Pune, and an extension of Chennai Metro has also been approved.

My Government has taken bold decisions in the interest of the poor.

To combat the evils of black-money, corruption, counterfeit currency and terror financing, my Government took the decision on 8th November, 2016 to demonetize old five hundred and one thousand rupee currency notes. My Government's very first cabinet decision was to set up an SIT on black-money. The passing of Black Money (Undisclosed Foreign Income and Assets) and Imposition of Tax Act, 2015, Benami Transactions (Prohibition) Amendment Act, 2016, amendments to treaties with Singapore, Cyprus and Mauritius to prevent misuse of provisions in such treaties for tax evasion and movement of black-money in India and the Taxation Amendment Act providing for *Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana*, have together resulted in a comprehensive policy backed initiative against black-money.

The four-decade old demand of One-Rank-One-Pension (OROP) of our Armed Forces veterans has been fulfilled. The total financial implications

would be around Rs. Eleven thousand crore. More than Rs. Six thousand Two hundred crore have been released in two tranches benefiting over 19.6 lakh veterans.

My Government has taken decisive steps to give a fitting reply to the repeated incursions on our territorial sovereignty. On 29th September 2016 our defence forces successfully conducted surgical strikes at several launch pads along the Line of Control to prevent infiltration by terrorists. We are proud of the exemplary courage and valour displayed by our defence personnel and owe a debt of the gratitude to them.

Transforming the culture of governance, My Government has simplified procedures, repealed obsolete laws and eliminated scope for corruption.

The Direct Benefit Transfer programme of subsidies through the *Jan Dhan-Aadhaar-Mobile* (JAM) Trinity has prevented leakages and helped save Rs. Thirty Six thousand crore. PAHAL is the world's largest cash benefit transfer scheme that has saved over Rs. Twenty One thousand crore in two years. *Digidhan Abhiyaan* and Two lakh Common Service Centres are providing employment to over 5 lakh youth, and spreading digital literacy.

The launch of mobile app -*BHIM*- Bharat Interface for Money—is a tribute to the vision of Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar who sought economic empowerment of the poorest. Within a few days, it has become one of the most popular mobile app-based payment mechanisms in the country. The biometric AADHAAR Payment system to be launched soon will usher a technological revolution in India.

Coal block and spectrum auctions illustrate the highest standards of transparency set by my Government in allocation of natural resources. To carry this forward, government procurements have been brought under a single platform—Government e-Market Place(GeM).

The process of recruitment to Government jobs has been made simpler and transparent by dispensing with interviews for recruitments to over Thirty Four lakh non-gazetted posts. The process of appointments to senior positions in Government has also been streamlined and is guided solely by objectivity, merit and integrity.

Over Eleven hundred obsolete laws have been repealed and 400 more are in the process of being repealed. Legislations relating to Women, Divyangjan, Labour, Apprentices, Factories, Benami Transactions, Aadhaar and Real Estate, to mention a few - mirrors My Government's guiding philosophy of Transparency and Social Justice.

Frequent elections put on hold development programmes, disrupt normal public life and impact essential services and burden human resource with prolonged periods of election duty. My Government welcomes a constructive debate on simultaneous conduct of elections to Lok Sabha and the State Legislative Assemblies. Funding of elections to eradicate the misuse of money power also needs to be debated. My Government would welcome any decision taken by the Election Commission in this regard after consultations with political parties.

Celebrating the cultural diversity along with the richness of language and heritage of every State, My Government has started the *Ek Bharat Shrestha Bharat* programme. The uniqueness of this programme is to pair and entwine two different States with diverse cultures for over a year so that each State can assimilate the cultural spirit of the other.

Taking forward the concept of cooperative federalism through One nation-One tax and *One nation-One market*, both Houses of Parliament passed the *Goods and Services Tax Act*. 17 States governed by political parties across the political spectrum ratified this in a record 23 days. My Government is thankful to the GST Council for working to resolve outstanding issues.

India has been widely acclaimed as a bright spot in the global economy, at a time when global growth has been slow. The rate of inflation, the balance of payments, current account deficit and the fiscal deficit have been consistently reduced since 2014. Foreign Direct Investment and foreign exchange reserves have reached record levels. The country's macroeconomic fundamentals are very strong, creating a platform for sustained high growth.

FDI inflows in 2015-16 were US \$ 55.6 billion, the highest-ever for any financial year. My Government further liberalized FDI policy provisions in various sectors in June 2016.

My Government is closely working with the State Governments to identify constraints in doing business. The rankings of the States/UTs show that the national implementation average of reforms stands at around 49 percent, much higher than last year's 32 percent. India is ranked third in the list of top prospective host economies for 2016-18 in the World Investment Report 2016 released by UNCTAD.

India has been facing the grave challenge of terrorism for the last four decades. Terrorism poses a serious danger to the global community. India will actively collaborate with other nations in decisively defeating these forces. My Government is committed to combating terrorism and to ensure that the perpetrators of such acts are brought to justice.

The State of Jammu and Kashmir has been affected by terrorism sponsored and supported from across the border. The attempts of infiltration, incidents of terrorist violence and loss of precious lives of civilians and security personnel remain a cause of grave concern.

There has been considerable success in containing Left Wing Extremism over the last three years, with the surrender of over 2600 extremists. The security situation in the North Eastern States has also shown significant improvement.

My Government, committed to the philosophy of partnerships for peace and progress, continues its active diplomacy aimed at facilitating national development, enhancing our security, and ensuring greater Indian influence in global fora.

The intensity of our international engagements has helped us shape a diverse and purposeful agenda with our global partners. There has been a consolidation of relations with friendly countries and major powers. The common desire of the South Asian region for greater prosperity and development led most of its nations to make common cause in their opposition to terrorism. Membership of the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR) and signing of the Memorandum of Obligations of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation were further reflections of India's growing and multi-dimensional role in global affairs.

India hosted the eighth BRICS Summit at Goa with its BIMSTEC outreach, and the sixth Heart of Asia Conference at Amritsar, marking important contributions to our regional and pluri-lateral outreach. India hosted a three day Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in Delhi, in which more than 50 Asian and Pacific countries participated.

There are over Thirty million Overseas Indians, settled in almost every corner of the world. They continue to make invaluable contributions to Indian society and economy. My Government will maximize the strengths of Indian diaspora in nation building and for deepening our global outreach.

Realising the importance of developing tourism, my Government has approved the new e-VISA policy and expanded the scope of e-tourist visa to include purposes such as short-term medical treatment and business trips. 161 countries are now covered under e-VISA. With over 88 lakh foreign tourist arrivals in 2016, tourism sector has shown a growth rate of over 10 percent.

India ratified the Paris agreement on 2nd October 2016, thereby sending a strong message of our commitment to combating climate change with focus on climate justice and sustainable lifestyle. The United Nations Environment Programme has recognized India as one of the countries on

track in achieving its voluntary goals. 25 nations have signed the Framework Agreement of International Solar Alliance, the first treaty based organisation initiated by India.

Indians today have a deep sense of pride in the awakening of India caused by the momentous steps My Government has undertaken. Our fellow citizens have exhibited great solidarity with our endeavours in transforming India. My Government reiterates its commitment to fulfil the aspirations of our citizens. The Vision of *Mahatma Gandhi and other founding fathers* lays down a great path for a resurgent India. This path is of debate, discussion, accommodation and understanding. It is the rich tradition of Samvaad, Samanvay and Samvedna that will continue to guide the spirit of our nation building.

We gather here today to redeem the trust reposed by our countrymen, particularly the poor, in the sacred Institution of Parliament. Every action of ours, in this temple of democracy must be an offering at the altar of the innumerable sacrifices that have built this nation. Let us work towards a common future, seeded in the promise of *Sabka Saath Sabka Vikas*, that will bring to all the equality and dignity enshrined in our constitution.

Jai Hind.

SHRI RAM NATH KOVIND

ADDRESS TO PARLIAMENT — 29 JANUARY 2018

Lok Sabha	–	Sixteenth Lok Sabha
Session	–	First Session of the year
President of India	–	Shri Ram Nath Kovind
Vice-President of India	–	Shri M. Venkaiah Naidu
Prime Minister of India	–	Shri Narendra Modi
Speaker, Lok Sabha	–	Smt. Sumitra Mahajan

HONOURABLE MEMBERS,

I welcome you all to the Joint Sitting of the Two Houses of Parliament. We have all recently celebrated the festivals of Pongal, Bihu, Lohri, Makar Sankranti and Basant Panchami. For us, the Republic Day is also a major festival. The presence of Heads of States and Governments of ten ASEAN countries during this year's Republic Day Celebrations added a special dimension to our vision of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam'.

2018 is an important year for realising our vision of a New India. I am confident that peoples' representatives present here, who have come from different parts of the country, would play an active role in accelerating this great journey for the development of our nation.

The architect of our Constitution, Baba Saheb Dr. Bhim Rao Ambedkar used to say that political democracy cannot survive without social and economic democracy. Guided by this fundamental spirit of the Constitution and committed to the welfare of weaker sections, my Government is working towards strengthening social justice and economic democracy and to usher ease of living for the common man.

Perhaps no one had imagined that construction of toilets could also contribute towards social justice. Construction of toilets not only protects their dignity but also fosters a feeling of social justice in women. The movement for social justice is becoming widespread day by day. It is our collective responsibility to pay a befitting tribute to Pujya Babu by making the country Swachh by 2019 when we celebrate the 150th birth anniversary of the Father of the Nation, Mahatma Gandhi.

Here in this House, there are many like me who for years have seen women collecting firewood for cooking. They and their children had no option but to endure the ill effects of smoky kitchens causing disease and suffering. '*Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana*' has empowered these poor women to enjoy equal rights with their privileged counterparts thereby addressing a *hitherto* ignored aspect of social justice. So far, under this scheme, over 3 crore 30 lakh cooking gas connections have been provided.

For decades, the dignity of Muslim women has remained captive to political cost-benefit. Now the Nation has an opportunity to emancipate them from this situation. My Government has tabled a Bill on Triple Talaq in Parliament. I hope that the Parliament will soon pass it into a law. The law on Triple Talaq, once enacted, will also enable Muslim sisters and daughters to live a life of self-respect with courage.

To eradicate discrimination against daughters, my Government had introduced the 'Beti Bachao Beti Padhao' scheme. Seeing its positive results, the scheme has been extended from 161 districts to 640 districts.

The Government has also taken a big step by amending the Maternity Benefit Act. It now provides for 26 weeks of paid leave in place of 12 weeks. Working women will now be able to devote more time towards their new born children during their crucial formative years.

My Government which feels for the poor is implementing schemes for further strengthening economic democracy in the country. We are moving towards bridging the gap between the country's banking system and the poor completely. Under the 'Jan Dhan Yojana', so far, about 31 crore bank accounts have been opened for the poor. Women have especially benefitted from the scheme with the percentage of Savings Bank accounts held by them going up to more than 40 per cent from the earlier 28 per cent.

To make bank credit accessible to the poor and middle class and to encourage self-employment, my Government has facilitated provision of credit without insisting on bank guarantee. Through easy access to credit, people are now able to fulfil their dream of setting up their own enterprise. Under the '*Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana*', about 10 crore loans have been sanctioned so far and more than Rs. 4 lakh crore worth of loans have been disbursed. About 3 crore first time beneficiaries have received assistance under this scheme for self employment.

The endeavour of the Government towards strengthening economic and social democracy is helping redefine our national life. These efforts are establishing a new social order in the country which provides equal opportunity to the poor to march ahead.

The highest priority of my Government is to remove various difficulties faced by farmers and to raise their standard of living. The schemes of my Government are not only removing their hardships but also reducing the expenditure incurred by them on farming.

As a result of Government's policies and the hardwork of farmers, a record production of more than 275 million tonnes of foodgrain and about 300 million tonnes of horticultural produce has been achieved in the country.

My Government is committed to doubling of farmers' income by 2022. To ensure remunerative price to the farmers for their produce, the agriculture *mandis* are being connected online. So far, agricultural commodities valued at about Rs. 36 thousand crore have been traded on e-NAM portal.

The work of completing 99 Irrigation projects that were held up for decades is in progress.

Government is also protecting the interests of farmers by giving production bonus on pulses and oil seeds. As a result of Government's policy for pulses, their production went up by more than 38 per cent as compared to last year, which is a record.

To prevent damage to agriculture produce before it reaches the market and to ensure its safe storage, "*Pradhan Mantri Kisan Sampada Yojana*" has been launched. The supply chain and infrastructure in the agricultural sector are being modernized under this scheme.

To enhance the income of farmers, an ambitious scheme has been introduced in the Dairy sector under which a 'Dairy Processing Infrastructure Development Fund' with a corpus of Rs. 11 thousand crore is being set up.

While on one hand, my Government's policies have helped in increasing the production of urea, on the other, mandatory 100 per cent Neem coating of urea has eliminated its black marketing. The work on reopening of fertilizer plants at Gorakhpur, Barauni, Sindri, Talcher and Ramagundam is progressing at a fast pace.

My Government is working actively and with sensitivity to remove the feeling of economic insecurity among the poor, farmers and senior citizens.

Under '*Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana*', farmers are being provided affordable and simple crop insurance services. During 2017, under Rabi & Kharif crops, 5 crore 71 lakh farmers were provided protective coverage under this scheme.

Similarly, my Government has introduced insurance schemes for the poor at a premium of 1 rupee per month and 90 paise per day. More than 18 crore poor have been covered under the '*Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana*' and '*Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana*' and about Rs. 2 thousand crore has been paid out as claims.

My Government is also committed towards social security of senior citizens. Under the '*Atal Pension Yojana*', about 80 lakh senior citizens have benefited.

Following the path of *Ekatm Manav-vad* (Integral Humanism) propounded by Deen Dayal Upadhyaya, my Government is developing mechanisms to ensure that benefits of development reach the poorest of the poor.

About 2 lakh 70 thousand Common Service Centres have been set up that provide digital services at low cost, even in the remotest areas of the country.

Under the 'Bharat Net Project', the Government is providing broadband connectivity to 2 lakh 50 thousand Gram Panchayats. In the first phase, more than one lakh Panchayats have already been connected. This project will play a major role in taking e-health, e-education, e-governance and e-commerce to each village of the country.

To illuminate the lives of the poor and to enable them to move forward on the path to development, my Government is providing electricity connections to 4 crore poor people under the "*Saubhagya*" Yojana.

To ensure that benefits of development reach all sections of society, my Government is actively pursuing the work of connecting all villages under the '*Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana*'. As compared to 2014 when only 56 per cent of the villages had road connectivity, now more than 82 per cent villages mostly in far flung and inaccessible areas have been connected by roads. Our target is to provide road connectivity to every village by 2019.

To ensure availability of two square meals to every poor person, effective enforcement of National Food Security Act is necessary. The distribution of food grains at cheap rates under this Act is being made transparent and leakage proof in all States of the country.

Working for the upliftment and dignity of all weaker and deprived sections of society is my Government's priority.

My Government is sensitive towards the aspirations of every section of society and has introduced a Constitution Amendment Bill to provide Constitutional Status to the National Commission for Backward Classes.

A Commission has been constituted to examine the sub-categorization of backward classes so that the benefits of higher education and jobs can be availed by the most backward sections among the backward classes.

Minimum Support Price of several forest produce collected by the tribal people has been increased.

Lives of lakhs of people in tribal areas especially in the North-East region are dependent on bamboo industry. Inclusion of bamboo in the category of tree had adversely affected livelihoods associated with it. Keeping in mind these difficulties, my Government has excluded bamboo from the category of tree. This has now provided freedom to cut, transport and use bamboo.

Adivasi Swatantrata Sangram Sangrahalayas are being established to honour the invaluable contribution of tribal communities in the independence struggle. Recently, the foundation stone of first such museum was laid in Kevadia, Gujarat on the banks of Narmada, near the Sardar Sarovar Dam. Proposals of Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Manipur and other States are also under consideration.

There are more than 2 crore 50 lakh *Divyangjan* in our country. My Government is continuously working with utmost sensitivity towards their empowerment and economic inclusion. Government has enacted the 'Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act 2016'. Provision has been made for 4 per cent reservation in Government jobs and 5 per cent reservation in higher education for *Divyangjan*. In the last three years, over 6 thousand camps have been organised benefitting more than 9 lakh needy *Divyangjan* with necessary aids and assistive devices.

Committed to “Empowerment and not Appeasement”, my Government is making intensive efforts for economic, social and educational empowerment of the minorities.

Employment opportunities have been provided to the youth belonging to Muslim, Christian, Sikh, Buddhist, Parsi and Jain communities through programmes, such as, ‘*Seekho Aur Kamao*’, ‘*Ustad*’, ‘*Garib Nawaz Kaushal Vikas Yojana*’, ‘*Nai Roshni*’ etc.

More than 45 lakh students have also benefited from scholarships, fellowships, skill development and coaching schemes during the last one year.

Keeping in mind the objective of womens’ empowerment, for the first time since independence, the restriction on women above 45 years of age to perform Haj pilgrimage unaccompanied by their male relatives has been removed. This year, more than 1300 women are going on Haj pilgrimage without *Mehram*.

With a sensitive approach towards providing housing with availability of water-electricity—toilet facility to all, my Government is targeting to provide a house to every poor and homeless household by the year 2022.

Over the last three and a half years, more than 93 lakh houses have been constructed by the Government in rural and urban areas. Under the ‘Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana— Urban’, interest subvention of 6 percent is being provided to the poor. In addition, for the first time, two new schemes have been launched keeping the middle class in mind.

One of the major worries of the poor and middle class relates to treatment of diseases. The financial burden of treatment of disease further aggravates the suffering.

A new ‘National Health Policy’ has been formulated by my Government for providing better and affordable healthcare facilities to the poor and middle class. In addition, under the ‘National AYUSH Mission’, traditional methods of treatment, such as, Yoga and Ayurveda are being promoted. It gives me pleasure to share with you that:

- Through the ‘*Pradhan Mantri Jan Aushadhi*’ Kendras, 800 different medicines are being made available to the poor people at affordable rates. More than 3 thousand such kendras have been established in the country.

- Under the 'Deendayal Amrut Yojana', over 5200 life saving branded medicines and surgical implants are being provided through 111 outlets at discounts ranging from 60 per cent to 90 per cent.
- In addition to medicines for heart patients, the cost of stent has been reduced up to 80 percent. The cost of knee implant has also been regulated.
- Under the '*Pradhan Mantri National Dialysis Programme*', in over 500 districts, more than 22 lakh dialysis sessions for 2.25 lakh patients have been conducted at discounted rates.
- To enhance the availability of doctors, 7 thousand post graduate seats and over 13 thousand MBBS seats have been approved.
- To ensure quality and transparency in medical education, Government has also introduced the 'National Medical Commission Bill' in the Lok Sabha.
- I am happy to inform that the annual rate of increase in immunization coverage in the country has increased from 1 per cent to 6.7 per cent. This has benefitted children living in far-flung and particularly tribal areas of our country. Recently, my Government has also launched the 'Intensified Mission Indradhanush'.

Education provides the foundation for building the future of the Nation. My Government is committed to strengthening and modernising School and Higher Education system in the country.

My Government has approved over 2400 'Atal Tinkering Labs' under 'Atal Innovation Mission', in order to inculcate a spirit of entrepreneurship and creativity in children at an early age.

My Government has approved setting up of a 'National Testing Agency' as an autonomous and self-sufficient organization to conduct all examinations of higher educational institutions in the country.

To ensure a bright future for the youth, my Government is working actively towards setting up of 20 'Institutes of Eminence'. Under this Mission, selected public sector institutions will be provided financial assistance of Rs. 10 thousand crore.

A law has also been enacted to provide autonomy to all 'Indian Institutes of Management' in order to upgrade them further.

Our country is the youngest among all nations in the world. My Government is implementing programmes like *Start Up India, Stand Up India, Skill India Mission, Mudra Yojana* to provide self-employment to the youth and to enable them to fulfil their dreams.

My Government has recently approved two schemes – ‘SANKALP’ and ‘STRIVE’ for skill development of youth in-line with the needs of the industry.

Enterprises or companies creating new employment opportunities are being provided financial assistance under the ‘*Pradhan Mantri Rojgar Protsahan Yojana*’. Over 20 lakh people have benefited under this scheme.

About 5 lakh youth have benefitted under the ‘National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme’.

Our workers play a central role in Nation Building. Sensitive towards safeguarding their interests, my Government is continuously working for reforms in Labour laws.

My Government has increased the minimum wage of workers by more than 40 per cent. The number of registers for compliance of Labour laws has also been reduced from 56 to 5. All returns are now filed online on the Shram Suvidha Portal.

Excellence in sporting arena is viewed as an indicator of progress in the world. Alive to all round development of youth, my Government is working towards registering an effective presence in sports on the world stage.

In recent months, International Sports Competitions like FIFA Under-17 World Cup and Asian Athletic Championship have been successfully organized in the country. This has not only enhanced the prestige of the country in the sports arena but has also increased attraction towards sport disciplines like Football.

My Government has started an ambitious campaign namely ‘Khelo India Programme’ with an outlay of over Rs. 1750 crore.

For transparent selection of talented sportspersons, a ‘Sports Talent Search Portal’ has been started.

A scheme has been launched to provide stipend of Rs. 6 lakh per annum to one thousand talented sportspersons.

The cultural heritage of our country is a part of our identity and provides the foundation for 'Ek Bharat—Shreshtra Bharat'.

It is a matter of pride for us that recently *Kumbh Mela* was included in the list of 'Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity'. Last year, UNESCO has accorded Ahmedabad the status of India's first 'Heritage City'. Chennai, on account of its glorious tradition of music, has been included in the list of Creative Cities by UNESCO.

It is my Government's continuous endeavor to preserve and protect our historical heritage through programmes such as 'Swadesh Darshan' and 'Amrut Yojana'.

Our Space programme contributes immensely in providing right information in a timely manner to farmers, fishermen, students, scientists, thus contributing to the development of the country. Towards this end, India's ambitious space programme is accomplishing new heights in promoting national development and in furthering regional and international cooperation.

For the first time in the world, 104 Satellites were launched successfully at one go by ISRO.

In June 2017, the first developmental flight of India's GSLV MK-III was successfully launched which marked an important step in taking forward the launch capability of the country.

Last year on 5th May, ISRO launched the South Asian Satellite which demonstrated India's commitment towards sharing benefits of its technical capabilities with neighbouring countries.

This year on 12th January, ISRO made the country proud by successfully launching the PSLV-C40. On this day, ISRO also scored a century of satellites launched.

In this modern era of digital connectivity, my Government is continuously working towards ensuring that our countrymen and future generations are able to harness the power of digital technology. The Digital India Mission is proving to be a milestone in providing due recognition and in securing the rights of the poor and deprived.

My Government is implementing the largest Digital Literacy Programme of the world under the 'Pradhan Mantri Gramin Digital

Saksharata Abhiyan'. So far, one crore people have been made digitally literate.

'BHIM App' is playing a major role in promoting digital transactions. The recently launched 'Umang App' has made more than 100 public services available on mobile phones.

'Aadhaar' has helped in securing the rights of the poor by eliminating middlemen. At present, Digital Payments are being carried out in more than 400 schemes of the Government. As a result, it has become possible to provide Government benefits to the genuine beneficiaries. Till now, more than Rs. 57 thousand crore have been prevented from going into the wrong hands.

As a result of commendable efforts in the field of electronic manufacturing, the number of mobile companies in the country have gone up from a mere 2 in 2014 to 113. This has helped in providing new employment opportunities to our youth in small towns of the country.

Digital and physical connectivity play a big role in country's balanced development. My Government is striving towards enhancing connectivity and is equipping the transport sector to meet the challenges of the 21st century. Modern transport arrangements are being developed in a manner that different modes complement each other.

Railways remain the main mode of transport even today and that is why investment in Railways for capacity development and modernization is being enhanced continuously. My Government is committed to the construction of world class Railways. Work on Mumbai-Ahmedabad High speed bullet train has commenced.

My Government has formulated a new Metro Rail Policy which lays emphasis on 'last mile connectivity'. Presently, Metro work is in progress in 11 cities of the country.

Recently, my Government has approved an ambitious programme for development of highways namely 'Bharatmala'. A provision of Rs. 5 lakh 35 thousand crore has been made for this. Under this project, in order to enhance National Corridor Efficiency, about 53 thousand km. of National Highways have been identified.

Under 'Jalmarg Vikas Pariyojana', major projects on Ganga river have started in Varanasi, Sahibganj, Farakka and Haldia.

Under the 'Sagarmala programme', works on Special Economic Zone in Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust and 'Smart Port Industrial Cities' in Paradip and Deen Dayal Port Trust have been taken up.

To provide air connectivity to smaller cities and to enable the lower middle class, middle class and young people to fly, "Ude Desh ka Aam Nagrik" or 'UDAN' scheme has been launched. While only 76 airports of the country were connected with commercial flights since Independence, under the aegis of 'UDAN', work has been initiated to connect 56 airports and 31 helipads in a short span of 15 months. So far, flights have commenced from 16 such airports.

Along with improving connectivity, these schemes are also generating new employment opportunities.

For the first time, increase in Power generation capacity in the country has exceeded the target. Today, India has become a net exporter of power.

My Government has ensured power availability to States at cheap rates by completing work on the 'One Nation, One Grid'. Schemes worth Rs. 1.5 lakh crore have been implemented to strengthen the power distribution network in all villages and towns of the country. The work of electrifying 18 thousand villages is also nearing completion.

As of now, more than 28 crore LED bulbs have been distributed under 'UJALA scheme' and the private sector has also sold over 50 crore LED bulbs. This has resulted in an annual saving of over Rs. 40 thousand crore in the electricity bills for poor and middle class. In addition to conserving the environment, this has also resulted in an annual saving of 10 thousand crore units of electricity to the nation.

Mission to save electricity and efforts to increase electricity production are moving hand in hand. In last three years, solar energy generation has increased by seven times.

With Indian efforts, the International Solar Alliance has now become a legal entity. Its headquarter has been set up in India.

With the objective of taking the benefits of development to every part of the country, my Government is working with sensitivity towards achieving the hopes and aspirations of the people of North-East.

To accelerate the pace of development of this area, North East Special Infrastructure Development Scheme has been sanctioned recently, with

100 per cent central assistance. Under this scheme, projects relating to drinking water supply, energy, education and health will be completed.

To strengthen electricity transmission and distribution network in the North Eastern States, Government has sanctioned schemes worth Rs. 10 thousand crore in the last three years.

In Mizoram, a Hydro Electric Power Project constructed at a cost of Rs. 913 crore has been dedicated to the nation recently.

My Government is also striving to enhance road connectivity in the North-East.

Work on Agartala-Akhaura rail-link which will connect India and Bangladesh is progressing rapidly.

Shillong–Tura road project was dedicated to the people last year in December. This road will improve connectivity in the entire North-East region.

Last year, the longest river-bridge of the country Dhola-Sadiyaa was also dedicated to the nation. This bridge has reduced distance between Assam and Arunachal Pradesh by 165 kilometers.

My Government has also decided to develop the Barak River as National Waterway-16.

Due to regular efforts of the Central and State Governments, there has been a significant improvement in internal security of the country. The North East has also witnessed an improvement in the security situation. There has been a reduction in incidents of Naxal-Maoist violence. For this, the enlightened citizens of the region, our military, paramilitary and police forces deserve to be congratulated. We commend all our security personnel and pay heartfelt tribute to the martyrs.

Terrorist violence in the interiors of Jammu & Kashmir is directly related to cross-border infiltration. With better coordination, our Army, Para-Military Forces and Jammu-Kashmir Police are giving a befitting response to the perpetrators.

My Government has kept open the path of dialogue with those who wish to shun violence and join the main stream, while reposing faith in the Constitution of India. In the past three years, maximum number of youth influenced by the Naxal-Maoist ideology, have surrendered and joined the main stream.

My Government has also recently sanctioned a scheme of more than Rs. 18 thousand crore for the modernization of Police Forces.

The policy related to Strategic Partnership in Defence Manufacturing sector has also been given a final shape. This will encourage maximum participation of private sector in the manufacture of major defence platforms and equipment and would provide a fillip to employment generation.

My Government has fulfilled its commitment of 'One Rank One Pension' and disbursed arrears of more than Rs. 10 thousand crore to over 20 lakh retired armed forces personnel.

Service to humanity is an integral part of India's cultural heritage. Because of these values, India has always remained the First Responder in times of crises, such as the earthquake in Nepal, flood calamity in Sri Lanka and drinking water crisis in Maldives.

Today, all Indians residing in any corner of the world are confident that in case of a crisis, their Government will provide them with a safe passage to the country. More than 90 thousand Indians stranded abroad have been safely brought back since 2014.

Due to the successful diplomatic efforts of my Government, there has been a new found respect for India. As a result, India has been able to secure representation in the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea, International Maritime Organization and Economic and Social Council. In a keenly contested election to the International Court of Justice, India emerged victorious.

Subsequent to inclusion in the Missile Technology Control Regime last year, India has been inducted as a member in the Wassenaar Arrangement and Australia Group this year. This success has come after a long wait and with prolonged efforts and is an important achievement of my Government.

The commencement of operations at Chabahar Port is a historic event. First shipment of wheat has been sent to Afghanistan through this Port. An Air-corridor between India and Afghanistan has been made operational this year and shipment of freight has started.

Ties with Indian Diaspora are being progressively strengthened. On 9th January this year, on the occasion of '*Parvasi Bhartiya Divas*', a Conference of Parliamentarians of Indian origin was organized for the first time in which elected representatives from 24 countries participated.

The Ministry of External Affairs, in collaboration with Department of Posts, has embarked upon a comprehensive programme for expansion of Passport services in the country. Under this programme, establishment of 251 Passport Service Kendras has been announced, of which 60 centres have started functioning.

To consolidate the foundation of development in the country, my Government has taken up the strengthening of financial institutions on priority.

As a result of this, India's growth rate remained impressive despite global economic slow-down. During the first quarter of 2016-17, the economy witnessed a temporary slowdown in GDP growth. The second quarter of 2017-18, however, has seen a reversal of this trend. In the last 3 and a half years, the rate of inflation as well as Government's fiscal and current account deficits have, on an average, shown a decline.

In 2017, Foreign Exchange Reserves have risen to a level of more than US dollar 410 billion. Appropriate policies adopted by my Government have contributed to an increase in Foreign Direct Investment from US Dollar 36 billion to US Dollar 60 billion during the last three years.

With a view to resolving the problems of citizens, my Government has accorded priority to simplification of procedures. In the last three years, 1428 obsolete laws have been repealed and this is a continuous process.

Working towards achieving robust and inclusive development, my Government is striving to institutionalize honesty and develop transparent systems in the country.

To achieve economic integration of the country, my Government has introduced GST which is the biggest tax-reform since Independence. My Government has also constituted the National Anti-profiteering Authority so that benefits of lower prices of goods and services are passed on to the consumers.

My Government is also committed to revitalizing the banking system and to make it transparent. It has been decided to re-capitalise the public sector banks by infusing more than Rs. 2 lakh crore of capital in them.

Our fight against corruption continues. Towards this end, registration of about 3 lakh 50 thousand dubious companies has been cancelled in the last one year.

To bring transparency in government procurement and to provide opportunity to maximum number of entrepreneurs, a new system—Government e-market place has been created by the name of GeM. With the help of GeM portal, even the smallest of entrepreneurs are now capable of selling their products to Government.

To give preference to Make in India in public procurement, a new policy has been formulated. This policy promotes domestic manufacturing and services which in turn would create new opportunities for employment.

The Central Government is working together with States for creating a favourable business environment.

As a result of these efforts of my Government, India has moved up from 142nd to 100th rank in the Ease of Doing Business ranking of the World Bank. This has improved the credibility of the country in the global market.

The effort of my Government is to achieve welfare of the people through public participation. My Government is taking feedback by communicating with the youth, women, farmers, entrepreneurs, students, workers and also from the people of civil society. Their suggestions are being incorporated in the policies and decisions of the Government.

Citizens alive to the state of governance in the country are concerned about the frequent elections in one part of the country or another, which adversely impact the economy and development. Frequent elections not only impose a huge burden on human resources but also impede the development process due to the promulgation of the model code of conduct. Therefore, a sustained debate is required on the subject of simultaneous elections and all political parties need to arrive at a consensus on this issue.

Nation building is a continuous process in which each citizen of the country has a role to play. It is our responsibility to exhibit exemplary conduct before the nation. The completion of time-bound goals towards Nation Building is our collective responsibility.

Attaining these goals by 2022, when the Nation celebrates the 75th year of Independence, would not only fulfil the dream of our freedom fighters and founding fathers but also strengthen the foundation of New India.

Dream of a New India does not belong to one political party or organization. It is an embodiment of the aspirations and expectations of 1 hundred 30 crore countrymen. To fulfil this dream, we all have to work together with complete dedication.

Come, let us all work towards achieving the ideals of equality and fraternity enshrined in our Constitution. Let us move ahead together in one direction with full commitment and energy towards creating a glorious India.

Jai Hind.

ADDRESS TO PARLIAMENT — 31 JANUARY 2019

Lok Sabha	—	Sixteenth Lok Sabha
Session	—	First Session of the year
President of India	—	Shri Ram Nath Kovind
Vice-President of India	—	Shri M. Venkaiah Naidu
Prime Minister of India	—	Shri Narendra Modi
Speaker, Lok Sabha	—	Smt. Sumitra Mahajan

HONOURABLE MEMBERS,

It gives me immense pleasure to address the Joint Sitting of the Two Houses of Parliament.

In the annals of our democracy, 2019 is an important milestone. We the people of India, are celebrating the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, the Father of the Nation this year. 13th April this year will also mark 100 years of the tragic massacre at Jallianwala Bagh. On behalf of the entire nation, I bow to pay tribute to all those martyrs who sacrificed their lives for a bright future for us.

This year, our country will also celebrate the 70th anniversary of the Constitution Day. It is in this historic Central Hall, that the illustrious architects of our Constitution had sculpted the Constitution of India. This year, we are also celebrating the 550th birth anniversary of Guru Nanak Devji, who taught us to lead our lives with the spirit of service and goodwill.

I am glad that our country is following the dreams of Gandhiji to build an inclusive society based on ethics and principles. Our nation is moving ahead guided by the ideals of social and economic justice as enshrined in the Constitution by Baba Saheb Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar. The efforts of my Government clearly reflect a belief in an egalitarian society as espoused by Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia, the torch bearer of public conscience against the politics of exploitation.

Prior to the 2014 General Election, the country was passing through a phase of uncertainty. After the elections, my Government assumed charge and vowed to build a new India. A new India with no place for imperfect, corrupt and inertia ridden systems. From day one, the mission of my Government based on transparency was to improve the lives of our citizens, to eradicate their difficulties owing to poor governance, and to make sure that the benefit of public services reach the lowest strata of the society.

The targets of my Government were determined by countless and helpless faces such as—that poor mother who cooked in a smoke filled kitchen; that helpless sister who was compelled to postpone her own treatment due to financial worries despite serious illness; that daughter who had to wait the whole day until the cover of darkness for going to the toilet; that child who was compelled to wait for day light to study because there was no electricity; that farmer who was caught in the anxiety of repaying his loan while watching his crops damaged by hail storm; that youth who was unable to earn his livelihood because no bank would lend to him. These very thoughts have shaped the schemes of my Government. These ideals of Deen Dayal Upadhyaya's Antyodaya have been the touchstone of my Government's work.

In the last four and a half years, my Government has infused new hope and confidence among the people of the country, enhanced the country's image and has effectively brought in social and economic change. As a result, my Government has been able to win immeasurable affection and trust of the people. The main goal of my Government is to improve the life of every Indian.

For an inclusive and modern development of our country, it needs to be ensured that not a single family is deprived of fundamental needs. My Government which is sensitive to the needs of the common people and understands their pain, has prioritised provision of basic amenities, addressed health concerns of the people and implemented the Government schemes at an unprecedented pace after restructuring them. Espousing universal compassion towards all, Lord Basavanna said:

‘दयवे धर्मद मूल वय्या’

(Dayave dharmad mool vayyaa)

That is “Kindness is the basis of all faiths”. Every human being must possess affection and kindness in his heart for all living beings.

Lack of toilets had forced crores of Indians, especially our daughters and daughters-in-law to lead an undignified and unhealthy life. Under the *Swachh Bharat Abhiyan*, more than 9 crore toilets have been constructed. It is the outcome of this mass movement that coverage of rural sanitation that was less than 40 per cent in 2014, has increased to 98 per cent. According to an assessment, because of the toilets built, numerous poor persons have been spared of various kind of diseases and more than 3 lakh lives have been saved. In the year of the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, we must remember that we have resolved in his memory to achieve *Swachh Bharat* by 2nd October.

Many of our mothers, sisters and daughters used to suffer from various illnesses because of smoke filled kitchens, which also affected health of the entire family; and much of their effort and time were spent in collecting firewood. My Government has provided more than 6 crore cooking gas connections to such sisters and daughters under the *Ujjwala Yojana*. Even after decades of efforts, there were only 12 crore gas connections in the country in 2014. In a short period of last four and a half years, 13 crore families have been provided gas connections.

We are fully aware that the burden of expenditure on medical treatment further impoverishes the poor families. My Government which empathizes with this pain has launched the "*Ayushman Bharat Yojana*" last year. Under the world's biggest health care scheme, '*Pradhan Mantri Jan Aarogya Abhiyan*', 50 crore poor are eligible for availing treatment up to Rs. 5 lakh per year per family in case of a serious illness. In a short period of four months, more than 10 lakh poor have already availed free treatment from hospitals under this scheme.

The endeavour of my Government has also been on reducing the burden of out of pocket expenses on medical care for the poor and the middle class. Under '*Pradhan Mantri Bharatiya Jan Aushadhi Pariyojana*', 4,900 *Jan Aushadhi Centres* have already been opened in more than 600 districts. More than 700 different medicines are being dispensed at low cost in these Centres. Similarly, reduction in the cost of cardiac stents has resulted in an annual saving of about Rs. 4,600 crore to the poor and middle class. Reduction in cost of knee replacement has led to an annual saving of about Rs. 1,500 crore. My Government has provided the facility of dialysis free of cost to those suffering from kidney diseases. This has resulted in a saving of more than Rs. 2,000 per session for these people.

In addition, for a premium of just one rupee a month under 'Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana' and 90 paise a day under 'Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana', as many as 21 crore poor brothers and sisters have been provided with insurance coverage. An assistance of Rs. 2 lakh in the event of an untoward incident is made available to them under both the schemes. By disbursing more than Rs. 3,100 crore under these schemes till now, my Government has supported the people in their times of difficulty.

My Government is also striving hard to alleviate the challenge of malnutrition among poor women and children. My Government has launched the National Nutrition Mission for persons suffering from malnutrition and to eliminate the factors responsible for malnutrition. 'Mission Indradhanush' has been launched by the Government to provide immunization facilities to children and pregnant women living in remote and tribal areas. As a result, the country has moved rapidly towards the target of "Universal Immunization".

Be it cities or villages, the Government is working at a fast pace to strengthen the healthcare related infrastructure. New medical colleges are being set up by the Government, district hospitals are being upgraded and Wellness Centres are being established in all major Panchayats of the country. From Madurai in Tamil Nadu to Pulwama in Jammu-Kashmir; and from Rajkot in Gujarat to Kamrup in Assam, new 'AIIMS' are being established. Government is setting up new Ayurveda Science Institutes and encouraging yoga for physical and mental well being. To address the shortage of doctors in rural areas, 31 thousand new seats have been added in medical education in the last four years.

When my Government set a target that by 2022 when the nation celebrates 75th anniversary of its independence, no family would remain homeless, many wondered how this would be possible. While completing the houses under the earlier scheme, the Government has also fast-tracked the construction of houses across cities and villages under the *Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana*, in an unprecedented manner.

In the last four-and-a-half years, 1 crore and 30 lakh homes have been constructed under the rural housing schemes of the Government, whereas in the five years preceding 2014, only 25 lakh houses had been constructed. This five-fold increase in the speed of construction of houses and handing over the house keys to the poor is rapidly transforming the destiny of the poor and the rural landscape.

Similarly, buying or building a house in the cities has become easier for the common person. The dream of building one's own home had become difficult for a normal family to achieve due to black money and rising costs. By enacting RERA law, my Government has ensured that construction of houses is completed and they are handed over to the buyers as scheduled so that the hard earned money of buyers does not get stuck. After enactment of this law, about 35 thousand 'Real Estate Projects' have been registered where lakhs of houses are being constructed and handed over to families.

Under 'Pradhan Mantri Aawas Yojana', the Government is also giving interest subsidy of 6 and a half per cent to the persons belonging to low income group. According to an estimate, an individual taking a home loan of Rs. 20 lakh for 20 years, would get a benefit of about Rs 6 lakh.

By providing electricity connection to every household, my Government is illuminating the life of each person. In 2014, there were more than 18 thousand villages which had no electricity connection. Today every village has been electrified. Under 'Pradhan Mantri Saubhagya Yojana', 2 crore and 47 lakh homes have been provided electricity connection. Now India is rapidly moving on the path where every home is electrified and no poor household will be forced to live in darkness.

My Government is working hard towards realization of the dreams and aspirations of all the sections. By decreasing the burden of income tax and keeping rate of inflation under control, Government has created new opportunities for expanding the savings of the middle class. The effort of the Government is to increase the income of the hard working middle class and provide avenues for investment to further augment their incomes.

When the nation was fortunate to have a visionary and compassionate Prime Minister in Atal Bihari Vajpayee, who also understood the pain of the poor; several new Departments and Ministries were created and new programmes were launched. A separate Ministry for the North East, a Ministry for welfare of the Tribals, *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan* and connecting the nation through Golden Quadrilateral were singular contributions of Atalji. He undertook a grand initiative to eliminate the widespread disparities prevailing in the country. The programmes and Ministries conceived by Atalji played a vital role in eliminating the social imbalances during the initial years of 21st Century. But unfortunately these initiatives did not get the desired momentum and continuity in subsequent years.

We are all aware that if our Divyang brothers and sisters are provided assistance to ameliorate their physical difficulties, they can achieve new

heights on their own. With this in mind, the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment established by Atalji had started the tradition of organizing camps to assist the *Divyangjans*. But the situation was so dismal that up to 2014 only 56 such camps could be organized.

After formation of my Government in 2014, following the vision of Atalji, efforts were made with full sensitivity to solve the problems of *Divyangjans*. In the past four-and-a-half years my Government has been organising 140 camps on an average every month where *Divyangjans* are receiving assistive equipments. During this period, assistive equipments worth Rs. 700 crore have been distributed to about 12 lakh *Divyangjans* in a fully transparent manner.

We are all familiar with the ordeals faced by *Divyangjans* at railway stations and bus stands while commuting. My Government under the '*Sugamya Bharat Abhiyan*' has made about 1,000 Government buildings and more than 650 railway stations fully accessible to *Divyangjans*.

Children using sign language in one State had to face considerable difficulty due to different types of sign languages while visiting other States. In many instances multiple sign languages were being used within a State. Taking note of their difficulty, my Government started working on a uniform sign language for *Divyangjan* applicable throughout the country. A dictionary for the *Divyangjan* with 3,000 words has already been published by the Delhi-based Indian Sign Language Research and Training Centre and the work on another dictionary with 3,000 new words is in progress. In addition, the Central Government has made about 100 websites compliant to the needs of *Divyangjan*. Through the enactment of 'The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016', my Government has provided them with equal opportunity in education, social security and employment.

Tragic accidents at unmanned railway crossings have for years been a subject of discussion in our country. This subject has also been raised many times in the Parliament. In 2014, unmanned crossings in the country numbered 8,300. My Government undertook a mission to eliminate unmanned railway crossings, which have now almost been done away with.

Our citizens have to frequently deal with natural calamity of one kind or the other. Every year, there are floods in some districts and drought in some others. My Government is fully focussed on the management of natural disasters, and the financial assistance has been more than doubled so that relief work can be performed with full capacity. Be it the cyclonic storms in

southern States or the floods in eastern India, my Government has exhibited promptness and sensitivity in relief and rehabilitation works.

Mindful of the prevalence of injustice and deprivation in the society, my Government has been working towards reforming the legal system so as to ensure social and economic justice. The Citizenship Amendment Bill will help in the securing of Indian citizenship by those victims who were persecuted and were compelled to seek refuge in India. These people cannot be blamed since they were victims of circumstances.

My Government has made a provision for capital punishment in case of heinous crimes like rape of minors. In many States, capital punishment has been awarded after expeditiously completing the hearing which has sent out a strong message to persons with such perverted thinking.

With a view to liberate our Muslim daughters from a life of fear and anxiety and to provide them with equal right to lead their lives at par with other daughters, my Government is striving hard to get the Triple Talaq Bill passed by the Parliament.

Similarly, grant of Constitutional status to the 'Other Backward Classes Commission' demonstrates my Government's commitment towards social justice.

A historic decision has been taken in the last Winter Session of Parliament to pass the 103rd Amendment to the Constitution to extend the benefit of reservation to the poor belonging to the general category. This is an effort to provide justice and equal opportunity to those poor young men and women who felt left out because of poverty. To ensure that this new dispensation has no impact on the existing reservation, the number of seats in educational institutions are being increased proportionately.

Youth are the greatest strength of our nation. India has the largest number of young people in the world, and the policy decisions of my Government have been inspired by the aspirations and dreams of the young Indians of 21st century.

Keeping in mind the desire of the youth to be self-reliant, the *Kaushal Vikas Abhiyan* was launched. Under this Abhiyan, in the last four years, on an average one crore youth have been trained every year in different skills. In the coming days, more than 15,000 ITIs, more than 10,000 Kaushal Vikas Kendras and more than 600 *Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Kendras*, will play a critical role in developing the skill-set of the country's youth.

Under the '*Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana*', which facilitates credit for professional and business requirements, loans worth more than Rs. 7 lakh crore have been disbursed to the youth without any guarantee. More than 15 crore people have benefitted and over 4 crore 26 lakh first time borrowers have started their business under this scheme.

Under 'Start Up India' and 'Stand Up India', my Government has provided financial assistance to make the youth self-reliant. As a result, in the world of start ups, India now figures as a frontline country.

The Government has linked creation of jobs with tax incentives under '*Pradhan Mantri Rojgar Protsahan Yojana*'. Under this scheme, when a young person gets a new job, the EPS and EPF contribution of 12 per cent payable by the employer is being paid by the Government for the first three years. More than 1 crore youth have already benefitted from this scheme.

Every parent aspires for a good education for their sons and daughters so that they can succeed in life. Government is establishing new educational institutions to provide increased opportunities for professional education of the highest standard. 7 IITs, 7 IIMs, 14 IIITs, 1 NIT and 4 NIDs are being established. It has been decided to enhance the amount of scholarship and fellowship by more than 25 per cent to encourage research activities in the country. In addition, efforts are being made to further strengthen the foundation of the education system by opening 103 Kendriya Vidyalayas, Eklavya Model Awasiya Vidyalayas in all talukas having a majority tribal population and 62 new Navodaya Vidyalayas.

To improve the standard of education, Government is following a multi-dimensional approach. To secure the future of the country, it is imperative that children still studying in schools get full opportunity to transform their flight of imagination into concrete reality. The Government is setting up more than 5,000 'Atal Tinkering Labs' for taking ideas to innovation.

With changing times and evolving technology, methods and processes of employment and business are also changing. My Government is constantly working to ensure the preparedness of youth of our country for such changes.

My Government is making efforts to identify talented sportspersons from different corners of this country under the youth centric '*Khelo India*' programme. Transparency in selection process has boosted the morale of our sportspersons. The result is reflected in the number of medals won by us at national and international levels.

Our daughters are making remarkable contribution in every field today and have brought laurels to the country. It is for the first time since independence that the policies and programmes of the Government have created numerous new opportunities for enterprise for women and led to their empowerment and economic mainstreaming.

Under the 'Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana', the maximum benefit has been availed by women. Out of the 15 crore Mudra loans provided so far throughout the country, 73 percent have been disbursed to women entrepreneurs. Under the 'Deen Dayal Antyodaya Yojana', about 6 crore women have become members of Self Help Groups. My Government has provided loans worth more than Rs. 75 thousand crore to such Self Help Groups. This amount is two and a half times more than the loans given in the four years preceding 2014.

In order to ensure the participation of women entrepreneurs in small and medium enterprises, it has been made mandatory for the major Government companies to purchase at least 3 percent of their material from the enterprises owned by women entrepreneurs.

My Government is also making efforts to address the problem of gender-based discrimination faced by women in different spheres. Last year, a decision was taken whereby women officers recruited under the Short Service Commission in the armed forces would be considered for permanent commission through a transparent selection process just like their male counterparts. Women, who had been deprived of employment opportunities in the underground mining sector even after so many years of independence, will now be given equal opportunity to work in this sector.

To enable working women to devote more time towards the upbringing of their new born children during their crucial formative years, the Government has enhanced maternity leave from 12 weeks to 26 weeks.

Despite the scorching sun, heavy downpour, snow fall, or any other challenge; the hard working farmers of our country have toiled day and night to produce record foodgrain harvest. There has also been an increase in dairy and fish production, as also in other areas. Many of you have witnessed village life and the struggles of the farmers from very close quarters. Our farmer brothers and sisters are not only the foundation of our economy, but they also keep our traditions alive.

On behalf of this august House, I compliment our *annadata* farmers. My Government is striving day and night to attain the goal of doubling

farmers income. Understanding the needs of farmers, the Government is seeking to find permanent solutions to their problems. It is the priority of the Government to provide better facilities and assistance to farmers for the entire spectrum of agriculture activities from purchase of equipments and seeds to transportation of produce and its sale.

Work is being carried out with a new approach for reducing the cost of farming, providing the farmers with fair price for their crops, providing access to new markets and helping them with additional sources of income. My Government has taken the historic decision of fixing the Minimum Support Price—MSP of 22 crops at one and a half times higher than the production cost of the crop.

In addition, it is being ensured that good quality seeds are made available to the farmers. The number of Krishi Vigyan Kendras is being increased across the country to assist the farmers with scientific methods of farming. More than 17 crore Soil Health Cards have been distributed to inform the farmers about the health of the soil. 100 percent Neem coating of urea has been done to facilitate its availability and to prevent its misuse.

My Government is completing 99 incomplete old irrigation projects so that farmers do not face any hurdle in irrigation. 71 of these projects will be completed by the next few months. Micro-irrigation is also being promoted by the Government to ensure full utilization of every drop of water.

Crop insurance is being provided to farmers at low premium under the '*Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana*' to safeguard them from potential crisis due to crop damage. A campaign has been launched to link online, more than 1,500 Agricultural Mandis to facilitate market access to farmers. Cold storage capacities are being increased at a fast pace to minimise crop damage from the field to the market and to ensure proper storage. The '*Waste to Wealth*' campaign is being implemented to ensure that farmers generate additional income out of the crop residue from their field.

Under the Blue Revolution Scheme, my Government is providing training to fishermen in deep sea fishing and financial assistance for buying modern fishing trawlers.

These comprehensive interventions will trigger a permanent transformation in our 70-year old agriculture system, empower our *Annadata* farmers, pull them out of their problems; and do justice to their potential.

By lending momentum to schemes linked with the Digital India programme, my Government is trying to provide full advantage of e-governance to people living in rural areas. In 2014, only 59 village panchayats in the country had digital connectivity. Today, 1 lakh 16 thousand village panchayats are connected with optical fibre and about 40 thousand village panchayats have been provided with wi-fi hotspots.

Establishment of Common Service Centres has been accelerated to ensure that various benefits and services are easily available to brothers and sisters in rural areas. In these Centres, facilities like banking, insurance, pension and scholarship etc. are being made available online to the village folk. In 2014 there were only 84 thousand Common Service Centres. Today, their number has increased to more than 3 lakhs. Of these, 2 lakh and 12 thousand centres have been set up in village panchayats.

In this era of information technology, easy availability of data at low cost is a big facility as well as means for development for our people. The cost of 1 GB data which was about Rs. 250 in 2014 has now reduced to only Rs. 10 to 12. Similarly, the mobile talk time charges have now been reduced to less than half.

Earlier, it was almost impossible for ordinary entrepreneurs to supply their products to Government Departments. The Government has now developed an online platform called GeM *i.e.* Government e-Marketplace for public procurement. This platform has helped in bringing transparency in public procurement and at the same time has provided an opportunity to entrepreneurs in big and small cities as well as villages to sell their products without any difficulty to the Government.

Recently, in order to simplify the processes, the Government has started a scheme wherein loans of amounts up to Rs.1 crore are approved within 59 minutes.

The great Saint Thiruvalluvar has said:

“इयद्रलुम् ईड्रलुम् कात्तलुम् कात्त,

वगुत्तलुम् वल्लद अरसु”

(Iyatralum eettalum kaattalum kaatta,

Vaguttalum vallad arasu)

That is, a well governed State is one where there is adequate growth in assets and services, where assets are well distributed and protected, and all citizens get their fair share.

We are all aware of the dismal state of banking facilities for the poor, that existed even 45 years after nationalisation of banks. The *Jan Dhan Yojana* of my Government is an excellent example of how to lay the foundation of major economic transformation. This scheme is not merely for opening new bank accounts; its objectives are far wider. This scheme is not only ushering in economic inclusion of the poor, it is also increasing their self-confidence.

34 crore bank accounts have been opened in the country because of '*Jan Dhan Yojana*' and almost every family is now connected to the banking system. According to an international agency, of all the bank accounts opened in the world from 2014 to 2017, 55 percent were opened in India alone. Beyond these numbers, it is important to appreciate the positive impact of this initiative on the nation's economy.

Our mothers and sisters always used to save some money for difficult times. But often these savings were spent on daily needs. Today, Rs. 88 thousand crore deposited in Jan Dhan accounts is a testimony to the changing saving habits. It is only because of the *Jan Dhan Scheme* that wages from MGNREGA, benefits from different insurance schemes, scholarships, pensions and most other Government benefits are being credited directly into the bank accounts of the poor through DBT. *Jan Dhan* accounts have succeeded in eliminating the middlemen between the Government and the poor.

Jan Dhan Yojana is playing an important role in facilitating cost effective digital transactions in the country through more than 60 crore Rupay debit cards and BHIM App. Similarly Government is bringing banking services closer to the people through the 'India Post Payments Bank' set up in the post offices. As a result, the whole world has taken note of this step towards financial inclusion in India.

Whereas many social welfare programmes were in existence for the past several decades, they had failed to produce the desired impact. The alertness, action-oriented approach and good intention displayed by my Government towards the aspirations and difficulties of citizens have made it possible to bring about large scale visible changes.

While giving a clear majority to my Government in 2014, the people of the country had also given a clear mandate to take strict action against corruption and black money. My Government has come down heavily on corruption in the past four-and-a-half years. Being sensitive to public sentiment, my Government has waged a war on corruption and black money from day one, and approved constitution of a Special Investigation Team-SIT on black money in the very first meeting of the Cabinet. Thereafter, Government enacted a new and strict law on black money. My Government also carried out a campaign against illegally acquired assets in foreign countries. New agreements were signed with several countries known as tax havens, and several others were signed with many other countries to rectify deficiencies in existing agreements.

While preventing the flow of black money abroad, my Government also launched a major campaign against black money within the country. New laws were enacted for sectors thriving on black money, and those were brought under the ambit of taxation. Amid these actions, Government also provided an opportunity to voluntarily disclose unaccounted income and wealth.

Demonetisation was a defining moment in the Government's war on corruption and black money. This decision struck at the very root of the parallel economy thriving on black money; and the money outside the formal system was brought within the ambit of nation's economy.

This action of the Government broke the back of the forces destabilising the country; and the systems sustaining the flow of black money. The registration of 3 lakh 38 thousand dubious shell companies responsible for flow of black money have been annulled by the Government. The directors of these companies have also been prohibited from holding such offices again.

Assets worth more than Rs. 50 thousand crore are being confiscated under the Benami Property Act, Prevention of Money Laundering Act and the law against fugitive economic offenders. As a result of the policies of my Government, black money in real estate sector has declined substantially, the prices of houses have come down and the dream of a normal middle class family for possessing their own house is being realised.

I am pleased that on account of these policies of my Government, people's trust in the Government has increased, and there has been a sharp increase in the number of persons paying income tax. Whereas prior to 2014, 3.8 crore people had filed their return, this number has increased and

more than 6.8 crore people have come forward to file their returns. Today, the taxpayer is confident that each paisa contributed by him or her is being spent honestly on nation building.

My Government believes that corruption and black money constitute a grave injustice towards the honest taxpayer of the country. Corruption always infringes on the rights of some poor or middle class person. The Government is relying on application of modern technology to address this situation.

As a result of the expansion in Direct Benefit Transfer in the last four and a half years, more than Rs. 6 lakh 5 thousand crore have been directly transferred to the bank accounts of beneficiaries. Because of this, about Rs. 1 lakh 10 thousand crore have been saved from falling into wrong hands. Government has removed about 8 crore fictitious names which were being used by middlemen to misappropriate the rightful benefits of genuine beneficiaries.

In order to build a strong nation, it is imperative that we develop our economy in such a manner that will help our fellow citizens to progress with transparency and honesty.

Prior to 2014, auction of coal mines used to be a subject of discussion due to lack of transparency. My Government developed a transparent system for auction of coal mines and has protected this national resource. Banks and creditors have directly or indirectly dealt with Rs. 3 lakh crore after the new Bankruptcy and Insolvency Code has come into effect. The tendency to avail large loans and misappropriate them with an intent to default has been curbed.

While Sardar Patel with his extraordinary abilities had accomplished the challenging objective of geographic and political integration of the nation, the task of economic integration remained incomplete. Our traders and entrepreneurs always faced difficulties in sale and purchase of their goods and in complying with different tax regimes prevalent in different States. Now with the implementation of a comprehensive tax reform like the GST, the concept of 'One Nation-One Tax-One Market' has been realised. GST is proving instrumental in establishing an honest and transparent system of trade and commerce which is also benefitting the country's youth. This system, while reducing the difficulties faced by traders, has enhanced their ease of doing business across the country. I congratulate my compatriots for wholeheartedly embracing the new system in a short span of time in the

interest of a better future for the country, in spite of the initial bottlenecks. My Government is continuously improving the GST regime keeping in view the suggestions being received from the business community.

The primary focus of my Government has been to enable our youth to earn their livelihood with dignity, while also creating employment opportunities for others. In order to facilitate self-employment, my Government has introduced wide ranging reforms, which are being appreciated globally. As a result of these reforms, India's position has improved by 65 places in the Ease of Doing Business ranking, from 142 in 2014 to 77 now. This is an extraordinary achievement.

During the last four and a half years, the economy of the country has been growing at a rate of 7.3 percent on an average. India is playing a significant role in international trade. While India's contribution to the world GDP was 2.6 percent in 2014, it has increased to 3.3 percent in 2017 as per the latest reports. India has emerged as the 6th largest economy in the world. This is an opportune moment for the country to play a decisive role in the 4th industrial revolution and my Government is committed to ensure that our citizens take full benefit of this opportunity.

As a result of the 'Make in India' initiative effective outcomes in the field of industrial development and employment generation are clearly visible. Now India is the 2nd largest manufacturer of mobile phones in the world. Recently, the milestone of converting diesel locomotives into 10 thousand horsepower electric engines has also been established by India. As a part of Make in India initiative, Asia's largest MedTech Zone is being established in Andhra Pradesh. Defence Corridors are being established in Uttar Pradesh and Tamil Nadu, which will not only strengthen our security through establishment of production facilities for defence equipment, but also provide employment to the youth. Soon, the passengers will also be able to avail the ultra-modern facilities of our fastest train till date – 'Vande Bharat Express'.

I also want to congratulate the scientists and engineers of our country who are tirelessly working for recognition of India's prowess in this era of modern technology. The scientists and engineers from ISRO in particular are proving their pre-eminent position in the world by setting new records in launching satellites. I, on behalf of the nation, convey our best wishes to our scientists and engineers for 'Mission Gaganyaan'.

The focus of my Government on timely completion of tasks, with accountability, has resulted in increasing the confidence of the people in Government functioning and has also enhanced the pace of development. My Government has established a reputation for time bound completion of projects.

Many projects where delays in completion had become synonymous with injustice to common people of this country such as India's longest Bogibeel railroad bridge in Assam, Western Peripheral Expressway near Delhi, Kollam Bypass in Kerala have been fast tracked and completed. By completing these projects, my Government has done justice to the resources of the nation and aspirations of the people.

Developing modern infrastructure for economic development as per the needs of 21st century, is the aspiration of every Indian, especially the middle class. Sensitive to their aspirations, my Government is completing new projects at a fast pace.

The airport terminal constructed at Prayagraj in a record period of 11 months is an evident example. Last year, the country's first container vessel sailed along the national waterway from Kolkata and reached Varanasi. Eastern Peripheral Expressway, started in November 2015, has also been dedicated to the nation last year.

My Government believes that eastern part of India comprising east Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal, Odisha and the States of North- East, has the potential to become a new 'Growth Engine'. Therefore, my Government is relentlessly striving to strengthen the infrastructure related to railways, highways, waterways and airways in Eastern India.

Under the *Udan Yojana*, 19 new airports are being built in Eastern India and of these 5 are coming up in the North East. The construction of Pakyong airport in Sikkim and Veer Surendra Sai Airport at Jharsuguda in Odisha has been completed.

The work of reconstruction of fertilizers plants at Gorakhpur in Uttar Pradesh, Barauni in Bihar and Sindri in Jharkhand, which were closed for several years, is progressing rapidly. The 'Urja Ganga Pariyojana' started with an approximate outlay of Rs.13 thousand crores will help expand the industries based on gas pipeline in several cities of Eastern India.

My Government is setting up new AIIMS and new Indian Agriculture Research Institutes in Eastern India. The Government has also established a

Central University at East Champaran-Motihari, the 'Karma-bhumi' of Mahatma Gandhi.

Similarly, the work on the 'Gas Cracker Project' which is important for Assam and Paradip Oil Refinery in Odisha has also been expedited. The Dhola Sadiya Bridge named after Bhupen Hazarika, linking Assam and Arunachal Pradesh has already been dedicated to the nation. Out of the 18 thousand villages electrified by the Government, about 13 thousand villages are in Eastern India and out of these 5 thousand villages are in the remote areas of the North-East.

My Government is working towards bringing about a transformation through transport and tourism in order to make the lives of the people of North-East easier. Almost all the railway lines of the North-East have been converted to broadgauge. Efforts are underway to provide rail connectivity to the capital cities of all the 8 States. For this, the work on 15 new rail lines is under progress at a cost of approximately Rs. 50 thousand crores.

Be it the country's fastest train, the highest bridge, the longest sea-link, the longest tunnel, construction of highways at double the speed or gauge conversion of railway tracks, modern facelift of railway stations or metro projects in cities, air connectivity among small towns or construction of a new waterway, my Government is rapidly developing modern infrastructure in all these areas. Keeping environment conservation in mind, my Government is moving forward on the electric mobility front.

In order to make the latest technology-based systems available in our cities so that they can become growth engines of the economy, modern facilities are being developed in 100 cities under the Smart City Mission.

The nation is moving at a fast pace in the civil aviation sector also. This sector has seen a double digit growth during the last four years. More than 12 crore and 30 lakh people travelled by air during 2017-18 and this number is increasing constantly. This transformation, offers a glimpse of an India on the move. Under the 'Udan scheme', 12 lakh seats have been made available to people at lower tariffs. This has provided the common person with an opportunity of air travel.

In addition, in the last four and a half years Government has established more than 300 new 'Passport Sewa Kendras' in the country. Prior to 2014, there were 77 'Passport Sewa Kendras', which have now increased to more than 400. People are no longer required to repeatedly visit big cities for getting their passports.

In the all-round development of the country, a pivotal role is played by our labourer brothers and sisters, small and medium entrepreneurs, engineers, auditors, doctors, teachers, scientists and every professional. All these responsible citizens have lived up to this saying of Sant Ravidas that work is the best form of worship.

श्रम कउ ईसर जानि कै, जऊ पूजहि दिन रैन।

रैदास' तिन्हहिं संसार मह, सदा मिलहि सुख चैन।।

(Shram kau Isar jaani kai, jau poojahi din rain,

'Raidas' tinahin sansaar mah, sadaa milahi sukh chain)

That is, those who deem work as God, and worship it day and night, are blessed with all the worldly joys and contentment.

Our hardworking professionals whether linked directly or indirectly with the Government, are watchful of the process of nation building. When their hopes and aspirations are combined with the willpower of Government employees, the result is unprecedented, as witnessed by the nation today. My Government is also supporting the employees in their hour of need. By implementing the recommendations of the 7th Pay Commission, my Government has strived to improve their living standards.

My Government has worked continuously to strengthen the spirit of Cooperative Federalism enshrined in the Constitution. It has been the endeavour of the Government to enable the State Governments to undertake development work in their respective States in a more effective manner. In line with this objective, my Government took the decision to provide the States with 10 percent additional share in taxes as per the recommendations of the Finance Commission.

At this time, the whole world is talking about *Kumbh*, underway at Prayagraj. For this colossal event, world-class infrastructure and other facilities on a permanent basis have been developed at a fast pace. The confluence of Ganga-Yamuna-Saraswati is setting an impressive example of cleanliness and modern management.

Ganga is not just a river for us but, is like a mother to us, a living symbol of our culture and faith. To keep Ganga clean is our sacred duty. Under the 'Namami Gange Mission', projects worth Rs. 25,500 crore have been

approved so far. My Government is engaged with the task of cleaning up of the river Ganga by diverting dozens of major drains, stopping flow of industrial effluents and by setting up several Sewage Treatment Plants in the cities.

Every citizen and the Government are duty bound to honour the contribution of National heroes. Carrying forward the tradition of honouring the builders of modern India, my Government has dedicated to the nation the 'National Salt Satyagraha Memorial' at Dandi on the death anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi. Kranti Mandir, a museum in Delhi dedicated to Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose has been opened to public this month. The Government has also instituted Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose Disaster Management Award in his honour. The Government has developed 5 sacred places associated with Baba Saheb Ambedkar as "Panchteerth". The nation has paid tribute to the Iron Man of India Sardar Patel, by building the 'Statue of Unity', which is the tallest statue in the world. My Government is setting up museums in various States in the memory of the country's tribal freedom fighters.

My Government has conferred the Bharat Ratna on Mahamana Madan Mohan Malaviya and Atal Bihari Vajpayee in 2015. This year it has been decided to confer Bharat Ratna on Nanaji Deshmukh, Bhupen Hazarika and Pranab Mukherjee.

By conferring national awards on the basis of merit and without any discrimination to those citizens, who have worked selflessly for the welfare of the people, my Government has demonstrated country's commitment towards the ideals of sacrifice and service.

In our tradition, the Saints and Gurus occupy the highest position. This month, to commemorate the Prakash Parv of Guru Govind Singhji, the Government has released a special coin. It is a matter of immense pleasure for all of us that my Government has taken the historic decision to construct the Kartarpur corridor.

In the International context, while India is a staunch supporter of friendly ties with all countries, there is also a need to constantly strengthen our capabilities to tackle any challenges. Through the surgical strike on cross border terror posts, India has shown its new policy and strategy. Last year India joined the handful of countries that possess the Nuclear Triad capability.

Our defence forces and their morale symbolise the prowess of the India of the 21st century. Not only has my Government fulfilled the demand for One Rank One Pension that had been pending for 4 decades, but it has also disbursed arrears amounting to more than Rs. 10,700 crore to 20 lakh ex-servicemen.

My Government believes that neglecting the country's defence needs even for a moment is detrimental to the present as well as future of the country. The new agreements relating to defence sector signed last year, purchase of new defence equipment and indigenous production within the country under the Make in India initiative have all helped in boosting the morale of the defence forces and increasing the country's military self-reliance. After a gap of many decades, the Indian Air Force is preparing to welcome, in the coming months, its new generation ultra-modern fighter aircraft Rafale and strengthen its strike capability.

On this occasion, I would also like to congratulate the country's security forces that are constantly striving to strengthen the country's internal security. Their concerted efforts have played a crucial role in reducing terrorism and violence. In the last few years, a record number of youngsters in the Maoist areas have come forward to join the mainstream. The Police Memorial, which was dedicated to the nation last year seeks to honour their sacrifice and also preserves the memories of their sacrifice for the future generations.

My Government is committed to the equitable development of Jammu, Ladakh and Kashmir. As a result of the efforts of my Government, an environment favourable to development has been created in the State. Recently, in Jammu and Kashmir, elections to Urban Local Bodies after an interval of 13 years and in Panchayats after 7 years have been conducted peacefully with more than 70 per cent voters participating enthusiastically. Committed to the development of Jammu and Kashmir, my Government announced a package of Rs. 80 thousand crores. Under the package, projects related to infrastructure, health and education sectors worth more than Rs. 66 thousand crores have been approved so far.

It is a measure of my Government's diplomatic success that today India's voice is heard with respect at international fora. *Pravasi Bharatiya Diwas* organized recently in Varanasi has reinforced this fact. At the initiative of India, 21st June was declared as International Yoga Day by the United Nations

and is now being celebrated with great enthusiasm across the world. Yoga is rapidly gaining in popularity at the global level. India is proud to have gifted the outstanding discipline of Yoga to the world community.

My Government has not only enhanced the credibility and prestige of the passports held by the Indian diaspora but has also stood by them in their hour of need. During the last four years, more than 2 Lakh 26 thousand Indians stranded abroad have been rescued and brought back to the country.

The United Nations Award for India's efforts in the field of environment conservation has made every Indian proud. It is a matter of pride for all of us that India is providing leadership to the global solar revolution and last year the first summit of the International Solar Alliance was successfully organized in Delhi.

In 2022, India will host the G-20 Summit. Hosting the summit in the year marking the 75th anniversary celebration of our independence will further enhance India's global influence.

This year our nation will provide a decisive impetus to our march towards a powerful, self-reliant and prosperous 21st century new India. The biggest festival of democracy will be celebrated this year in the form of General Election. Through this august House, I convey my best wishes to the young voters who will cast their votes for first time in this century. As citizens of India, they will exercise their right to vote, and determine the direction of the nation's policies and decisions.

My Government's efforts are ushering in change for the betterment of the country and this process will continue. With the blessings and support of 130 crore Indians, my Government has commenced its journey towards building a New India.

- A New India, where every person has access to basic amenities.
- A New India, where every person is healthy, secure and educated.
- A New India, where every person gets an opportunity to nurture his or her talent, and has equal opportunities of advancement.
- A New India, where every child progresses in life without any deprivation, and every daughter feels safe.

- A New India, where every person gets justice with dignity.
- A New India, which commands the respect of the entire world.

Let us all come together to pave the way for a New India and take India to glorious new heights in the 21st Century.

Jai Hind.

ADDRESS TO PARLIAMENT — 20 JUNE 2019

Lok Sabha	—	Seventeenth Lok Sabha
Session	—	First Session after the 17th General Election
President of India	—	Shri Ram Nath Kovind
Vice-President of India	—	Shri M. Venkaiah Naidu
Prime Minister of India	—	Shri Narendra Modi
Speaker, Lok Sabha	—	Shri Om Birla

HONOURABLE MEMBERS,

I am pleased to address the first joint sitting of Parliament after the election of the 17th Lok Sabha, in the year commemorating the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi. I extend my heartiest congratulations to all newly elected Members of this Lok Sabha.

More than 61 crore voters of the country set a new record by casting their votes and enhanced the credibility of India's democracy in the world. People have stood in long queues braving extreme heat to cast their votes. This time, as compared to previous elections, more women have cast their votes and their participation has been almost equal to men. Crores of youth have voted for the first time and played an important role in shaping India's future. All voters deserve to be congratulated for the success of this election.

I also convey my best wishes to the new Speaker of the Lok Sabha for this new responsibility.

I congratulate the entire team of the Election Commission for successful completion of the world's largest election. The contribution of employees of several administrative departments and various institutions, as well as the security forces in successful conduct of the electoral process is extremely praiseworthy.

Nearly half of the MPs in this Lok Sabha have been elected for the first time. The election of 78 women MPs which is the highest number in the history of Lok Sabha, presents the picture of a New India.

It is a matter of joy that the reflection of India's diversity is visible in this joint sitting. People of every age, hailing from villages and cities, belonging to every profession, are members of both the Houses. Many members are associated with social service, many are from the field of agriculture, from business and economic sphere while other members are from the field of education, medical profession which saves the lives of people and legal profession which provides justice to the people. MPs who have made their mark in the world of cinema, art, literature and culture are also present here. I am confident that your unique experiences will contribute to enriching the discussions in Parliament.

The people of the country have given a very clear mandate in this election. After assessing the performance of the Government during the first tenure, the people have given even stronger support for the second term. By doing so, the people of the country have given a mandate for continuing uninterrupted and at an accelerated pace the journey of development which started in 2014.

All fellow countrymen are familiar with the atmosphere prevailing in the country before 2014. In order to take the country out of a sense of gloom and instability, the people elected a Government with absolute majority after three decades. Giving the highest regard to that mandate, my Government started to march forward without any discrimination with the mantra of 'Sabka Saath—Sabka Vikas', to create a New India.

on January 31st this year, in this very Central Hall, I had said that my Government from the very first day was dedicated to the goal of improving the lives of all citizens, addressing their problems arising out of mis-governance and providing all basic amenities to the last person standing at the margins of society.

During the last five years, the countrymen have come to believe that the Government is always with them, working to improve their lives and to enhance their Ease of Living. Based on this wealth of people's trust, a fresh mandate was sought.

People of the country have long waited for the basic amenities of life. But now the conditions are changing. My Government wants to make the people conscious, capable, well-provided and unfettered to such an extent that they do not feel the "Burden, Force, or Absence" of the Government in their daily life. Empowering every person in the country is the main goal of my Government.

My Government is committed to that very idea of nation-building, the foundation for which was laid in 2014. While fulfilling the basic needs of the countrymen, now the Government is moving forward towards realising their aspirations of building a Strong, Safe, Prosperous and All-inclusive India. This journey is inspired by the basic spirit of 'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas aur Sabka Vishwas'.

This New India's vision is motivated by the noble thoughts of Shri Narayana Guru Kerala's great spiritual figure, social reformer and poet:

"Jaati-Bhedam Mat-Dwesham Adumilladey Sarvrum

Sodar-tvain Vaadunn Matrukasthan Maanit."

That is, an ideal place is one where people live like brothers free from the discrimination of caste and religion.

Three weeks ago, on 30th May, immediately after swearing-in the Government has started working towards building a New India. A New India:

- Where equal opportunities to progress are available to every person;
- Where life of every person becomes better and their self-esteem is enhanced;
- Where brotherhood and harmony bind the people with each other;
- Where the foundation built on our ideals and values becomes stronger; and
- Where the benefits of development reach every region and the last person standing in the queue.

This New India, will move forward towards that ideal state envisioned by Gurudev Rabindra Nath Tagore, where the mind of the people is without fear and the head is held high with self-esteem. In Gurudev's words:

"Chitto Jetha Bhay-Shunno, Uchcho Jetha Shir."

It is a matter of pride for every Indian that when our country completes 75 years of independence in 2022, we would have achieved many national goals for building a New India. To pave the way for the golden future of New India, my Government has resolved:

- On this path of a New India, the rural India will be strong and urban India will also be empowered;
- On this path of a New India, the entrepreneurial India will attain new heights and the dreams of young India will also be fulfilled;
- On this path of a New India, all systems will be transparent and the prestige of honest countrymen will increase further;
- On this path of a New India, infrastructure for the 21st century will be built and all resources for creation of a powerful India will be mobilised.

In the light of these resolutions, in a short period of 21 days, my Government has taken many decisions aimed at the welfare of farmers, soldiers, students, entrepreneurs, women and other sections of society and have also started implementing them. Initiatives have also been taken to enact several new laws.

A decision has been taken to increase the income support to farmers who are our Annadaata, by extending the coverage under '*Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi*', to every farmer in the country. To enable the farmer brothers and sisters who work day and night in their fields to lead a respectable life after attaining the age of 60 years, a 'Pension Scheme' for them has also been approved.

Livestock is invaluable for farmers. They have to spend a lot of money for treatment of cattle-related diseases. To reduce this expenditure, my Government has also decided to start a special scheme with an allocation of Rs. 13,000 crore.

For the first time, a Government has taken note of the economic security of small shopkeepers. In the very first meeting of the Cabinet, a separate 'Pension Scheme' has been approved for small shopkeepers and retail traders. About 3 crore small shopkeepers in the country will benefit from this scheme.

We are all indebted to the soldiers who dedicate themselves to protect the countrymen by sacrificing every joy, every pleasure and every festive occasion. It is our duty to secure the future of children of those who guard the border, and ensure peace and security for everyone. Inspired by this sentiment, the amount of scholarship under the 'National Defence Fund' has been increased for the children of our brave soldiers. For the first time,

sons and daughters of the State police personnel have also been included in this scholarship.

One of the biggest challenges of the 21st century is – the growing water crisis. Over time, the traditional and effective practices of water conservation in our country are disappearing. Houses have come up over ponds and lakes, and the vanishing water sources have accentuated the water crisis for the poor. In view of the growing impact of Climate Change and Global Warming, water crisis is likely to aggravate further. Today, the need of the hour is that the way the country has shown seriousness about ‘Swachh Bharat Abhiyaan’, the same seriousness be shown in ‘Water Conservation and Management’.

We must conserve water for our children and future generations. The creation of the new ‘Ministry of Jalshakti’ is a decisive step in this direction, which will have far-reaching benefits. Through this new Ministry, the systems related to water conservation and management will be made more effective.

My Government is fully conscious of the crisis in the drought-hit areas and stands by every affected citizen. With the support of State Governments and Sarpanches at the village level, it is being ensured that farmers are assisted and the scarcity of drinking water is tackled.

Strengthening the system and spirit of Co-operative Federalism, my Government is taking the States along to achieve the national goals. Last week, important developmental issues were discussed with the Chief Ministers and a decision was taken to constitute a Committee of Chief Ministers to look into Structural Reforms in the field of agriculture.

Only on the foundation of a strong rural economy, it is possible to build a strong national economy. Our farmers are the pillars of rural economy. All possible efforts are being made by the Central Government to provide adequate assistance to the States for agricultural development.

Large scale investments have been made to strengthen rural India. In order to enhance agriculture productivity, an investment of Rs. 25 lakh crore will be made in the coming years.

To double the income of farmers by 2022, several steps have been taken in the last 5 years. Be it the decision to increase the MSP, or approval for 100 percent FDI in food processing; be it completion of the irrigation projects pending for decades or extension of ‘Crop Insurance Scheme’; be it the ‘Soil Health Card’ or 100% Neem coating of urea; my Government has

taken many decisions, appreciating such numerous small and big needs of the farmers. The Government has made the agriculture policy both production-centric as well as income-centric.

An important link in these efforts is '*Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi*'. Through this, an amount of more than Rs. 12,000 crore has been disbursed to the farmers in just three months. An estimated expenditure of Rs. 90,000 crore is likely to be incurred annually on this scheme since every farmer has now been brought in its ambit.

With the provision of storage for farm produce, the economic security of the farmers is strengthened. Now the storage facility will be provided to the farmers near their village through the '*Grameen Bhandaran Yojana*'.

The benefit of cooperatives in the agriculture sector is being availed by the farmers in the dairy business. In other areas of agriculture also, the target is to create 10,000 new 'Farmer Producer Organisations' to benefit the farmers.

Today, India is second in the world in fish production. Our country has the potential to attain the first place. There is immense potential for increasing the income of farmers through marine fish industry and inland fisheries. That is why the Government is committed to '*Neeli Kranti*' which means '*Blue Revolution*'. A separate Department has been constituted for integrated development of fisheries. Similarly, a special fund has been created to develop infrastructure related to fishing industry.

We can achieve our constitutional objectives only by liberating the poor families of the country from poverty. During the last five years, the schemes implemented in the country for the welfare of farmers, labourers, *divyangjan*, tribals and women have achieved wide-spread success. Only by empowering the poor can they be rescued from the vicious cycle of poverty. That is why the Government has adopted an approach to empower the poor, deprived and weaker sections through provision of housing, healthcare, essential amenities of life, financial inclusion, education, skill and self-employment. This is in harmony with Deen Dayal Upadhyaya's concept of *Antyodaya*.

Comprehensive work is underway for the development of 112 '*Aspirational Districts*' in the country. 1 lakh 15 thousand most backward villages of the country are in these districts. With the development of education and healthcare facilities and infrastructure in these villages, there will be a positive impact on the lives of crores of poor families.

After the success of the world's largest financial inclusion campaign, in the form of '*Jan-Dhan Yojana*', my Government is also working to bring the banking services to the doorsteps of the people. In order to ensure that banking services are readily available in every village of the country and in the inaccessible areas of North East, work is being done at a fast pace. About 1.5 lakh post offices in the country are being prepared to provide banking services through '*India Post Payment Bank*'. Our goal is to utilise the postman as a mobile bank to bring banking services to every doorstep.

Cost of medical treatment pushes the poor families into financial crisis. In order to protect them from this crisis, world's biggest healthcare scheme '*Ayushman Bharat Yojana*' has been implemented, providing '*Health-Protection-Cover*' to 50 crore poor people. Under this, so far about 26 lakh poor patients have availed treatment in hospitals. In order to provide medicines at affordable rates, 5,300 '*Jan Aushadhi Kendras*' have also been opened. It is our endeavour to provide medicines at affordable rates to people residing in far-flung areas through these Jan Aushadhi Kendras.

The objective is to set up about 1.5 lakh '*Health and Wellness Centres*' in all rural areas by 2022. So far, about 18,000 such Centres have already been operationalised.

Our countrymen can learn a lot from tribal communities. Our tribal brothers and sisters live in harmony with the environment and nature and maintain a beautiful balance between development and tradition. In New India, every effort will be made to create an inclusive and sensitive system in the interest of tribal communities. Many schemes have been implemented for all-round development of tribal areas. Work is in progress to provide '*Learning to Earning*' facilities to the youth residing in the forest areas. In tribal dominated areas, '*Eklavya Model Residential Schools*' are being set up for children. The thrust is on value addition and marketing of forest produce through Van Dhan Kendras.

Women Empowerment is one of the top priorities of my Government. Empowerment of women and their effective involvement in society and economy is the touchstone of a developed society. The Government's thinking promotes not only women's development but also women-led development. According the highest priority to women's security, several effective steps have been initiated with the cooperation of the States. Penalties for crimes against women have been made harsher and the new penal provisions are being strictly enforced. The '*Beti Bachao Beti Padhao*'

campaign has brought down female foeticide and improved the sex ratio in many districts of the country.

Rural women are the biggest beneficiaries of freedom from smoke through '*Ujjwala Yojana*', vaccination through '*Mission Indradhanush*' and free electricity connections under '*Saubhagya Yojana*'. Women are also being given priority in the registration of houses built under '*Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana*' in the rural areas. Under this scheme, nearly 2 crore new houses will be built in the villages during the next three years.

Facilities for the women workers in the unorganized sector are also being augmented. Self-employment opportunities are being made available to rural women through '*Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Rashtriya Aajivika Mission*'. Under the '*Rashtriya Aajivika Mission*', loans amounting to more than Rs. 2 lakh crore have been disbursed so far to 3 crore women in rural areas.

My Government is committed to make women equal stakeholders in the country's development and prosperity. Efforts will be made in collaboration with industry and corporate sector to provide better employment opportunities to women. In addition, in Government procurement, priority will be given to those enterprises where women's participation in the workforce is more than the prescribed limit.

To secure equal rights for every sister and daughter in the country, eradication of social evils like '*Triple Talaq*' and '*Nikah-Halala*' is imperative. I would urge all the members to cooperate in these efforts to make the lives of our sisters and daughters better and dignified.

Our young generation must have a meaningful participation in the building of New India. In the last five years, attempts have been made for developing the skills of the youth, providing them financial support for start-ups and self-employment, and making available adequate number of seats for higher education. The amount of scholarship has also been increased by 25 per cent.

The Government has made provision of 10 per cent reservation for youth from economically weaker section of the general category. This will enable them to get more opportunities in employment and education.

To enable the youth of all strata of society to fulfil their dreams, timely provision of financial resources is being emphasised. The impact of '*Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojna*' has been felt on a big scale. Under this scheme, about 19 crore loans have been disbursed for self-employment. An effort will

now be made to cover 30 crore people by expanding this scheme. A facility for entrepreneurs to avail loan up to Rs. 50 lakh without any guarantee will also be introduced. Apart from this, new employment opportunities will be generated through appropriate policies in sectors which have the potential to accelerate the economy.

Today India has joined the league of countries with most number of start-ups in the world. To improve the start-up ecosystem, the Government is simplifying the rules. This campaign will be further expedited. Our goal is to establish 50,000 start-ups in the country by 2024.

Research is being encouraged in higher educational institutions. To further strengthen this effort, it is proposed to establish a 'National Research Foundation'. This proposed foundation will work as a bridge between different Departments of the Central Government, science laboratories, higher educational institutions and industrial institutions.

To enable various higher educational institutions of India to find a place in the top 500 educational institutions of the world, they are being encouraged through grant of autonomy and financial assistance.

My Government is striving to increase the number of seats in the country's Higher Education System by one-and-a-half times by 2024. With this initiative, 2 crore additional seats would be available for the youth in higher educational institutions.

It is our responsibility to provide appropriate opportunities, environment and quality education to enhance the talent of children. In this regard, the 'Pradhan Mantri Innovative Learning Programme' will be started.

In order to attract children early enough, at the school level, towards technology, suitable infrastructure is being created. Through the 'Atal Innovation Mission', the work of establishing 'Atal Tinkering Labs' in about 9,000 schools across the country, is progressing rapidly. Similarly, 'Atal Incubation Centres' are being set up in 102 universities and other institutions.

Impressive performance in sports competitions at the world level, enhances the pride of the country as well as increases the interest of children and youth in sports. It also strengthens the culture of according primacy to health in life. To make India a global sports powerhouse, it is important that talented players living in far-flung areas of the country are identified and

their selection process is made transparent. To identify the players at the state and district level, it has been decided to widen the '*Khelo-India Programme*'. Under this, 2,500 talented players have been selected, and are being trained. Now this facility will be provided to 2,500 new players every year.

The sports infrastructure in the country will be modernised as well as expanded. A new system is being evolved to make available modern infrastructure and facilities to the players. It is our endeavour that our players win high accolades in the sports world and enhance the prestige of our country.

Economic development plays the most vital role in improving the lives of our countrymen. Today India is among the fastest growing economies in the world. Inflation is low, fiscal deficit is under control, foreign exchange reserves are growing and the impact of Make In India is clearly visible.

India is now on the way to become the world's 5th largest economy in terms of GDP. To maintain the high growth rate, reform process will continue. It is our objective to make India a 5-trillion dollar economy by 2024.

Work is underway in full earnest to transform India into a Global Manufacturing Hub. Keeping in view Industry 4.0, a New Industrial Policy will be announced shortly. In 'Ease of Doing Business', India has leap-frogged 65 positions during the past 5 years, from a ranking of 142 in 2014 to 77. Now our goal is to be among the top 50 countries of the world. In order to achieve this, process of simplification of rules will be further expedited in collaboration with the States. In this sequence, necessary amendments are also being brought in the Companies Law.

Taxation regime plays an important role in accelerating economic development. Along with continuous reform, simplification of taxation system is also being emphasised. Exemption to persons earning up to Rs. 5 lakh from payment of income tax is an important step in this direction.

Similarly, indirect tax system is also being made simple and effective. With the implementation of GST, the concept of 'One country, One tax, One market' has become a reality. Efforts to further simplify the GST will continue.

Keeping in view the interests of small traders, my Government has launched a New Pension Scheme for them. 'National Traders Welfare Board' will be constituted shortly, and 'National Retail Trade Policy' will be formulated to promote retail business. Accident insurance of up to Rs. 10 lakh will also be provided to all traders registered under GST.

MSME sector provides a strong foundation to the country's economy, and plays a critical role in employment generation. Several steps have been taken to ensure smooth cash flow to enterprises run by small entrepreneurs. In order to ensure that entrepreneurs associated with MSME sector do not face any problem in accessing credit, the credit guarantee coverage is being enhanced to Rs. 1 lakh crore.

Good governance reduces corruption, enhances self-respect of the citizens and enables them to optimally utilize their talents and capabilities.

My Government will make the Zero Tolerance Policy against corruption more comprehensive and effective. The mission to eliminate corruption from public life and Government services will be implemented with greater zeal. Towards this objective, Minimum Government—Maximum Governance will be further emphasised. In addition, use of technology will be maximised to reduce Human Interface. Appointment of Lokpal will also promote transparency.

The campaign against black money will be taken forward at a faster pace. During the last two years, 4 lakh 25 thousand Company Directors have been disqualified and the registration of 3 lakh 50 thousand suspicious companies has been revoked.

The 'Fugitive and Economic Offenders Act' has proved effective in controlling fugitive economic offenders. Now we are receiving information in this regard from 146 countries, including Switzerland. Of these, we have concluded agreements with 80 countries for automatic exchange of information. We are now receiving information about all those who have stashed black money abroad.

The impact of 'Real Estate Regulation Act' or RERA is clearly visible in curbing black money transactions in real estate sector and protecting the interests of the customers; providing huge relief to the middle class families.

'Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code' is among the biggest and most impactful economic reforms undertaken in the country. With the coming into force of this Code, banks and other financial institutions have been able to settle directly or indirectly an amount of more than Rs. 3 lakh 50 thousand crore. This Code has also curbed the tendency of wilfully defaulting on loans taken from banks and other financial institutions.

Under the 'Direct Benefit Transfer', funds from more than 400 schemes are being directly credited into the accounts of beneficiaries. During the last five years, Rs. 7 lakh 30 thousand crore have been transferred through DBT. So far, not only has DBT prevented Rs. 1 lakh 41 thousand crore from falling into wrong hands, but it has also enabled deletion of names of about 8 crore ineligible beneficiaries. DBT will be further expanded in the coming days. I would urge the State Governments to use DBT in more and more schemes.

Infrastructure will play an important role in ushering in a prosperous India. My Government's continuous endeavour has been to build infrastructure in an eco-friendly manner. Along with concrete, greenery has been made an integral part of the highway and expressway projects. For supply of electricity, optimal utilisation of solar energy is being stressed. Household and industrial wastes are also being used in road construction.

In the 21st century economy, the pace and spread of urbanization will continue to increase. Development of urban infrastructure in cities and suburbs will pave the way for economic progress and enhance employment opportunities. My Government is tirelessly working for a modern India, by providing world-class infrastructure and public amenities in villages as well as cities. Special emphasis is being accorded to improving connectivity in the North-East, hilly and tribal areas. In addition to increasing the ease of living of citizens in the North-East; tourism, agriculture and other allied sectors will also benefit from better connectivity. Effective steps are being taken to expand organic farming in the North-East.

Under the 'Bharatmala Project', construction or upgradation of about 35,000 kilometers of National Highways is to be undertaken by 2022. In addition, under the 'Sagarmala Project', a network of good quality roads is being constructed in coastal areas and areas adjoining ports.

Along with the highways, Government is also working extensively in the area of Railways, Airways and Inland Waterways. Under the 'UDAN Scheme', air connectivity to smaller towns is being expanded rapidly.

Urban transport infrastructure is being created to cater to present and future requirements. While developing infrastructure, attention is also being given to addressing the challenges posed by pollution. My

Government is developing a transport system, which is not only fast and safe, but is also environment friendly. For this, special emphasis is given to Public transport. Metro rail network is being expanded rapidly in several cities. The facility of 'One Nation, One Card' has been launched to realize the dream of seamless mobility. Similarly, electric vehicles are being promoted to reduce vehicular pollution. The network of electric charging stations is also being expanded rapidly.

Modern amenities like gas-grid and I-Ways are being developed at a rapid pace. PNG based domestic fuel and CNG based transportation systems are being developed. In modern India, we are according a special emphasis on production of bio-fuel. Prior to 2014, about 67 crore litres of ethanol was being blended. This year, we have set a target of about 270 crore litres for ethanol blending. Enhancing the use of blended ethanol will not only benefit our farmers but also safeguard the environment. Further, it will reduce import of petroleum products thus saving foreign exchange.

My Government is fully devoted to make the flow of Ganga uninterrupted and pollution free. Recently, encouraging evidence of revival of aquatic life at several locations along Ganga have been reported. This year, during the Ardhakumbh in Prayagraj, the cleanliness of Ganga and amenities provided to the devotees have made news throughout the world. My Government has enhanced the dignity and self-esteem of every person who contributed towards the successful organization of *Ardhakumbh* by honouring them.

Under the 'Namami Gange' scheme, my Government will further accelerate the campaign for closure of drains releasing effluents in the river Ganga. On the lines of river Ganga, the Government will also endeavour to clean up other rivers such as Kaveri, Periyar, Narmada, Yamuna, Mahanadi and Godavari.

My Government is making earnest efforts for conservation of forests, wildlife and the environment. In recent years, forest and tree cover has increased by more than 1 per cent. During the last five years, protected areas in the country have also increased. In 2014, the number of protected areas in the country was 692, which has now gone up to 868. To address the challenges posed by air pollution, 'National Clean Air Programme' has been started in 102 cities.

Solar energy plays an important role in reducing the adverse effects of Climate Change and Global Warming. Proactive efforts of India have resulted

in the formation of the International Solar Alliance. Through this organization, India is contributing significantly to the development of solar energy in the developing countries of the world.

Space Technology plays a central role in improving the lives of the common man, providing early-warning of impending disasters, identifying location of natural resources, providing signals to various means of communication and ensuring national security. It is the endeavour of my Government to maximize the use of space technology for human welfare. Several facilities such as roads, houses for poor, farming or equipment for fishermen have all been linked to space technology.

Space technology has helped us in further strengthening our security at land, air and water. Our expertise in accurate weather forecast has improved. This was evidenced during the recent 'Cyclone Phani' that struck the eastern coast of the country. Due to accurate information and timely preparation, large scale destruction to life and property was averted.

India is marching forward to assume a leadership role in unravelling and comprehending the mysteries of space. Our scientists are involved in the preparations for the launch of 'Chandrayaan-2', which will be India's first spacecraft to reach the Moon. We are also making rapid progress towards achieving the goal of sending the first Indian in India's own 'Gaganyaan' by 2022.

During the Lok Sabha elections, the country attained another milestone, which however, did not receive as much attention as it should have. With the successful testing of 'Mission Shakti' a new dimension has been added to India's capability in space technology and security-preparedness. For this, today I once again congratulate our scientists and engineers.

The role of technology in the field of security is expanding continuously. Keeping this in view, work is in progress to establish three joint service agencies for space, cyber and special forces. These collaborative efforts will strengthen the security of the country.

New India is rapidly moving towards occupying its rightful place in the world community. Today, India has acquired a new image and our relations with other countries have become stronger. It is a matter of immense pleasure that in 2022, India will host the G-20 Summit.

The world community enthusiastically supported India's proposal to declare June 21st as 'International Day of Yoga' by the United Nations. At

present, several programmes associated with International Day of Yoga are being organized with great enthusiasm in various countries, of which the most important events will be held tomorrow, the 21st June.

The world community supports India's position on various issues such as climate change, economic and cyber-crime, action against corruption and black money and energy security. Today the whole world stands with India on the issue of terrorism. Designation of Masood Azhar, responsible for dastardly terrorist attacks on our soil, as a global terrorist by United Nations, is a major testimony to this fact.

My Government's "Neighborhood First" policy is an evidence of our approach of according priority to South Asia and countries in the adjoining region. India will play a crucial role in the progress of this region. Accordingly, trade, connectivity and people-to-people contact are being encouraged in this region. The presence of Heads of States and Heads of Governments of 'BIMSTEC' countries, Kyrgyzstan – the current chair of 'Shanghai Cooperation Organisation' and Mauritius during the swearing-in of the new Government is a reflection of this policy.

My Government is also conscious of protecting the interests of Indians living and working abroad. Today an Indian, if caught in any crisis abroad, is confident of receiving timely help and relief. Several services ranging from passports to visas have been made easy and accessible.

Due to the efforts of my Government, India's philosophy, culture and achievements have got a distinct recognition at the global stage. This year, the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, which is being celebrated world over, will provide a fillip to India's 'Thought Leadership'. Similarly, programmes related to the 550th birth anniversary of Guru Nanak Dev ji, will help spread the light of India's spiritual wisdom throughout the world.

New India will be sensitive and also, economically prosperous. But for this to happen, nation's security is of utmost importance. My Government accords top most priority to national security. Therefore, effective steps are being taken to tackle Terrorism and Naxalism.

India has amply demonstrated both her intent and capabilities, first through surgical strikes and then through air strikes after the Pulwama attack at terrorist hideouts across the border. In future too, all possible steps will be taken to ensure our security.

Illegal infiltrators pose a major threat to our internal security. This is leading to social imbalance in many parts of the country, as well as putting

a huge pressure on limited livelihood opportunities. My Government has decided to implement the process of 'National Register of Citizens' on priority basis in areas affected by infiltration. Security along the border will be further strengthened to prevent infiltration.

While on the one hand, Government is working to identify the infiltrators, on the other, it is also fully committed to protecting the victims of persecution due to their faith. In this regard, efforts will be made to amend the Citizenship Act while protecting the linguistic, cultural and social identities.

My Government is making efforts with complete dedication to provide a safe and peaceful environment to the residents of Jammu and Kashmir. The recently concluded peaceful elections to local bodies and to Lok Sabha have bolstered our efforts. My Government is committed to take all necessary steps for the development of Jammu and Kashmir.

My Government is resolutely working to eradicate the menace of Naxalism from the country. Considerable success has been achieved in this direction during the last 5 years. The area affected by Naxalism is reducing continuously. In the coming years, development projects will be expedited in these areas, which will benefit our tribal brothers and sisters residing there.

My Government is rapidly taking forward the work of modernisation of the army and the armed forces. India is going to receive the delivery of first 'Rafale' fighter aircraft and 'Apache' helicopters in the near future.

Special emphasis is being accorded by the Government to manufacture of modern armaments under 'Make in India'. The policy of indigenously manufacturing weapons such as modern rifles and cannons, tanks and combat aircrafts is being carried forward successfully. 'Defence Corridors' coming up in Uttar Pradesh and Tamil Nadu will further strengthen this mission. While fulfilling our security requirements, export of defence equipment is also being encouraged.

Respect towards soldiers and martyrs enhances self-respect and enthusiasm among the forces, and also strengthens our military capabilities. Hence, all possible efforts are being made to take care of our soldiers and their families. Through 'One Rank One Pension', increased pensionary benefits to ex-service men and expansion of health facilities, efforts are being made to improve their living standards.

The National War Memorial near India Gate in Delhi, built by my Government, seven decades after India's independence, is a tribute to the martyrs by a grateful nation. Similarly my Government has set up the 'National Police Memorial' in memory of police personnel who were martyred while safeguarding the security of the country.

Inspiration from history guides us towards the future path of nation building. It is our duty to preserve the memory of our nation-builders and gratefully remember them. There have been many such efforts during the last five years. 'Dandi Museum' has been built to honour Pujya Bapu and the historic Dandi March. "Statue of Unity", the tallest statue in the world, has been built as a mark of our gratitude to the Iron Man, Sardar Patel. 'Kranti Mandir' has been set up at the Red Fort in Delhi, as a tribute to Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose and other freedom fighters of Azad Hind Fauj. 26 Alipur Road in Delhi, the site of Babasaheb Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar's Mahaparinirvana has been developed as a National Memorial. A museum is also being built in Delhi as a mark of respect to the contributions of all former Prime Ministers of the country.

My Government, inspired by Sardar Patel, is committed to further strengthen the spirit of 'Ek Bharat, Shreshtha Bharat'. For this, it is essential to accord importance to National Ambitions and Regional Aspirations. All forms of dialogue and cooperation will be encouraged to achieve this. Guided by the principle of 'Sabka Sath, Sabka Vikas aur Sabka Vishwas', it is the endeavour of my Government to ensure that no citizen is left behind in India's journey of development.

India had to pass through a long period of subjugation. But throughout this period, Indians kept fighting for independence in different parts of the country. The longing for freedom and willingness to make sacrifices to achieve freedom had never waned. This desire for independence culminated into the 'Quit India Movement' in 1942, when the entire nation was determined to achieve independence and even to sacrifice their lives in this cause. Contributing to the freedom struggle was the only thought behind all the actions of our countrymen. We achieved our independence in 1947 on the strength of this collective spirit.

Today, all of us are again at a juncture of creating history. We are striving to launch a new movement for ushering in a new era. Our resolve today will determine the shape of the India of 2047 when we celebrate the centenary of our independence.

Today, our country is enriched with the experiences of a 72-year journey since independence. The nation is moving ahead only by learning from these experiences. All of us have to move ahead with the resolve to realise the idea of New India by the year 2022 when we celebrate the 75th anniversary of India's independence. Thus, in the New India in the 75th year of its independence:

- Farmers' income will be doubled;
- Every poor will have a pucca roof over his head;
- Every poor will have access to clean fuel;
- Every poor will have electricity connection;
- No poor will be compelled to defecate in the open;
- Every poor will have access to medical facilities;
- Every village in the country will be connected by roads;
- River Ganga will flow uninterrupted, and pollution free;
- In collaboration with States, India will be close to becoming a \$ 5 trillion economy;
- We will be progressing towards joining world's three largest economies;
- An Indian will unfurl the tri-colour in space, entirely on the strength of indigenous resources; and
- We will provide leadership to global development with a new zeal and confidence.

If the gap between the public and the Government is reduced, and public partnership is ensured, our countrymen can transform Government schemes and programmes into mass movements. This is the way forward to achieve transformative national goals. Adopting this approach, programmes like the '*Beti-Bachao, Beti-Padhao*', and '*Swachh Bharat Abhiyan*' evolved into mass movements. On the strength of people's participation, we will also achieve the objective of a New India.

It is the belief of my Government that political parties, States and 130 crore countrymen are all committed to India's integrated and accelerated development. Our vibrant democracy has also matured adequately. During the last few decades, due to frequent elections being held in some part of the country or the other, the pace and continuity of development

programmes have been impacted. Our countrymen have demonstrated their wisdom by delivering a clear verdict both at State and National issues. 'One Nation – Simultaneous Elections' is the need of the hour, which would facilitate accelerated development, thereby benefitting our countrymen. With such a system in place, all political parties, according to their respective ideologies, will be able to better utilise their energy towards development and public welfare. Therefore, I urge all Members of Parliament to seriously ponder over this development oriented proposal of 'One Nation— Simultaneous Elections'.

This year also marks 70 years of adoption of the Indian Constitution. As a Member of Parliament, all of you have undertaken the oath or affirmation to discharge your duties with true faith and allegiance to the Constitution of India. The Constitution is paramount to all of us. The chief architect of our Constitution, Babasaheb Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar had said that 'we must hold fast to constitutional methods of achieving our social and economic objectives'.

Our Constitution provides guidance for ensuring social, economic and political justice as well as securing liberty and equality for all citizens; and promote fraternity among all, assuring the dignity of the individual.

I believe that you all Members of the Rajya Sabha and the Lok Sabha, as parliamentarians, will make invaluable contributions in achieving the ideals of the Constitution while discharging your duties. In this way, you will contribute effectively in ushering in a New India.

All of us will have to accord priority to our duties as public representatives and as citizens of the country. Only then will we be able to inspire countrymen to discharge their duties as citizens.

My advice to all MPs is that you should always remember the fundamental mantra of Gandhiji. He had said that every decision of ours should be guided by its impact on the poorest and the weakest person in the society. You must also remember the voter who setting aside all his work and overcoming his difficulties went to the polling station to cast his vote and discharge his responsibilities towards the nation. Your priority should be to fulfil his aspirations.

I urge you all to dedicate yourselves in the task of building a New India and to discharge your duties with utmost sincerity over the next five years. I once again wish the very best to all of you.

Jai Hind.

ADDRESS TO PARLIAMENT — 31 JANUARY 2020

Lok Sabha	—	Seventeenth Lok Sabha
Session	—	First Session of the year
President of India	—	Shri Ram Nath Kovind
Vice-President of India	—	Shri M. Venkaiah Naidu
Prime Minister of India	—	Shri Narendra Modi
Speaker, Lok Sabha	—	Shri Om Birla

HONOURABLE MEMBERS,

I am pleased to address the joint sitting of Parliament at the start of the third decade of 21st century. I once again extend my best wishes for the New Year and congratulate all Members of Parliament for being a witness to this historic occasion.

This decade is extremely important for India. In this decade, we will complete 75 years of our independence. In this decade, we all have to work together with new energy to give impetus to the making of a new India. With the efforts of my Government, a strong foundation has been laid in the last five years, to make this decade India's decade and this century India's century.

Whether it is Pujya Bapu's dream of Gram Swaraj, Babasaheb Ambedkar's principle of social justice, Nehru ji's dream of creating a modern India, Sardar Patel's resolve for *Ek Bharat—Shreshtha Bharat*, Deen Dayal Upadhyaya's goal of *Antyodaya*, Lohia ji's vision of social equality, we the people of India will together make these dreams a reality.

The Constitution of India is the guiding light for all of us in fulfilling these dreams. Just a few weeks ago, on 26th November, 70 years of the Constitution have been completed. On that day, 12 crore citizens of the country, publicly read out the Preamble of the Constitution and renewed their commitment to the Constitution.

In addition, to protecting the rights of every citizen of our country, our Constitution makes the citizens of the country mindful of their duties. Further, our Constitution also places an expectation that the decisions taken through democratic processes will be accepted by the countrymen. At the same time, our Constitution expects the Parliament and every member present in this House to fulfil the hopes and aspirations of the countrymen and make the necessary laws, keeping the national interest paramount.

I am happy that in the last 7 months, Parliament has set new standards in conducting its business. The performance during the first session of this Lok Sabha has set a new record in the last seven decades.

Due to my Government's strong commitment, the law against Triple Talaq ensuring justice to Muslim women and safeguarding their rights; the Consumer Protection Act providing new rights to the citizens; the Banning of Unregulated Deposit Schemes Act for protecting the savings of the poor; the Chit Funds Amendment Act protecting the poor from fraudulent chit fund schemes; the law enhancing punishment for sexual offences against children; Motor Vehicles Amendment Act aimed at reducing road accidents; and the law protecting the rights of the transgender persons — several such historic legislations have been enacted.

I congratulate every Member of Parliament for fulfilling this Constitutional responsibility.

The faith reposed by the people of our country in our democratic institutions strengthens the foundation of our democracy. The maturity displayed by the countrymen after the Supreme Court's verdict on Ram Janmabhoomi is also laudable. My Government is of the firm view that mutual discussions and debates strengthen democracy. At the same time, any kind of violence in the name of protests weakens the society and the nation.

In a democracy, nothing is more sacred than the mandate given by the people. The people of the country have given this mandate to my Government for the making of a new India.

- A new India which takes pride in the glory of our ancient culture and which enriches the 21st century world with the power of its knowledge.
- A new India, in which besides finding solutions to old problems, new chapters of development are written.

- A new India, in which adequate facilities and new opportunities for growth are available for the poor, dalits, women, youth, tribals and minorities.
- A new India, where every region develops, no region is left behind, where the benefits of modern technology reach the farthest end of society, and
- A new India, which is at the forefront of the fourth industrial revolution and which attains new heights at the global stage.

For making such a new India and for fulfilling the expectations of the people, my Government is working with commendable pace and decisiveness to bring about changes in every field. It is the outcome of reforms at the grassroot level ushered in by the Government in the last five years that there has been an unprecedented improvement in India's global ranking in several areas.

In the World Bank's Ease of Doing Business rankings, India has leapfrogged to the 63rd position, moving up by 79 places. In the Resolving Insolvency rankings, India has moved from 108th to 52nd position and in the Global Innovation rankings, from 74th to 52nd position. India has improved its international ranking by 10 points in the Logistics Performance Index. India has moved from 52nd to 34th position in the World Economic Forum's Travel and Tourism Competitiveness rankings.

These reforms in diverse areas are also a call to the international community to see how India has strengthened its foundations in the last 5-6 years and how keen the people of India are to build a new India.

My Government is following the mantra of 'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas', and is working with full commitment and sincerity. Free gas connections to 8 crore poor, houses to 2 crore poor, bank accounts to about 38 crore poor, free treatment facility of up to Rs. 5 lakh to 50 crore people, insurance cover to 24 crore people and free electricity connections to over 2.5 crore people have been provided; with complete transparency and without any discrimination. My Government has provided equitable access to benefits and facilities of its schemes for the poor people; of all religions and all regions, and has, thus, earned the trust of the people of the country.

Dr. Shyama Prasad Mukherjee, the great son of Bengal and the Minister of Industry in the Government headed by Jawaharlal Nehru Ji, had said in the Lok Sabha: "In a democratic federal state, the fundamental rights of the citizens of one constituent unit cannot vary *vis-à-vis* the citizens of another unit. Are not the people of Jammu and Kashmir entitled to the fundamental rights that we have given to the people of India minus Jammu and Kashmir?"

Today, after seven decades, the whole country is happy that the dream of crores of freedom fighters including Dr. Mukherjee has come true and the people of Jammu-Kashmir and Ladakh, the dalits and women from that area have also got the same rights as the people in the rest of the country. The abrogation of Article 370 and Article 35A of the Constitution by two-thirds majority in both the Houses of Parliament is not only historic but has also paved the way for equitable development of Jammu-Kashmir and Ladakh. Through this House, I heartily congratulate the people of Jammu - Kashmir and Ladakh for joining the mainstream of development.

Rapid development of Jammu-Kashmir and Ladakh, preservation of their culture and traditions, transparent and honest administration and democratic empowerment are among the priorities of my Government. During the President's Rule and since becoming a Union Territory, all the developmental projects in Jammu - Kashmir and Ladakh have gained momentum.

Towards the end of the year 2018, elections in more than 4,400 panchayats of Jammu -Kashmir were conducted in a peaceful manner. For the first time since independence, elections to more than 300 Block Development Councils have also been held there. The people there are now getting full benefits under *Swachh Bharat Abhiyan*, *Ujjwala Yojana*, *Ayushman Yojana*, *Ujala Yojana*, DBT and food subsidy, in a transparent manner. Under the *Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana*, while around 3,500 houses were built in Jammu-Kashmir till March 2018, in less than two years thereafter, construction of more than 24,000 houses has been completed.

Apart from this, works relating to connectivity, irrigation, hospitals, schemes related to tourism and establishment of institutes of higher education such as IIT, IIM, AIIMS are also proceeding at a rapid pace in Jammu -Kashmir and Ladakh. NAFED has been entrusted with the responsibility for the direct procurement of apples in Jammu-Kashmir. This has especially benefited the apple growers of Kashmir Valley.

The success of the public welfare schemes of my Government and the historic decisions taken by the Government have increased the expectations of the countrymen, as well as the responsibilities of the Government.

For many years, the people of the country desired that they should be able to pay their respects at Kartarpur Sahib with ease. My Government has built the Kartarpur Sahib Corridor in record time, and dedicated it to the nation on the occasion of 550th birth anniversary of Guru Nanak Dev Ji. It is a privilege for my Government to have got the opportunity to celebrate the 550th birth anniversary of Guru Nanak Dev Ji with full veneration, within the country and abroad. The 400th birth anniversary of Shri Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji will also be celebrated in a befitting manner with full grandeur and devotion by my Government.

Over 40 lakh people living in the capital city of Delhi, had been living for many years in the hope that one day they would get the ownership rights of their homes and that they will be able to lead a dignified life. The Government has fulfilled this long awaited expectation of people living in more than 1,700 colonies of Delhi.

Farmers, agricultural labourers, unorganized sector labourers and small traders of the country had expectations of a pension scheme that would be of help to them in their old age. My Government has not only fulfilled their wish, but also has covered about 60 lakh beneficiaries so far, under these pension schemes.

Pujya Babu always considered cleanliness next to Godliness. On the occasion of Gandhi ji's 150th birth anniversary, on 2 October last year, rural areas of the country have paid a befitting tribute to the Father of the Nation by declaring themselves free from open defecation. Now it is incumbent on all of us to make our cities and villages even more clean and beautiful in the coming decade.

Even today, there are about 15 crore houses without piped water supply in rural areas of the country. Our sisters and daughters face the maximum hardship due to lack of water supply in the house. Further, contaminated water adversely impacts the health of the entire family. In order to ensure the availability of sufficient quantity of potable drinking water to each rural household in the country, my Government has launched the *Jal Jeevan Mission*. Central Government, all State Governments, local bodies and voluntary organizations are working together to transform this Mission into a people's movement. In the coming days Rs. 3 lakh 60 thousand crore will

be spent on this scheme. My Government has launched the *Atal Bhujal Yojana* with special focus on seven of the most vulnerable States of the country, where ground water level is depleting rapidly.

My Government's mantra of *Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas* is meant for every citizen and for every region and every State of the country. My Government believes that just as advancement of a person on the margins of society should be given high priority, the development of the areas left behind should also receive greater attention.

By according 112 districts the status of Aspirational Districts, the Government is paying special attention to each scheme relating to development of the poor living there. State Governments have also positioned the right mix of experienced and youthful officers in these districts. As a result, there has been impressive improvement in several development indicators in these districts and many districts have now come close to their State average. I congratulate and convey my best wishes to the team of each Aspirational District through this House.

More than the physical distance of the North East from Delhi, it was the emotional disconnect that disheartened the people of the region. My Government has transformed this situation by working tirelessly during the last five years. Work is being done at an unprecedented pace in the North East to enhance connectivity, strengthen infrastructure and make people's lives easier. As a result of these efforts of the Government, by 2022, the capitals of Sikkim, Mizoram, Manipur and Nagaland will be connected to the rail network. The work on Agartala-Akhaura rail link is also progressing at a fast pace. In the year 2022, the construction of the new airport being built at 'Holongi' in Arunachal Pradesh will also be completed.

Besides this, construction of AIIMS in Guwahati, bio-refinery in Numaligarh and sports university in Manipur are also progressing at a fast pace. Recently, the Government has sanctioned about Rs. 9,000 crore for the North East Gas Grid Project. This project will lay the foundation of a Gas Based Economy in all the 8 States of the North East.

The Central and Assam Governments have recently signed a historic agreement with the Bodo Organizations to bring an end to the 5 decade-old Bodo dispute. With this agreement, a complex problem, that has claimed more than 4000 lives, has been resolved. After this agreement, the Government will spend Rs. 1500 crore for the development of Bodo community. Similarly, another landmark agreement between Tripura,

Mizoram, the Central Government and the Bru community has not only resolved a decades-old problem but has also ensured a secure life for thousands of people belonging to the Bru community.

My Government is committed to bringing the brothers and sisters from the tribal community of the country into the mainstream of development. For the first time, Government has extended the benefit of MSP to forest produce. My Government's special emphasis is on the health, education and skill development of the tribals. Only a few weeks ago, the Government has launched a programme for opening more than 400 Eklavya Model Residential Schools in the country. Recently, reservation for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in Lok Sabha and State Assemblies has also been extended for the next ten years.

My Government is also constantly striving for the social, economic and educational progress of the minority community. Through *Hunar Haat*, employment opportunities have been provided to 2 lakh 65 thousand skilled artisans belonging to the minority community. Scholarships have been granted in large numbers to Muslim students to enable them to continue their education without interruption.

On the special request of my Government, an unprecedented increase in Haj quota was made by Saudi Arabia as a result of which a record 2 lakh Indian Muslims performed the Haj this time. India is the first country where the entire process of Haj pilgrimage has been made digital and online. The Government is also undertaking 100 percent digitization of Waqf properties across the country so that these properties can be utilised for the welfare of the Muslim community.

My Government is working with utmost sensitivity towards fulfilling the hopes and aspirations of the *divyangjan*. Along with increase in reservations and legal empowerment, more than 1000 Government buildings and more than 700 railway stations have been made accessible for *divyangjan*. In the last 5 years, aids and assistive devices worth Rs. 900 crore were distributed to the *divyangjan* by organising camps. The Government is creating a national database of *divyangjan* and e-Unique Identification Cards have been issued to more than 25 lakh *divyangjan*. My Government, in its previous term, had undertaken a special initiative for preparing the Indian Sign Language Dictionary. It gives me pleasure to inform the House that a special dictionary of 6 thousand words has been prepared.

India has always believed in the principle of equal respect for all faiths. However, at the time of Partition, this very belief of India and of its people came under the most severe attack. In the environment prevailing in the aftermath of partition, the Father of the Nation Mahatma Gandhi had said: "Hindus and Sikhs of Pakistan, who do not wish to live there, can come to India. It is the duty of the Government of India to ensure a normal life for them." Many national leaders and political parties have from time to time supported this idea of Pujya Bapu and further propagated it. It is our responsibility to honour this wish of the founding fathers of our nation. I am happy that both the Houses of Parliament have fulfilled this wish, by enacting the Citizenship Amendment Act. At a time when the country is celebrating the 150th birth anniversary of Gandhi ji, all of you have given paramount consideration to this sentiment. I congratulate both the Houses of Parliament and all the MPs for this.

We have all been witness to the increase in the atrocities on minorities in Pakistan over time. We have all seen what happened in Nankana Sahib recently. It is the responsibility of all of us to bring the atrocities being committed in Pakistan to the notice of the global community.

While condemning the atrocities on the minorities in Pakistan, I urge the world community to take cognizance of it and take necessary steps in this regard.

My Government would like to clarify once again that the procedures which have existed for people from all faiths of the world who believe in India and who wish to obtain Indian citizenship, remain unchanged. A person of any faith can follow these processes and become a citizen of India. The Government has made several provisions to ensure that granting citizenship to those who have been compelled to take shelter in India does not have any adverse cultural impact on any region, especially the North East.

The great saint poet of India, Thiruvalluvar had said -

'Urruvar Ulgattaark Aaniya Tattraad, Erru-vaare Ellaam Porutt'

That is, "Like a linchpin of an axle, a farmer holds together the entire world. He bears the burden of those people who cannot cultivate land".

Our country is indebted to our farmers who are our annadata, because of whose hard work we are self-reliant in foodgrain. Bringing about a change in the lives of farmers who serve the country selflessly and development of rural areas, are the priorities of my Government. The Government is going

to spend an amount of Rs. 25 lakh crore in the coming years to strengthen the rural economy. Government is working on a strategy to develop an income centric system aimed at doubling the income of farmers.

Under the *Prime Minister Kisan Samman Nidhi*, more than Rs. 43 thousand crore has been deposited in the bank accounts of more than 8 crore farmer families. On 2nd January this month, my Government has created a record by transferring Rs. 12 thousand crore to the bank accounts of 6 crore farmers simultaneously.

My Government is working with dedication to provide the farmers, prices which are one and a half times the input cost. Steady increase in MSP for Kharif and Rabi crops is a step in this direction. Due to the efforts of the Government the procurement of pulses and oilseeds has increased by more than 20 times.

My Government is also promoting alternative farming practices. Along with cluster-based horticulture, organic farming is also being promoted and propagated. The production of honey has increased by about 60 per cent due to the efforts made by the Government in this area. The export of honey has also more than doubled. In order to build further on this accomplishment, the National Bee-Keeping and Honey Mission has been approved.

The twin objectives of doubling the fishermen's income and fish production are sought to be achieved through the newly created Department of Fisheries. A massive drive is being organized with the aim of ensuring the health of more than 50 crore livestock of the country. Under the National Animal Disease Control Programme, an amount of Rs. 13 thousand crore is being spent on immunization and other measures to protect the cattle from Foot and Mouth Disease.

My Government along with the State Governments is working with sensitivity to provide relief to farmers from natural calamities. Under the *Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana*, on an average, every year, more than five and a half crore farmers are availing crop insurance cover at a very low premium. Under this scheme in the last three years, claims of farmers to the tune of Rs. 57 thousand crore have been settled.

The impact of e-NAM, the online national market for farmers has also started becoming visible. 1 crore 65 lakh farmers and about 1 lakh 25 thousand traders of the country have been linked to it. About Rs. 90 thousand

crore worth of business has been transacted through this platform. In order to further enhance the effectiveness of e-NAM in this decade, work is underway to link more than 400 new mandis with it.

The health of an individual has impact on the development of both the family and the country. My Government is working with a holistic approach in the area of health. Serious efforts are being made at every level in preventive and curative healthcare. Many schemes such as the *Swachh Bharat Abhiyan*, *Jal Jeevan Mission*, *Poshan Abhiyan*, *Fit India Movement*, *Ayushman Bharat Yojana*, are contributing to improving the health of the people.

The wide ranging impact of the *Ayushman Bharat Scheme* on the health sector of the country is visible. Under the *Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana*, so far 75 lakh poor have availed free treatment. More than 27 thousand Health and Wellness Centres have also been set up.

Due to the decisions taken by my Government, medical expenses of the poor and the middle class have been reduced considerably. Capping of prices of more than 1000 essential medicines has resulted in a saving of Rs. 12,500 crore for the patients. Reduced cost of stents and knee-implants has provided huge relief to lakhs of patients. Everyday 5 to 7 lakh patients are now purchasing medicines for serious ailments at affordable prices from more than 6,000 *Jan Aushadhi Kendras*.

By setting up the National Medical Commission, my Government has reaffirmed its commitment to reform medical education and healthcare. 75 new medical colleges have been sanctioned this year, which will result in an increase in MBBS seats by about 16 thousand and PG seats by more than 4 thousand. In addition, 22 AIIMS have been sanctioned for various parts of the country, construction work for which is in progress.

My Government is also making special efforts to improve the health of women. Under the *Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana*, about Rs. 5 thousand crore has been transferred by the Government directly to the bank accounts of 1 crore 20 lakh women of the country. Under Mission Indradhanush, 3 crore 50 lakh infants and about 90 lakh pregnant women have been vaccinated. Benefits of these schemes are particularly visible in areas inhabited by dalits and tribals. My Government has also started making oxo-biodegradable sanitary napkins 'Suvidha' available for just one rupee.

Because of the efforts of my Government to promote entrepreneurship and livelihood for women, more than 6 crore 60 lakh women have already joined the Self Help Group movement. These women are being provided credit at low interest rates. In order to provide equal opportunities, for the first time women have been allowed to work during the night shift also in both under-ground and open cast mines. It is with this same objective of promoting gender equality that admission of girls has been permitted in Sainik Schools for the first time. Appointment of women in the Military Police is also underway. For the first time the Indian Air Force is providing new opportunities for women to work in the fighter stream and as defence attachés.

My Government is working with sensitivity for ensuring the safety of women. In order to enhance women's safety, more than 600 One Stop Centers have been set up in the country. A national database has been created to identify the perpetrators of crimes against women. More than 1 thousand Fast Track Special Courts will be set up across the country to ensure speedy justice in such cases. It has also been decided to set up a Women Help Desk in every police station of the country. For heinous crimes like sexual offence against children, Government has made a provision even for capital punishment.

The 21st century is referred to as the Century of Knowledge and the priority of the Government is to prepare the youth to provide leadership in this field. In the areas related to Research, Innovation, Incubation and Start-Ups, it is the youth who will be at the forefront in this decade. The youth are benefitting continuously from the policy decisions taken by my Government in this regard. Today, India is home to the world's third largest start-up ecosystem. Under the Start-Up India campaign, recognition has been accorded to 27 thousand new start-ups in the country. The number of patents granted in the country has increased four times in the last five years, whereas trademark registrations have increased five-fold.

Through the Skill India Mission and National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme, alongwith skill development the youth are also being provided with necessary funds for self-employment. More than 5 crore 54 lakh new entrepreneurs in the country have availed loans under the Mudra scheme. So far, credit in excess of Rs. 10 lakh crore has been sanctioned under this scheme.

My Government is laying emphasis on schemes aimed at improving quality of education and promoting innovation. More than Rs. 37 thousand

crore has been sanctioned for modernization of 75 educational institutions in the country through the Higher Education Funding Agency (HEFA). Government has initiated action for appointment of about 7 thousand teachers in Kendriya Vidyalayas and 12 thousand teachers in Higher Education Institutions. 'Swayam2' has also been introduced by the Government to strengthen the online education system.

I am delighted to inform you that for the first time ever in the history of the country, number of girls admitted in higher education has exceeded that of boys.

Our youth have the potential to transform India into a great sporting power in the world. Under various schemes, including the Khelo India programme and the Olympic Podium Scheme, young talent is being identified and provided with requisite training to compete at the highest level. The third phase of Khelo India programme has been successfully concluded in Guwahati just a few days back. It is worth noting that 80 new national records were set there, of which 56 were set by women.

This year 1st August marks the hundredth death anniversary of the great freedom fighter, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, who had given the clarion call that *Swaraj* is our birth right. After attainment of *Swaraj*, the nation has now started moving towards *Suraaj*. Moving rapidly towards the goal of *Suraaj*, my Government is working at three levels:

- First – Transforming the work culture in Government and strengthening institutions,
- Second – Use of modern technology to promote transparency,
- And third – promoting healthy competition and public participation at the grassroot level.

Following the fundamental principle of “Minimum Government, Maximum Governance”, several reforms have been undertaken by the Government. With its recent abolition of 58 more laws, the number of laws abolished by the Government has now reached about 1500. Reforms in recruitment process for every level are underway in order to promote transparency. The youth are benefitting from the decision to discontinue interviews for most of the Group B posts and Group C posts.

Coordination among Departments and dismantling of silos are absolutely essential for successful implementation of schemes. In this

direction, organization of a common Foundation Course for officers of more than 20 Civil Services in October last year is an important step. Recently, the management of Indian Railways has also been restructured. To make the functioning of various Tribunals in the country more effective, the Tribunal system too is being reformed. New Ministries have also been created to facilitate better target orientation of schemes. Creation of the Ministry of Skill Development and the Ministry of Jal Shakti by the Government is an example of this thought process.

Fast and accurate delivery of Government services and benefits has been the hallmark of my Government. This has been made possible by application of technology as a basis of good governance on an unprecedented scale. Identification of beneficiaries in a transparent manner, transfer of 100 per cent assistance directly to bank accounts of beneficiaries and use of modern technology in monitoring of schemes have made the lives of the poor and the middle class easier. This technology will also help in improving the quality of life of our countrymen during this decade.

We are all aware that digital technology is the foundation of the Industrial Revolution Industry 4.0. My Government has focused on Digital Access, Digital Inclusion and Digital Empowerment in an unparalleled manner through the Digital India Programme in order to take full advantage of the Industrial Revolution in the 21st century. It is a matter of pride for the country that digital systems developed in India during the last five years have been a source of inspiration for several countries of the world.

Today, more than 121 crore people in the country have Aadhaar cards and about 60 crore people possess *RuPay* cards. A record value of Rs. 2 lakh crore has been transacted through UPI in December 2019. Recently, the Government has also launched a new version of the BHIM App.

The Government has linked about 450 schemes to Direct Benefit Transfer or DBT by using the JAM Trinity of Jan-Dhan, Aadhaar and Mobile. An amount of over Rs 9 lakh crore has been directly transferred to the bank accounts of the beneficiaries through DBT, during the last 5 years. By plugging the leakages, my Government has saved about Rs. 1 lakh 70 thousand crore from going into the wrong hands.

The Government e-Marketplace, GeM has brought about transparency in Government procurement. GeM has not only opened up a huge market, in the form of the Government, for the small and micro entrepreneurs, it has also connected the Government directly with the entrepreneurs. During

the last three years, about Rs. 40 thousand crore worth of procurement has been done by different Government Departments through GeM.

By leveraging technology, my Government has taken several major steps to end the Inspector Raj. Now we are also developing a system in the Income Tax Department which would be devoid of any human interface. This system will increase transparency and improve work culture in the tax department.

Technology plays a major role in bringing cities and villages closer. So far, more than 1 lakh 25 thousand Gram Panchayats have been connected with high speed broadband under the BharatNet scheme. In 2014, there were 60 thousand Common Service Centres in rural areas of the country, which have now increased to more than 3 lakh 65 thousand. This has provided employment to more than 12 lakh villagers. Through these centres, the Government is delivering more than 45 services in rural areas.

In order to strengthen the spirit of *Ek Bharat, Shreshtha Bharat*, My Government is developing integrated and organized systems for the countrymen, through use of technology.

Recently, One Nation, One Fastag has been launched to ensure seamless mobility in the country. One Nation One Mobility Card has enabled use of the same card for different modes of transport across different States. One Nation, One Ration Card is also being launched by the Government. One Nation, One Tax, that is GST, has also promoted transparency in trade and commerce through use of technology. In the pre GST period, more than two dozen different taxes had to be paid. Now, not only the complex tax web has come to an end, the incidence of tax has also been reduced.

In a federal country like India it is imperative for fast paced development, that States compete with each other in development schemes; and also share experiences with each other. My Government has therefore been consistently emphasizing Competitive Cooperative Federalism. The Government is ranking States on the basis of real time data collected at district and village level. Its impact is visible in various areas ranging from *Swachh Bharat Abhiyan* to Ease of Doing Business and Smart City Mission to Aspirational District Programme.

Information collected during the Census plays a crucial role in enabling Governments in formulation of appropriate schemes and targeted interventions. This time digital technology is being used, in the conduct of Census, to collect information so as to complete the process expeditiously.

My Government is committed to protecting privacy amidst the increasing use of digital technology. To fulfil this commitment, Government has introduced the Data Protection Bill in the Parliament.

My Government is committed to attaining the goal of making India a USD 5 trillion economy. Towards this objective, Government is making efforts at all levels of the economy, in consultation with all stakeholders. In spite of global challenges, the fundamentals of Indian economy are strong. Our foreign exchange reserves have reached a historical high of over USD 450 billion. Inflow of Foreign Direct Investment to India is also on the rise. As compared to last year, FDI has increased by USD 3 billion between April and October this year.

On the other hand, merger of small Public Sector Banks has strengthened them and improved their lending capacity. In the first half of this financial year, 12 Public Sector Banks have reported profits. Due to the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, nearly Rs. 3.5 lakh crores have also been recovered by the banks and other institutions. Reduction of corporate tax and the codification of Labour Laws will increase ease of doing business in India.

My Government is providing *impetus* to Make in India to accelerate the growth rate of the economy and to boost manufacturing and exports. Government is developing two defence corridors in Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh, in addition to 5 Industrial Corridors in the country.

India is making rapid strides in electronics manufacturing sector in particular. National Policy on Electronics has been formulated to give further impetus to the manufacturing of mobile phones, TVs and other electronic devices. The value of electronic equipment manufactured in the country has increased to Rs. 4 lakh 58 thousand crore in 2018-19, as against Rs. 1 lakh 90 thousand crore in 2014-15. In 2014, there were only 2 companies manufacturing mobiles in India. Today India is the second largest mobile manufacturing hub in the world. Make in India is also being encouraged by the Government in automobile sector and railways. Full indigenous manufacturing of modern trains like *Vande Bharat* and *Tejas Express* is in progress.

The fundamental mantra of independence was a Self-reliant India. A self-reliant India is possible only when every Indian takes pride in every product made in India. My Government believes in the mantra of 'Buy local for a better tomorrow'. I urge every representative of the people, from

Panchayat level to the Parliament, and every Government in the country, to transform the philosophy of 'Buy local for a better tomorrow' into a movement. I also urge every Indian to give priority to local products. By using locally manufactured products, you will be able to help the small entrepreneurs in your area to a great extent.

The poor and the middle classes hope and aspire for a modern 21st century infrastructure in the country. To fulfil this aspiration of the people more than Rs. 100 lakh crore will be invested in the next five years. With a special emphasis on connectivity, the Government is also focusing on creation of new highways, new waterways, new airways, and new I-ways.

Rural roads contribute significantly to the country's infrastructure. Rural roads have now been expanded to every corner of the country through the *Pradhan Mantri Gramin Sadak Yojana*. Third phase of the programme has been launched to strengthen rural roads and connect them to schools, hospitals and agricultural markets. 1 lakh 25 thousand kilometers of roads will be constructed and upgraded under this programme.

Inland waterways are also being developed by the Government. In December 2019, for the first time, container cargo reached Pandu in Assam via National Water Way-2. Under the *Jal Marg Vikas Project*, the multi-modal terminal at Haldia on River Ganga and the navigation lock at Farakka will be completed this year. It is also our endeavour to operate large transport cargo vessels on River Ganga by next year.

Rapid progress is being made towards providing better public transport facilities in urban areas. Metro facility has now been extended to 18 cities in the country. So far, 670 km. of metro lines have been operationalized, and work on another 930 km. is underway. The residents of Delhi and NCR have greatly benefited from the construction of Delhi-Meerut Expressway, as well as from Eastern and Western Peripheral Expressways.

Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities of the country are emerging in a new role towards achieving the goal of USD 5 trillion economy. The progress of small cities in areas relating to sanitation, amenities, start-ups or other commercial activities has been encouraging. Since 2014, start-ups in small cities have grown at a rate of 45 to 50 per cent. Similarly, about 35 lakh people have so far travelled by air under the UDAN scheme. Last year, 335 new air routes have been approved. It is estimated that in the coming years, more than half of the country's digital transactions will take place in these tier-2 and tier-3 cities.

My Government is doing its utmost to fulfil the developmental aspirations of small cities and the new middle class. The middle class in small towns has also benefited the most from tax exemption on income up to Rs. 5 lakhs. The middle class families with annual income of up to Rs. 18 lakhs are able to save between Rs. 5 to 6 lakh on home loans with tenure up to 20 years. It is the middle class that will benefit the most from the Rs. 25 thousand crore fund provided by the Government for completion of stalled housing projects.

India is playing an effective role globally in the field of clean energy. Due to the efforts of the Government, LPG coverage in the country has increased from 55 per cent to about 97 per cent. City gas distribution is now being extended to 407 districts of the country. Now we are moving towards a gas-based economy.

Keeping environment conservation in mind, my Government has enhanced the target for producing renewable energy to 450 gigawatts. Under the *Pradhan Mantri-Kusum Yojana*, it has been targeted to provide more than 17 lakh solar pumps to farmers across the country. Similarly, under the second phase of the solar roof top programme, the target is to generate 38 gigawatt of electricity.

The efforts of the countrymen have made it possible to expand India's tree and forest cover by 13 thousand square kilometers during the last four years. Similarly, the number of tigers has increased to 2,967 in July 2019 from 2,226 in 2014, which is a matter of satisfaction.

To address the issue of air and water pollution, the Government will be implementing the National Clean Air Programme in 102 cities of the country. I am glad that the positive impact of the *Namami Gange Mission* launched by the Government has now started becoming visible. Under this mission, projects worth Rs. 7 thousand crore have been completed and projects worth more than Rs. 21 thousand crore are in progress.

The impact of all these efforts is also visible on the country's tourism sector. During the last few years, there has been extraordinary development of infrastructure related to tourism. Recently a nationwide programme has been launched from Kolkata for conservation and beautification of the heritage buildings of the country. The tourism sector is also being strengthened by the modern infrastructure being developed under *Swadesh Darshan* and PRASAD schemes. New records are being created every day in

the number of tourists visiting the 'Statue of Unity', the statue of Sardar Patel; which is the tallest in the world.

It is the belief of my Government that paying tribute to the great personalities who dedicated their lives to the nation and contributed towards preserving the heritage of the country is an important part of nation building. With this idea, museums celebrating the contributions made by the brave tribals, both men and women, during our freedom struggle are being set up in different States. The 250th birth anniversary of the great social reformer Raja Ram Mohan Roy, whose teachings guided the nation, will also be celebrated in 2022 by the Government in a befitting manner.

The objective of India's space programme has always been service to humanity. Due to the tireless work of country's space scientists, Chandrayaan-2 has stimulated a new interest in technology among the country's youth. My Government has already approved Chandrayaan-3. ISRO is also working expeditiously on the manned spacecraft programme – Gaganyaan, as well as Aditya-1 Mission.

In these evolving times, to meet the new and complex challenges related to the defence of the country, my Government is working to make the defence forces stronger, more effective and modern. The appointment of CDS, the Chief of Defence Staff and creation of the Department of Military Affairs are steps in this direction. This will also improve coordination among the three services, while speeding up their modernization and the process of making them self-reliant.

We are fully attentive to the requirements of our security forces, including adequate armaments, safety equipment and bullet proof jackets. Manufacture of state-of-the-art AK 203 rifles, in collaboration with Russia, will commence in the Ordnance Factory at Amethi in Uttar Pradesh. Recently, when the Naval Prototype of Tejas landed and took off from INS Vikramaditya, every Indian was filled with pride. The Government has also taken historic steps in enhancing space security. With the successful testing of A-Sat, India has become the fourth country in the world to attain strike capability in space.

My Government is working with full strength and determination to free the country from the scourge of terrorism. In view of the changing nature of terrorism, alertness on the part of the citizens is extremely helpful. The decrease in terrorist activities in Jammu Kashmir demonstrates that public cooperation can be effective in the fight against terrorism. My Government has given the security forces a free hand in taking the strongest

measures against those indulging in terrorism. The security situation in the North East has also improved significantly due to the concerted efforts of the Government. The geographical spread of Naxalism is also steadily shrinking.

My Government is of the view that foreign policy is a vital ingredient of the country's economic and strategic security. We are stimulating economic growth and prosperity by increasing connectivity with our neighbouring countries. "Neighbourhood First" policy is our priority. Apart from our neighbours, we have also strengthened relations with other countries of the world. This is why a number of countries have bestowed their highest honour on India. Our cooperation with ASEAN and African countries is being taken to a new level.

After International Solar Alliance, India has been at the forefront of a global partnership, Coalition on Disaster Resilient Infrastructure-CDRI. This step aimed at mitigating natural disasters will further strengthen India's stature as a sensitive world power.

This decade, which has just begun, will determine India's global standing in the times to come. The world will witness an inclusive, prosperous, capable and powerful New India in this decade. Hence it is the bounden duty of every Member of this House and every countryman to strive hard with all their capability to achieve their respective goals.

We should all strive to make every citizen conscious of and dedicated to his duties in the national interest, and ensure that this sense of responsibility becomes the guiding principle of our civic life. Come, let us together make this decade of 2020 the decade of fulfilling our duties.

We must always remember that we are first and foremost citizens of this country, and leaders or supporters of a particular ideology thereafter. The prestige of our country should be more important than our party loyalties.

It is my belief that in the times to come, all of us together, drawing inspiration from the glorious past of our country, will make every possible effort to ensure a bright future for the country; and that we will also succeed in our endeavour.

Let us all come together to fulfil the dream of a New India; let us together make a New India.

Jai Hind.

ADDRESS TO PARLIAMENT — 29 JANUARY 2021

Lok Sabha	–	Seventeenth Lok Sabha
Session	–	First Session of the year
President of India	–	Shri Ram Nath Kovind
Vice-President of India	–	Shri M. Venkaiah Naidu
Prime Minister of India	–	Shri Narendra Modi
Speaker, Lok Sabha	–	Shri Om Birla

HONOURABLE MEMBERS,

This joint sitting of Parliament which is being held during the time of the Coronavirus pandemic has great significance. It is the beginning of a new year and a new decade. We will also be entering the 75th year of India's independence this year. All the Members of Parliament present here today embody the conviction held by every Indian that the toughest of challenges will deter neither us nor India.

Whenever India has remained united, it has been able to attain even seemingly unattainable goals. This solidarity and Pujya Bapu's inspiration had given us freedom from hundreds of years of colonial rule. Echoing the same spirit, Assam Kesari, Ambikagiri Raichaudhuri the nationalist poet, had said –

“Om tatsat Bharat Mahat, Ek chetonaat, Ek Dhyant,

Ek Sadhonaat, Ek Avegot, Ek Hoi Jaa, Ek Hoi Jaa”

That is, India's grandeur is the ultimate truth. In one single consciousness, one thought, one devotion, one inspiration, let us unite; let us unite.

This unity and dedication of Indians has enabled the country to overcome multiple adversities. Our country has faced every crisis with fortitude, be it the Coronavirus pandemic, floods, earthquakes or major

cyclones in several States, locust attack or the bird flu. The recent past also saw an unprecedented escalation in tension along the border. The nation stood together, battled crises on multiple fronts and surmounted every challenge. During this period, we all have also witnessed the unparalleled courage, endurance, discipline and spirit of service of our countrymen.

In this fight against the pandemic, we have also suffered the untimely loss of life of a number of our countrymen. Our beloved former President and my predecessor Shri Pranab Mukherjee too passed away during the pandemic. The untimely demise of six Members of Parliament was also due to the coronavirus. I pay my heartfelt tribute to all of them.

It has been said in our Shastras –

“Kritam me dakshine haste jayo me savya aahitah”

That is, if we do our duty, success is assured. During the coronavirus pandemic, which has affected each individual and every country in the world, India has emerged on the global stage with renewed vigor. It gives me satisfaction that due to timely and calibrated decisions taken by my Government, we were able to save lives of lakhs of our countrymen. Today, there is a rapid decline in the number of new cases of coronavirus and at the same time there is a significant increase in the number of recoveries.

When we think of the preceding year, we are reminded of the twin challenges that faced us, of saving lives of the citizens and protecting the economy. Besides announcing a record economic package for reviving the economy, my Government took care to ensure that no poor person went hungry.

Under the *‘Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana’*, 80 crore people were provided an additional 5 kg free food grains per month for 8 months. The Government was also mindful of the plight of migrant labourers, workers and those who were away from their homes. Besides providing them with the facility of *‘One Nation- One Ration Card’*, the Government made free foodgrains available and organized Shramik Special trains for them.

My Government also launched the Garib Kalyan Rojgar Abhiyan in 6 States in order to provide employment to the returnee migrant labourers in their villages, during the pandemic. As a result of this Abhiyan, 50 crore mandays of employment were generated. The Government also launched SVANidhi—a special scheme for street vendors and hawkers. Further, an amount of approximately Rs. 31,000 crore was directly transferred to the

Jan Dhan accounts of poor women. During this period, more than 14 crore gas cylinders were given free of cost throughout the country to poor women beneficiaries, under the Ujjwala scheme.

Through all its decisions, my Government has set an unprecedented example of the collective strength of federal structure. The collaboration between the Central and the State Governments has not only strengthened democracy but also enhanced the prestige of the Constitution.

Acharya Chanakya had said –

**“Trinam laghu trinatoolam tooladapi cha yaachakah
Vayuna kim na neetosow mamayam yachayishyati”**

A person who implores or begs is considered to be less valuable than even straw or cotton.

Even the wind that carries away cotton and straw will not take a person who begs, lest he starts demanding something from wind itself. In this way, everyone tries to avoid a beggar.

This implies that in order to enhance our relevance or importance, we must minimise our dependence on others and become self-reliant.

The dream of an empowered and free India, which our freedom fighters had envisioned, was also based on the idea of self-reliance of the country. Under the circumstances that emerged during the coronavirus pandemic, when each country was prioritizing their own requirements, we were reminded of the significance of developing a self-reliant India.

During this period, India has demonstrated its scientific capabilities, technical expertise & strength of its start-up ecosystem by developing a network of over 2200 laboratories in a short time span, manufacturing thousands of ventilators, PPE kits and test kits thereby, attaining self-reliance. It is a matter of immense pride that India is conducting the world's largest vaccination programme. Both the vaccines rolled out under this programme are produced indigenously. By making lakhs of corona vaccine doses available to several countries India has fulfilled its obligation towards humanity in these times of difficulty. The accolades being showered on India globally for this work along with the essence of our age-old cultural tradition of '*Sarve Santu Niramayaha*' and endeavour to work for human welfare is imparting strength to our efforts.

The gains from the work done by my Government in the healthcare sector in the past 6 years were visible during the coronavirus pandemic. During these years, emphasis has been placed not only on modernizing the healthcare systems but also on prevention of diseases. Programmes such as *Rashtriya Poshan Abhiyaan*, *Fit India Movement* and *Khelo India Abhiyan* have helped in creating awareness about health within the country. We have also witnessed the beneficial impact of the efforts made by my Government to promote Ayurveda and Yoga.

As a result of the efforts of my Government, the poor are now able to avail the benefits of healthcare facilities with ease and their expenditure on treatment of diseases is progressively reducing. Under the *Ayushman Bharat – Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana*, 1.5 crore poor people in the country have received free treatment of up to Rs. 5 lakh. As a result, the poor have been able to save over Rs. 30,000 crore. Today, benefits of *Ayushman Bharat Yojana* can be availed at more than 24,000 hospitals across the country. Similarly, under the *Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Yojana*, the poor are getting medicines at extremely affordable rates from 7000 *Jan Aushadhi Kendras* across the country. Lakhs of patients are purchasing medicines from these Kendras daily and due to their reasonable prices, are able to save Rs. 3600 crore annually.

In order to develop healthcare facilities across the country commensurate expansion in medical education is equally important. In 2014, there were only 387 medical colleges, but today there are 562 medical colleges in the country. In the last 6 years, there has been an increase of over 50,000 seats at the under-graduate and post graduate levels in medical education. Under the *Pradhan Mantri Swasthya Suraksha Yojana*, the Government has also sanctioned 22 new AIIMS.

The Central Government has laid the foundation for historic reforms in the field of medical education by establishing the National Medical Commission along with 4 Autonomous Boards. The decades' old Medical Council of India has been replaced with the National Medical Commission as a part of these reforms.

Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan is not just confined to manufacturing in India, but is also a campaign aimed at elevating the standard of living of every Indian as well as boosting the self-confidence of the country.

Our goal of an *Atmanirbhar Bharat* will be further strengthened by self-reliance in agriculture. With this idea, the Government has, over the

last 6 years, attempted to bring positive transformation in the 'Seed to Market' system so that Indian agriculture is modernized and also sees growth. In pursuance of these efforts, my Government decided to implement the recommendations of the Swaminathan Committee report and increased the MSP to at least 1.5 times of the cost of production. Today my Government is not only purchasing record quantities at the MSP, but is also increasing the number of procurement centres.

Widespread improvements are being brought in various sources of irrigation. Following the mantra of 'Per Drop More Crop', the Government is not only completing the pending irrigation projects, but is also delivering modern irrigation techniques to the farmers. In 2013-14, only 42 lakh hectares of land was under micro-irrigation whereas today, more than 56 lakh hectares of land has been brought under micro-irrigation.

I am happy to say that through their hard work, our farmers are augmenting the efforts of the Government. Today, the food grain availability in the country is at a record high. In 2008-09, the foodgrain production in the country was 234 million tonnes, whereas in 2019-20, the production has increased to 296 million tonnes. During the same period, the production of fruits and vegetables has also increased from 215 million tonnes to 320 million tonnes. I congratulate the farmers of the country for these achievements.

In the agricultural sector, the need of the hour is to focus our attention on the small and marginal farmers who own only 1 or 2 hectares of land. More than 80% of the farmers in the country numbering over 10 crore fall under this category.

My Government accords priority to these small and marginal farmers too. In order to provide expenditure support to these farmers, almost Rs 1,13,000 crore have been directly transferred to their bank accounts under *Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi*. *Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana* has also benefitted small farmers of this country. Under this scheme in the last 5 years, about Rs. 90,000 crore has been paid as compensation to the farmers against a premium of Rs 17,000 crore.

The mission for setting up 10,000 Farmer Producer Organisations by bringing together small farmers of the country is also an impactful step. This has ensured access of small farmers to better technology, additional credit, post-harvesting processing and marketing facilities and insurance coverage during natural calamities, on the same footing as the rich farmers.

This has also provided an alternative to farmers for securing remunerative prices for their produce and generating greater savings.

After extensive consultation the Parliament approved 3 important farm reform bills 7 months ago, namely, The Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Bill, The Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Bill, and the Essential Commodities (Amendment) Bill. The benefits of these three important farm reforms, have started reaching more than 10 crore small farmers instantly. Appreciating the advantages that these reforms would bring to the small farmers, several political parties too had, from time to time, expressed their support. The discussions over these farm reforms in every part of the country for over 2 decades and the demand for these reforms at different fora were also reflected during the deliberations in the House.

Presently, the Apex Court has stayed the implementation of these laws. My Government respects the decision of the Apex Court and shall abide by it.

My Government holds in high esteem the values of democracy and sanctity of the Constitution. It is continuously making efforts to dispel the misunderstanding created in the context of these laws. My Government has always respected freedom of expression and holding of peaceful agitations in a democratic set up. However, the recent acts of dishonouring the National Flag and showing disrespect to the auspicious occasion of the Republic Day are unfortunate. While the Constitution gives us the right to freedom of expression it is also expected that we abide by the laws and rules with equal sincerity.

My Government wants to make it clear that the rights and facilities available under the system prevailing before the enactment of the three new laws are not affected in any way. Rather, through these agricultural reforms, the Government has provided new facilities to the farmers and has empowered them.

In order to enhance the profitability of agriculture, my Government is also placing emphasis on creating modern agricultural infrastructure. The Agriculture Infrastructure Fund for Rs. 1,00,000 crore has also been started for this purpose.

The *Kisan Rail*, started throughout the country, is helping chart a new course by increasing the access of Indian farmers to new markets. This rail is

like a mobile cold storage. So far, over 100 *Kisan Rails* have been started which have enabled the farmers to transport over 38,000 tonnes of food grains and fruits & vegetables from one region to the other.

In order to increase the income of farmers, my Government has also focused on development of livestock as a source of income. As a result, the livestock of the country has been increasing at an annual rate of 8.2 % over the last 5 years. The Government has also set up the Animal Husbandry Infrastructure Development Fund for Rs. 15,000 crore for creating basic infrastructure and encouraging investment in dairy sector.

My Government has also extended the facility of Kisan Credit Cards to animal husbandry and fishery sectors. Efforts have been undertaken to increase the income of fishermen through the *Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana*. In this sector, an investment of about Rs. 20,000 crore has been planned over the next 5 years.

In order to increase the income of the farmers, the Government has also launched a campaign to turn the 'Annadata' into 'Urjadata'. 20 lakh solar pumps are being provided to farmers under the *Pradhan Mantri Kusum Yojana*. Government is also encouraging production of ethanol from sugarcane, maize and paddy. Due to the affirmative policies of the Government, over the past 6 years, the annual ethanol production has increased from 38 crore litres to 190 crore litres. The production is expected to reach 320 crore litres this year. Ethanol is emerging as a major source for augmenting the income of farmers.

Pujya Babu had envisioned the development of self-reliant '*Adarsh Gram*'. Carrying this idea forward, my Government has been working relentlessly for multi-faceted development of villages. Raising the standard of living of the villagers is a priority for my Government. This is best exemplified by the 2 crore houses built since 2014 for the poor families living in villages. The implementation of *Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana* has also been expedited to ensure a pucca roof for every poor person by 2022.

Under the *SVAMITVA scheme* launched by my Government, villagers are now acquiring legal rights over their property. With ownership rights, the villagers can now easily avail bank loans and housing loans against the collateral of their properties and economic activities are expected to gain momentum in the rural areas. Small entrepreneurs, people associated with cottage industries and small farmers would be especially benefitted under the scheme.

Baba Saheb Ambedkar was not only the principal architect of the Indian Constitution but also guided the development of the country's Water Policy. On 8th November 1945, during a conference in Cuttack, he had said – “Water is Wealth. Water being the wealth of the people and its distribution being uncertain, the correct approach is not to complain against nature but to conserve water”.

Drawing inspiration from Baba Saheb, my Government is working on the ambitious scheme of '*Jal Jeevan Mission*'. Besides delivering water to every household (Har Ghar Jal), work on water conservation is also progressing at a rapid pace. I am happy to say that under this scheme, 3 crore families have been connected with piped water supply so far. Under this scheme, water connection is being provided on priority to brothers and sisters belonging to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes as well as other deprived sections of the society.

Keeping in mind the requirements of the 21st century and with a view to improving the connectivity of our villages, my Government has made commendable progress in expanding the network of rural roads. Under the *Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana*, construction of 6.42 lakh km of road network has been completed in rural areas of the country. In the third phase of this scheme, 1.25 lakh km roads connecting the settlements, schools, markets and hospitals in rural areas will also be upgraded. Along with roads, internet connectivity is equally important in the rural areas. After ensuring electrification of every village, my Government is implementing a mission to connect over 6 lakh villages of the country through optical fibre.

Our small scale industries, cottage industries and MSMEs spread across the villages and small towns are the backbone of our economy. These small scale industries have immense potential of making India self-reliant. This sector accounts for about 50% of India's total exports. Several steps have been taken to enhance the role of MSMEs in the mission aimed at developing an Atmanirbhar Bharat.

Development of small and cottage industries has received the requisite impetus through measures like modification in the definition of MSMEs, increase in the investment limit or priority in government procurement. Initiatives such as Emergency Credit Guarantee Scheme for Rs. 3,00,000 crore, special scheme of Rs 20,000 crore for MSMEs in distress and Fund of Funds have benefitted lakhs of small scale industries. Besides ushering in greater transparency, the GeM portal has facilitated increased participation of the MSMEs even in far flung and remote areas in Government procurement.

It is a constant endeavour of my Government to ensure that benefits of entrepreneurship are availed by every section in the country. Under schemes like Hunar Haat and USTTAD, not only the skills of lakhs of crafts persons are being developed but employment opportunities are also being generated. Under these schemes, women crafts persons comprise more than half of the beneficiaries. These crafts persons are being connected to the global market through e-haat.

Women entrepreneurs have a vital role to play in building a self-reliant India. My Government has taken several steps to provide new opportunities for self-employment to women. Under the MUDRA scheme, more than 25 crore loans have been sanctioned so far, of which nearly 70% have been given to women entrepreneurs.

Under Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana — Rashtriya Grameen Ajeevika Mission, more than 7 crore women entrepreneurs have become a part of the network of nearly 66 lakh Self Help Groups in the country. These women groups have been provided bank loans worth Rs. 3,40,000 crore in the last 6 years.

Keeping in mind the health concerns of working women in rural areas of the country, the Government is implementing the 'Suidha' scheme under which sanitary napkins are made available at a nominal cost of Re. 1. My Government is relentlessly working towards protecting the health of infants and pregnant women through various initiatives like *Rashtriya Poshan Abhiyaan*, free check-ups and financial assistance to pregnant women. As a result of this, the Maternal Mortality Rate has declined from 130 per lakh in 2014 to 113. The Under 5 Child Mortality Rate has also reduced to 36 for the first time, which is less than the world average rate of 39.

As my Government considers it important to ensure equal participation by women, it is providing new opportunities for our sisters and daughters in various fields. My Government has taken several decisions in this direction, such as appointing women in the Fighter stream of the Indian Air Force and the Military Police for the first time, as well as allowing women to work in underground and open cast mines during the night shift. Keeping in mind the safety of the women, work on several initiatives such as setting up One Stop Centres, National Database of criminals, Emergency Response Support System and Fast Track Courts across the country is progressing at a rapid pace.

Keeping in mind the global requirements and challenges of the 21st century, the Government has announced the National Education Policy.

For the first time students have been given the freedom to opt for the subjects of their choice under the National Education Policy. Students have also been provided the option of changing their subjects or streams in the middle of a course.

Under the Pradhan Mantri e-Vidya, my Government has developed the Diksha online portal as One Nation, One Digital Platform for school education. Ever sensitive towards safeguarding the interests of the students, my Government has also successfully conducted the JEE and NEET examinations in order to prevent the loss of an academic year.

My Government believes that the journey of the most deprived sections towards social and economic development begins with access to quality education. More than 3 crore 20 lakh such students are benefitting from various scholarship schemes of the Government. These include students belonging to the scheduled castes, backward classes, forest-dwellers and tribal community and minority communities. It is the endeavour of the Government to ensure that maximum number of eligible and needy students are able to avail the benefit of the scholarships. Along with this, the Central Government's share in the funding of post matric scholarship scheme for scheduled castes students is also being enhanced. Similarly, the network of Ekalavya Model Residential Schools is being expanded to cover every tribal dominated block to facilitate the education of tribal students. So far, more than 550 such schools have been sanctioned.

Along with improvements in education, the emphasis of my Government is also on simplifying and streamlining the recruitment process for jobs. The youth have benefited greatly from discontinuation of interviews for recruitment to Group C and Group D posts. By setting up the National Recruitment Agency, the Government has freed the youth from the inconvenience of appearing for multiple examinations.

Following the mantra of 'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas' my Government is prioritizing the development of all sectors and all sections of the society. To alleviate the hardships faced by Divyangjans, thousands of buildings, public transport buses and railways have been made accessible. About 700 websites have also been made accessible for Divyangjans. Similarly, to provide better facilities and equal opportunities to transgenders, the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act has been implemented. A Development and Welfare Board has also been set up for the Denotified, Nomadic and Semi-nomadic communities.

Development oriented schemes are being implemented on priority by my Government in 112 Aspirational Districts which have fallen behind in the race for development. The tribal brothers and sisters have benefitted greatly from this initiative. Works related to marketing of forest products and setting up of small businesses dependent on forest produce, which are the mainstay of livelihood for the tribal community, are also in progress. As a result of these efforts, an additional amount of Rs. 600 crore has accrued to the tribal families. Government has increased the MSP on 46 types of forest produce by up to 90 per cent.

The advancement of modern technology in India and easy access of every Indian to modern technology are important indicators of progress towards the goal of an *Atmanirbhar Bharat*.

While maintaining the requirement of 'Do Gaj ki Doori', the institutions and citizens of our country did not allow the pace of growth to slacken, by leveraging the power of Digital India. In December 2020, digital transactions of more than Rs. 4,00,000 crore have been done through UPI. Today, more than 200 banks are linked to the UPI system. Similarly, Digilocker is being used as a paperless platform for more than 400 crore digital documents. Through the Umang App too, crores of citizens are availing more than 2000 services. More than three and a half lakh Common Service Centres are linking people in rural areas to Government services. In the same vein, e-stamp service has been launched after amending the Indian Stamp Act.

The trinity of Jan Dhan Accounts, Aadhaar and Mobile has helped safeguard the rights of people. Because of the JAM Trinity, Rs 1,80,000 crore have been saved from falling into wrong hands.

My Government has also initiated digitisation of medical services through the 'Rashtriya Digital Health Mission'. The citizens will be able to avail facilities like digital appointments, digital reports as well as digital health records through this mission in the coming days.

Our very own Navigation Satellite System 'Navik' is also enhancing the prestige of the country. Thousands of fishermen are now benefitting from it. New standards have been set in the form of National Atomic Timescale and Bharatiya Nirdeshak Dravya Pranali which were dedicated to the nation recently. These indigenous solutions will help in developing Indian products as per international standards.

This technology push is also empowering the democratic institutions of the country. In this direction, through the e-Vidhan App digitization of

Legislative Assemblies, Legislative Councils and both houses of Parliament is being undertaken. Implementation of NeVA – National e-Vidhan Application in State Legislative Assemblies will usher in a new era in facilitating legislative and democratic processes.

Our Parliament is an important medium for ensuring increased engagement of citizens in the democratic process and in fulfilling the aspirations of a New India. During the tenure of previous Governments and in the Houses of Parliament, it has been repeatedly mentioned, that the existing building is proving to be insufficient to meet our present day requirements. Efforts had been made by previous governments also for a new Parliament building. It is a happy coincidence that the construction of a new Parliament House has commenced as we are approaching the 75th year of our independence. With the construction of the new Parliament building, every member will get better facilities to enable them to effectively discharge their responsibilities.

The pace, at which citizens of this country have assimilated technology and change, is a testimony to the eagerness with which every Indian is waiting to see the country reach new heights. Keeping in mind the aspirations of the people, my Government has been taking speedy decisions and is implementing long awaited reforms in every sector of the economy.

Besides facilitating faceless tax assessment and appeal, several provisions of the Companies Act have been de-criminalised by my Government, in order to encourage entrepreneurship. A GIS based database of industrial zones has been created to enable delivery of essential services to industries. Information pertaining to more than 5 lakh hectares of industrial land is available through this database.

I am happy that espousing the sentiment of *Shramev Jayate*, both Houses of Parliament have taken a decision to bring about a transformation in the lives of the labour force. 29 Central labour laws have been amalgamated into 4 Labour Codes. States have also displayed initiative in bringing about these labour reforms. These reforms will result in expansion in the scope of labour welfare, timely payment of wages to labourers and generation of new employment opportunities. The new labour codes also ensure enhanced and a more equitable participation of the female work force.

Along with labour, easy availability of capital is also crucial for industries. For this, the banking system in the country is being strengthened.

Merger of small banks to create large and strong banks is also a step in this direction.

For the first time in the country, a Production Linked Incentive Scheme worth about Rs. 1.5 lakh crore is being implemented in 10 manufacturing sectors. Its impact is already visible in manufacturing of electronic goods as well as other products. As a result of this initiative, many large national and international companies have started their operations in India.

My Government is encouraging public participation in consumption of domestically manufactured goods. Today, 'Vocal For Local' has become a people's movement in the country. Efforts are being made to inculcate an emotional attachment for goods manufactured in India while at the same time ensuring that they are of high quality.

Continuous steps are being taken to improve 'Ease of Doing Business' in India. In this regard, healthy competition amongst States is being encouraged. It is matter of immense pleasure that States too are appreciating the importance of improving the ranking and are participating in this wholeheartedly.

The country has also started emerging from the economic setback suffered in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic when the focus was primarily on saving the life of each Indian citizen. This is evident from several indicators. Even in these difficult times, India has emerged as an attractive destination for foreign investors. Between April and August, 2020, a record foreign direct investment of 36 billion dollars has been made in India.

My Government believes that building modern infrastructure will serve as a strong foundation for a new and 'Atmanirbhar Bharat'. Rapid execution of major infrastructure projects and their completion, even during the coronavirus pandemic, demonstrates our resolve. Be it the Submarine Optical Fibre Cable from Chennai to Port Blair, the Atal Tunnel or the Char Dham Road Project, our country has been forging ahead with developmental work.

A few days back, sections of the Eastern and Western Dedicated Freight Corridors have been dedicated to the nation. Along with promoting industrialisation in Eastern India, this freight corridor will also reduce unnecessary delays during transit.

For modernizing the country's infrastructure, my Government is also working on the 'National Infrastructure Pipeline' worth over Rs. 110 lakh

crore. Along with this, work on 6 new expressways and 18 new access controlled corridors under the 'Bharatmala Pariyojana' is in progress.

Be it the Ro-PAX Ferry Service between Hazira and Ghogha in Gujarat or the seaplane service between Kevadia and Sabarmati River Front, these are lending a new dimension to water transport in India. Embodying the pride of having the world's tallest statue of Sardar Patel, Kevadia is now connected with direct trains from many cities of the country.

To transform the country into a gas based economy, work on gas connectivity is being expedited. A few days back, Kochi-Mangaluru Gas Pipeline has been dedicated to the nation. The construction of Dobhi-Durgapur Gas pipeline is boosting the surge of 'Urja Ganga'. This pipeline will go up to West Bengal and will make gas available to various industries, especially the fertilizer plants of Eastern India. Similarly, work on the Tuticorin-Ramnathpuram Gas Pipeline, that provides gas connectivity to fertilizer plants and other industrial units in Tamil Nadu, is progressing at a fast pace.

My Government considers urban development as an opportunity and that is why, massive investment is being made in urban infrastructure. More than 1 crore houses had been sanctioned for the poor in cities, of which about 40 lakh houses have already been constructed. A few days back, work on construction of houses based on modern technology has also been started in six cities of the country. A scheme has also been initiated for providing better and affordable rental housing facilities for the labourers working in cities.

Urban infrastructure linked to connectivity is also a priority for the Government. Today, metro rail service has been rolled out in 27 cities. Only a few days back, driverless metro train was also operationalized on one of the routes of Delhi Metro. Public transport system in cities is being improved by building Regional Rapid Transit System. Expansion of common mobility card will facilitate travel in various cities across the country.

My Government is fully committed to the overall and balanced development of Eastern India. A policy for rapid development of North East while preserving its unique geographical, cultural and linguistic characteristics and its social identity is being implemented. For Assam and North Eastern states, River Brahmaputra is the 'Jibondhara'. Making this lifeline the basis for economic activity, work on operationalizing several National Waterways is in progress. This will benefit all sections of people in the North East, including farmers, youth and entrepreneurs. By developing

the Integrated National Waterways under the “*Artha Brahmaputra*” programme, efforts are underway to transform Brahmaputra and Barak rivers as streams of development.

The policy of my Government for bringing enduring peace to the North East, based on sensitivity and collaboration, has started showing clear results now. Today extremism in North East is on the wane and there is a sharp decline in the number of violent incidents. The youth who went astray on the path of violence are now returning to the mainstream of development and nation building.

The rehabilitation of Bru refugees is being completed in a peaceful and harmonious manner. Similarly, a historic Bodo Peace Accord has been signed which has been implemented successfully. After the accord, this time the elections to the Bodo Territorial Council have also been held successfully.

My Government is committed to counter the forces challenging the sovereignty and unity of the country, at every level. While on the one hand, development is being promoted in violence affected areas, on the other hand firm action is being taken against the forces inciting violence. As a result of this, the number of naxal-violence related incidents have declined and the naxal-affected area is shrinking.

The development oriented policy of my Government has also received wholehearted support from the people of Jammu and Kashmir. Only a few weeks back, elections to District Councils in Jammu and Kashmir were held successfully for the first time after Independence. Large scale participation of voters has shown that Jammu and Kashmir is forging ahead towards a new democratic future at a rapid pace. Grant of new entitlements have empowered the people of the region. After the implementation of ‘Ayushman Bharat Health Scheme’, every family of Jammu and Kashmir is assured of free treatment worth Rs. 5 lakh. A bench of the Central Administrative Tribunal has also been established in Jammu. After becoming a Union Territory, elections to the Ladakh Autonomous Hill Council have been held successfully a few months back. Now the people of Ladakh are themselves taking decisions related to the development of their region expeditiously.

During the Coronavirus pandemic, when the country was grappling with crisis, attempts were made to challenge the country’s capability at the

border. Efforts were made to disrupt the peace at LAC in utter disregard of bilateral relations and agreements. However, our security forces not only responded to these machinations with promptitude, force and courage, but also foiled all attempts to change the *status quo* at the border. The restraint, valor and courage displayed by our jawans, deserve utmost praise. In June 2020, twenty of our jawans made the supreme sacrifice and laid down their lives defending the country at Galwan Valley. Every citizen is deeply indebted to these martyrs.

My Government is vigilant and fully committed to safeguard the interests of the country. Additional forces have also been deployed at the LAC to protect the sovereignty of India.

The great Malayalam poet Vallathol, who composed immortal patriotic lyrics during the Independence struggle, has said:

“Bharatam Enna Peru Kettal Abhimana Puridam Aaganam Antrangam.”

That is, whenever you hear the name of Bharat, your heart should swell with pride.

Keeping in mind the larger role that India is set to play in the future, my Government is intent on strengthening our military preparedness. A range of modern armaments are being procured to enhance the capabilities of India’s armed forces. There is also a thrust on achieving self-reliance in the defence sector. Only a few days back, the Government has placed an order with HAL for procurement of 83 indigenous fighter aircraft ‘Tejas’ worth Rs. 48,000 crore. Imports of more than 100 items linked to defence have been prohibited in order to promote ‘Make in India’. Similarly, several advanced weapons including supersonic torpedoes, quick reaction missiles, tanks and indigenous rifles are being manufactured in India. India is now also rapidly increasing its share in the exports of defence equipments.

The formation of ‘Indian National Space Promotion and Authorisation Centre — IN-SPACE’ will accelerate major reforms in the space sector. We are proud that today ISRO space scientists are working on important missions such as ‘Chandrayan-3’, ‘Gaganyaan’, and ‘Small Satellite Launch Vehicle’. In the field of nuclear energy also, the country is moving rapidly towards achieving self-reliance. A few months back, country’s first indigenous pressurized heavy water reactor has been successfully tested at Kakrapar.

Along with development, environment protection is also one of the topmost priorities of my Government. With this resolve, efforts are being made to achieve the goal of reduction in the Emissions Intensity of GDP by 33 to 35 per cent, by the year 2030 as compared to the year 2005. India is among the frontline nations in implementing the Paris Agreement.

The work on setting up the world's largest Hybrid Renewable Energy Park in the desert of Kutch has commenced recently. In the last six years, India's renewable energy capacity has grown two-and-a-half times, whereas Solar Energy capacity has increased 13 times. Today, almost one-fourth of the total energy production in the country is coming from renewable energy sources.

The world is witness to the sincerity with which India has been discharging its global responsibilities even during the Coronavirus pandemic. Living up to the spirit of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam', India has, in addition to fulfilling its domestic requirements, supplied essential medicines to more than 150 countries. India is committed to ensuring the availability of vaccine at the global level. It is a matter of pride for the country that 'Vande Bharat Mission', which is the biggest mission of its kind organized anywhere in the world, is being hailed universally. In addition to evacuating about 50 lakh Indians from various parts of the world, India has also enabled safe passage for more than 1 lakh foreign nationals to their respective countries.

Despite the impediments caused by Covid-19, India has strengthened its contacts and relations with other countries. During this period, India has further bolstered international cooperation by holding a large number of apex summits, multilateral events and official meetings. For the eighth time, this year India has joined the Security Council as a non-permanent member by garnering historic international support. India has also assumed the presidency of BRICS for 2021.

Today, as India eagerly forges ahead in the world, we have to be prepared to also fulfill commitments that are commensurate with its new identity. The year 2021 is significant for us for this reason also. A few days back, the country observed the birth of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose on 23 January as "*Parakram Diwas*". This year we are celebrating the 125th birth anniversary of Netaji. To celebrate this anniversary in a befitting manner, my Government has constituted a High Level Committee. We will also celebrate our venerable '*Guru Tegh Bahadur's 400th Prakash Parv*' with great reverence. Along with these commemorations, the '*Amrut Mahotsav*' marking the 75th year of India's Independence will also commence from this year.

We have to achieve new goals with the same strength of collective unity we displayed last year. In the past few years, India has accomplished many tasks which were once considered extremely difficult to achieve.

- After abrogation of provisions of Article 370 the people of Jammu and Kashmir, have been empowered with new entitlements.
- Citizenship Amendment Act has been passed by the Parliament.
- Country has started benefitting from the creation of a post of Chief of Defence Staff.
- Women’s participation in Armed Forces is increasing.
- Construction of a grand *Ram Mandir* has commenced after the Supreme Court judgement.
- India has registered a record improvement in the Ease of Doing Business ranking. Now, special emphasis is being laid on reducing Compliance Burden.
- India has moved up from 65 to 34 in the World Tourism Index ranking.
- Direct Benefit Transfer, which was being disregarded earlier, has facilitated funds transfer of more than Rs. 13,00,000 crores to beneficiaries during the last 6 years.
- Once we had only two factories manufacturing mobiles, whereas today, India is the second largest manufacturer of mobiles.
- Today, lakhs of middle class citizens are benefiting from Real Estate Regulatory Authority established under the Real Estate Regulation and Development Act.
- During this period, not only were new laws passed, but more than 1500 archaic and irrelevant laws were also repealed.

There are so many such decisions which have been taken in almost every sphere. My Government has demonstrated that when the goals set are high and the intent is clear, transformation can be brought about. The number of persons whose lives have been touched by my Government in these years, is unprecedented:

- more than 2.5 crore free electricity connections were given so that every poor person’s house is electrified.

- more than 36 crore LED bulbs were distributed at affordable rates to reduce the electricity bill of poor and middle class families.
- more than 21 crore poor were linked to ‘Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana’ for a premium just Re 1 a month, to ensure that in the eventuality of an accident, poor families do not have to run from pillar to post,
- about 9.5 crore people were insured under ‘Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana’ for a premium of just 90 paise a day so that in case of death of the bread earner, the family may receive some support.
- in order to ensure that infants from poor families do not get affected by serious illnesses, the Government not only increased the scope of the vaccination programme by including more diseases, but also took the vaccination campaign to even remote tribal areas which had hitherto not been covered.
- more than 3.5 crore children were vaccinated under ‘Mission Indradhanush’.
- to safeguard the entitlement for ration of the poor, 100 per cent digitisation of ration cards was completed and 90 per cent ration cards have been linked to Aadhaar.
- more than 8 crore gas connections were given free of cost under ‘Ujjwala Yojana’ so that the health of sisters and daughters from poor families is not adversely affected by smoke from the kitchen.
- more than 10 crore toilets were built under ‘Swachh Bharat Mission’ so that the dignity of sisters and daughters from poor families is maintained and they are not inconvenienced.
- ‘Pradhan Mantri Shram Yogi Maan-dhan Yojana’ was started so that poor persons including brothers and sisters engaged as domestic workers, drivers, cobblers, persons ironing clothes, farm hands etc. may also get pension.
- more than 41 crore Jan Dhan accounts were opened so that the poor may benefit from the banking system. More than half of these accounts belong to our sisters and daughters from poor families.

These are not just figures. Each of these number represents a life story. Several members of this Parliament have spent a large part of their lives in

similar difficult circumstances. The extent to which we can alleviate the suffering, pain and anxiety of our poor brethren and provide them basic amenities, empower them, increase their self-esteem, will help in imparting meaning to our presence in this Parliament.

I take pride in the fact that my Government, has been working in this direction continuously for the past 6 years with full commitment and honest intention, taking decisions and implementing them.

Jyotirindranath Tagore, the elder brother of Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore, the illustrious son of West Bengal, the land of valor, spirituality and talent, had penned a powerful patriotic song. He said :

**“Chol Re Chol Shobe Bharato Shantan,
Matribhumi Kore Aohan,
Birodarpe, Paurush Garbe,
Shadh Re Shadh Shobe, Deshero Kalyan”.**

That is,

Motherland is beckoning all the children of Bharat, to keep moving forward together; to move ahead with self-esteem and confidence of courage and aspire for the welfare of the nation.

Come,

Let all citizens move forward together.

Let us fulfil our duty and contribute to nation building,

Come, let us make ‘Bharat Atmanirbhar’.

I convey my best wishes to all of you.

Jai Hind.

ADDRESS TO PARLIAMENT — 31 JANUARY 2022

Lok Sabha	—	Seventeenth Lok Sabha
Session	—	First Session of the year
President of India	—	Shri Ram Nath Kovind
Vice-President of India	—	Shri M. Venkaiah Naidu
Prime Minister of India	—	Shri Narendra Modi
Speaker, Lok Sabha	—	Shri Om Birla

HONOURABLE MEMBERS,

We are in the third year of the pandemic caused by Corona-virus. In these years, people of India have displayed profound faith in the democratic values, discipline and sense of responsibility. At a time, when India is celebrating the Amrit Mahotsav on the occasion of 75th year of its independence, this willpower of every Indian creates immense confidence for India's bright future. With this confidence, I extend my greetings to every Indian from this historic Central Hall of the Parliament.

Addressing both Houses of Parliament assembled together today, I salute lakhs of freedom fighters who gave highest priority to their duties and secured the rights of India. I also salute all the great personalities for their contribution in the development-journey of our country in these 75 years of independence.

In this period of Amrit Mahotsav, special events related to great personalities of the country are also inspiring us. My government is celebrating the sacred occasions of the 400th Prakash Parv of Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji, the 150th birth anniversary of Sri Aurobindo, the 150th birth anniversary of V.O. Chidambaram Pillai and the 125th birth anniversary of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose with grandeur. From this year onwards, the Government has started the Republic Day celebrations from January 23, the birth anniversary of Netaji.

My Government believes that remembering the past and learning from it are equally important for a secure future of the country. Observance of 'Veer Bal Diwas' on 26th December in the memory of sacrifice of Sahibzadas and 'Vibhajan Vibhishika Smriti Diwas' on 14th August is a reflection of this thinking. The Government also decided to celebrate the birth anniversary of Bhagwan Birsa Munda on 15th November as 'Jan-jatiya Gaurav Diwas' as a tribute to him.

Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav is a sacred occasion for all the Indians to give concrete shape to the resolutions for the next 25 years. My Government is moving fast on building a strong foundation for the next 25 years following the mantra of 'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas, Aur Sabka Prayas'. The most important resolution related to this foundation is the creation of an India which includes all, benefits all, which is strong and self-reliant. The challenging period of Corona has inspired us to achieve our goals at the fastest possible pace.

The Covid pandemic affected the entire world and in India too, many of our loved ones were snatched away from us. In these circumstances, the Central Government, State Governments, local Governments and administration, our doctors, nurses and health workers, our scientists and entrepreneurs have worked as a team. This mutual trust, coordination and cooperation between the Government and citizens is an unprecedented example of the strength of our democracy. For this, I appreciate every health and front-line worker, and every citizen.

An example of India's capability in the fight against Covid-19 is evident in the ongoing Covid vaccination program. We have surpassed the record of administering more than 150 crore vaccine doses in less than a year. Today we are among the leading countries in the world with the highest vaccine doses administered. Success of this campaign has given a shield to the country providing enhanced protection to our citizens, while also boosting their morale.

Today, more than 90 percent adult citizens of the country have received the first dose of the vaccine, whereas more than 70 percent have been administered both the doses. The Government is also reaching out to the rest of the population through the 'Har Ghar Dastak' campaign. Adolescents in the age group of 15 to 18 years have also been included in the vaccination program from this month. Precautionary dose for the frontline workers and senior citizens with co-morbidities has also been started.

So far, eight vaccines have been approved for emergency use in the country. Three vaccines being manufactured in India have also got approval from the World Health Organization for emergency use. These vaccines manufactured in India are playing an important role in making the entire world free from the pandemic and in saving crores of lives.

The efforts of the country are not limited to addressing the immediate challenges in the fight against Covid pandemic. My Government is developing far-reaching solutions which would be effective and useful in future also. The launch of Pradhan Mantri Ayushman Bharat Health Infrastructure Mission with an outlay of Rs. 64,000 crore is a commendable example. This will not only help in meeting the current health requirements, but will also prepare the country for any future crises.

Health facilities are now easily accessible to the common people because of the responsive policies of my government. More than 80,000 health and wellness centres and crores of Ayushman Bharat cards have helped the poor immensely in getting treatment. Government has reduced the cost of treatment by providing affordable medicines through more than 8,000 Jan Aushadhi Kendras. 'Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission' is an important step in providing easy and accessible health services.

The Indian pharma sector has also proved its mettle during the Corona period. Presently, products of Indian pharma companies are reaching more than 180 countries. However, there is a wide range of opportunities for India in this sector. The PLI scheme announced by my government for the pharma industry will further expand the opportunities, and will also provide impetus to research.

Yoga, Ayurveda and traditional medical practices are also becoming increasingly popular due to the efforts of the government. The country used to export AYUSH products worth Rs. 6,600 crore in 2014. This export has now increased to more than Rs. 11,000 crore. India is going to establish the world's first 'WHO Global Centre of Traditional Medicine'.

The chief architect of our Constitution, Baba Saheb Doctor Bhimrao Ambedkar, had said:

"My ideal would be a society based on Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity... Democracy is not merely a form of Government... It is essentially an attitude of respect and reverence towards one's fellow men".

My government considers these ideals of Baba Saheb as its motto. My government believes in the mantra of Antyodaya, which encompasses social justice, equality, respect and equal opportunities. Therefore, in the policies of the Government, top priority is being given to villages, the poor, Scheduled Castes & Scheduled Tribes and backward communities. This spirit of India is clearly reflected in the selection for Padma awards in recent years. In a diverse country like India, dedicated people across the country are engaged in the service of the nation. They reflect the strength of India.

Several major countries have experienced scarcity of foodgrains and faced starvation during the Corona crisis. But my sensitive Government ensured that nobody remained hungry during the worst pandemic in 100 years. My Government is providing free ration to each poor household every month under the *Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana*. This is the world's largest food distribution program with an outlay of Rupees two lakh sixty thousand crore reaching out to 80 crore beneficiaries for 19 months. Being fully sensitive to the present circumstances, the government has extended this scheme till March 2022.

Government is also running the PM-Sva-Nidhi scheme for enhancing the self-esteem of the poor and protection of their livelihood also during the Corona period. This scheme is proving to be very useful for the street vendors. Under this scheme, more than Rupees 2900 crore have been provided to 28 lakh street vendors. The Government is also connecting these street vendors with online food delivery companies. Further, Government has started the e-SHRAM portal to protect the interests of labourers and more than 23 crore workers have joined it so far.

We can see the impact of Jan Dhan-Aadhaar-Mobile or JAM trinity which my government has leveraged for the empowerment of citizens. With more than 44 crore poor people joining the banking system, crores of people benefitted from direct cash transfer during the pandemic.

Amidst the progress made in respect of Digital India and Digital Economy, I also appreciate the Government's vision for the success of the country's UPI platform. Transactions worth more than Rupees 8 lakh crore have taken place in the country through UPI in December 2021. This is a clear example of how fast our people are adopting technology and rapid change.

My Government considers provision of basic amenities as a means of empowering the poor and enhancing their dignity. More than two crore

pucca houses have been provided to the poor under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana as a result of the efforts made in the last few years. Under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana - Gramin, 1 crore 17 lakh houses have been approved at a cost of about Rupees one and a half lakh crore in the last three years.

Launched with the aim of 'Har Ghar Jal', the Jal Jeevan Mission has brought about a huge difference in the lives of the people. Nearly six crore rural households have been provided tap water connection despite the constraints imposed by pandemic. It has been of huge benefit for the women, sisters and daughters in our villages.

The Svamitva scheme, launched to provide property documents to people in rural areas, is also an extraordinary initiative. So far, more than 40 lakh property cards have been issued in 27,000 villages under this scheme. These property cards are not only preventing disputes but are also assisting rural population in accessing banking support.

My Government is working continuously to empower the farmers and the rural economy of the country. Despite the pandemic, our farmers produced more than 30 crore tonnes of food grains and 33 crore tonnes of horticulture produce in 2020-21. The Government made record procurement to match the record production. The government procured 433 lakh metric tonnes of wheat during the Rabi season benefiting about 50 lakh farmers. A record quantity of about 900 lakh metric tonnes of paddy was procured during Kharif season, benefiting 1 crore 30 lakh farmers.

Our agriculture exports have also reached a record level due to the efforts of the Government. Agricultural exports registered a growth of more than 25 percent in the year 2020-21, and have reached nearly Rupees 3 lakh crore.

Horticulture and honey production are important means of generating new sources of income for farmers, as also to provide them better access to markets. Because of incentives provided to honey production, domestic production of honey has reached 1 lakh 25 thousand metric tonnes in 2020-21, an increase of about 55 percent compared to 2014-15. Export volume of honey has also grown by more than 102 percent as compared to 2014-15.

In order to ensure remunerative prices to farmers for their crops, it is necessary that their products reach the right market. In this direction, the

government has endeavoured to open new avenues of prosperity for the farmers by launching *Kisan Rail Seva*. During the Corona period, Indian Railways operated over 1,900 *Kisan Rails* on more than 150 routes to transport perishable food items like vegetables, fruits and milk, thereby transporting about 6 lakh metric tonnes of agricultural produce. This is an example of how new avenues can be created from the existing resources if the thinking is innovative.

I would like to give maximum credit to the small farmers of the country for this consistent success and strengthening the agriculture sector. Interests of the small farmers, who constitute 80 percent of the farmer-community, have always been central to our Government. Under the *PM-Kisan Samman Nidhi*, Rs. 1 lakh 80 thousand crore have been provided to more than 11 crore farmer families. With this investment, the agriculture sector is witnessing major transformations today. The small farmers of the country have also benefited from the new changes in the crop insurance scheme. More than Rupees one lakh crore have been given as compensation to about eight crore farmers since these changes were introduced.

Government is also making investments at an unprecedented level for developing infrastructure required near farmlands. Thousands of projects have been approved under the Agriculture Infrastructure Fund having a corpus of Rupees one lakh crore. In order to ensure self-sufficiency in edible oil, my government has also launched the National Mission on Edible Oils – Oil Palm with an outlay of Rs. 11,000 crore. Government is also making special efforts like organic farming, natural farming and crop diversification.

All of you are aware that the United Nations has declared 2023 as the International Year of Millets. My government will celebrate the International Year of Millets on a large scale with farmers, Self-Help Groups, FPOs, food industry and the common citizen.

My Government is also working sincerely for rain water conservation. Special campaigns are being implemented for creation of rain water harvesting infrastructure and restoration of traditional water sources in the country. Sixty-four lakh hectares of land with irrigation facilities has also been developed in the country with the help of various projects under the *Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana and Atal Bhujal Yojana*. The Government has also taken forward the plans for interlinking of rivers. Recently, the Ken-Betwa link project to be completed at a cost of Rs. 45,000 crore has also been approved. This project will be helpful in ending the water crisis in Bundelkhand.

Women are playing an increasingly important role in providing impetus to rural economy. Banks have extended financial help to the tune of Rs. 65,000 crore to more than 28 lakh Self-Help Groups in 2021-22. This is four times the amount extended in 2014-15. The Government has also provided training to thousands of members of the women Self-Help Groups and made them partners as 'Banking Sakhi'. These women are delivering banking services to rural households at the doorsteps.

Women's empowerment is one of the top priorities of my government. We are all witness to the success of *Ujjwala Yojana*. Entrepreneurship and skills of the mothers and sisters of our country have been promoted through the "Mudra" scheme. "Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao" initiative has yielded many positive results, and there has been an encouraging improvement in the number of girls enrolled in schools. Treating sons and daughters as equals, my Government has also introduced a Bill to increase the minimum age of marriage for women from 18 years to 21 years at par with men.

The Government has made a beginning to liberate the society from the manifestly arbitrary practice of Triple Talaq by making it a criminal offence. Restrictions on Muslim women from performing the Haj only with Mehram have also been removed. While about three crore students from minority communities were provided scholarships prior to 2014, my Government has provided scholarships to 4.5 crore such students since 2014. This has led to a significant reduction in the school dropout rate of Muslim girls and an increase in their enrolment.

A provision has also been made for Gender Inclusion Fund in the National Education Policy to promote learning capability among our daughters. It is a matter of happiness that all the existing 33 Sainik Schools have started admitting girl students. The Government has also approved the admission of women cadets in the National Defence Academy. The first batch of women cadets will enter the NDA in June 2022. With the policy decisions and encouragement of my Government, the number of women personnel in various police forces has more than doubled as compared to 2014.

The great saint Thiruvalluvar had said:

Karkka kasaddar karpawai katrapin,

Nirkka adarkka taga.

That is, what a person has learnt is reflected in his conduct.

My Government is implementing a new National Education Policy across the country to give shape to the resolve and potential of *Atmanirbhar Bharat*. Local languages are also being promoted through the National Education Policy. Emphasis is being laid on conducting important entrance examinations for undergraduate courses in Indian languages as well. This year, 19 engineering colleges in 10 States will start teaching in six Indian languages.

Under the Skill India Mission, more than 2 crore 25 lakh youth across the country have been skilled through ITIs, *Jan Shikshan Sansthan*s and *Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Kendras*. Many changes have also been made in the UGC regulations to link skills with higher education.

In the battle against Corona, six special training programs related to health care have been launched under the Skill India Mission. These are helping the health care sector.

Eklavya Residential Model Schools are being expanded to every tribal majority block for the education of tribal youth. These schools will empower about three and half lakh tribal youth.

We have all witnessed the potential of India's youth power during the Tokyo Olympics. In its best performance ever in this international competition, India won seven medals. In the Tokyo Paralympics too, Indian para-athletes set a record by winning 19 medals. In order to improve India's performance in the Olympics and sports, the Central Government along with the State Governments is setting up hundreds of Khelo India Centres in the country. The Government has also established Centres for Disability Sports in Gwalior with modern facilities to provide training to Divyang youth in para sports.

Accessibility, equality and a dignified life for *Divyang* people is our collective responsibility as a society. In this direction, Sugamya Bharat Abhiyan is a symbol of our national sensibility. The country is implementing several programs - from providing free assistive devices to Cochlear Implant surgery - in order to transform the lives of *Divyang* people. Under these programmes, more than 25 lakh assistive devices have been provided to *Divyang* people so far and about 4,000 successful Cochlear Implant surgeries have been performed. Taking these efforts forward, the Government has also established the National Institute of Mental Health Rehabilitation in Madhya Pradesh. A 10,000-word Indian Sign Language Dictionary has also been developed for the future of *Divyang* youth.

Our start-up industry is also an example of the infinite new possibilities that are rapidly taking shape under the leadership of our youth. Since 2016, sixty thousand new start-ups have been established in 56 different sectors in our country. More than six lakh jobs have been created by these start-ups. In 2021, during the Corona period, more than 40 unicorn start-ups have emerged in India, each with a minimum market valuation of Rupees 7,400 crore.

Because of the policies of my Government, the cost of internet connectivity and price of smartphones in India today are among the cheapest in the world. This has hugely benefitted our young generation. India is also working with great pace on 5G mobile connectivity, which will open doors to new opportunities. India's efforts on semiconductors will significantly benefit our start-up ecosystem. The Government has taken many policy decisions and opened up several new sectors so that our youth can benefit from rapidly changing technology. Through the Start-ups Intellectual Property Protection Program, the Government has simplified and accelerated the processes related to patents and trademarks. As a result, nearly 6 thousand patents and more than 20 thousand trademarks have been applied for in this financial year.

Due to consistent endeavours of my Government, India has again emerged as one of the fastest growing economies in the world. GST collection has consistently remained above Rupees one lakh crore during the last several months. Inflow of 48 billion dollars in the first seven months of the current financial year is a testimony to the belief the global investor community has in India's growth story. India's foreign exchange reserves today exceed 630 billion dollars. Our exports are also growing rapidly, breaking several past records. During April to December 2021, our goods-exports stood at 300 billion dollars or more than Rs. 22 lakh crore, which is one and a half times more than the corresponding period of 2020.

My Government has launched 14 key PLI schemes with an outlay of more than Rs. 1 lakh 97 thousand crore to fully realize the potential of the manufacturing sector and to create new opportunities for the youth. These PLI schemes will not only help transform India as a global manufacturing hub but also create over 60 lakh jobs. The domestic mobile manufacturing sector is a shining example of the success of the PLI scheme. Today India has emerged as the second largest mobile phone manufacturer in the world, generating lakhs of jobs for our youth.

In order to develop our country as a global leader in the field of electronics and technology hardware, the Government has also recently announced a package of Rs. 76,000 crore for silicon and compound semiconductor fabrication, display FAB, chip design and related ventures.

Along with developing new areas, my Government is restoring our traditional strength in domains in which we possess centuries of experience. In this direction, my Government has approved seven Mega Integrated Textile Regions and Apparel Parks with an investment of about Rs. 4,500 crore. This will facilitate integrated textile value chain. These mega textile parks will attract both Indian and foreign investors, and create lakhs of new employment opportunities.

Along with large companies, our small and medium enterprises have a critical role in India's prosperity. Our MSMEs have been the backbone of our economy and a driver of *Atmanirbhar Bharat*. In order to protect MSMEs from crisis and ensure adequate availability of credit during the Corona period, the Government started a scheme for guaranteed Collateral Free Loans of Rs. 3 lakh crore. It is evident from the recent studies that this scheme has given a fresh lease of life to 13 lakh 50 thousand MSME units and also secured 1 crore 50 lakh jobs. In June 2021, the government has enhanced credit guarantee from Rs. 3 lakh crore to Rs. 4.5 lakh crore.

Several policy decisions have also been taken to expand the scope and opportunities for the MSME sector. The new definition of MSMEs is helping small industries to expand. The Government has also permitted wholesale and retail traders, as well as street vendors to get themselves registered on the Udyam portal so that they can avail benefits of Priority Sector Lending.

The success of Khadi also deserves a special mention. Khadi, which was a symbol of the country's consciousness during the freedom struggle under the leadership of Bapu, is once again becoming the mainstay of small entrepreneurs. With Government's efforts, sale of Khadi products has trebled in the country since 2014.

Infrastructure is the foundation for development in any country. My Government also views infrastructure as a bridge to address social inequality. Investment in infrastructure not only generates lakhs of new jobs, but also has a qualitative impact, enhancing ease of doing business, facilitating faster transport and promoting economic activities across sectors.

My Government has integrated different ministries to work in a synergised manner under the Pradhan Mantri Gatishakti National Master Plan to accelerate infrastructure development. This plan is going to usher in a new era of multi-modal transport in India. In future, the railways, highways and airways in India will no longer be separate and isolated infrastructures, but will be an integrated resource to the country.

Construction of roads, resources and infrastructure in rural areas has opened up possibilities for the country which have been neglected for decades. The achievements of *Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana* are something to be proud of. In the year 2020-21, 36 thousand 5 hundred kilometres of roads have been built in rural areas, at the rate of more than 100 km per day, and thousands of habitations have been connected with all-weather roads.

Today, the national highways too are connecting the length and breadth of the country from east to west and north to south. As against 90 thousand kilometres of national highways in March 2014, today we have more than 1 lakh 40 thousand kilometres of national highways. Under the Bharatmala Project, construction of more than 20,000 kilometres of highways is in progress with an outlay of about Rs. 6 lakh crore, including 23 green expressways and green-field corridors.

The Delhi-Mumbai Expressway is also nearing completion; it will be the longest and fastest expressway in India. It is also a matter of privilege for my Government to start widening of Sant Dnyaneshwar Marg and Sant Tukaram Palkhi Marg connecting Pandharpur temple.

Today, while on the one hand the modern infrastructure of the country is opening ways for development, on the other hand it is also providing new strength to country's security. Border Roads Organization has constructed a transport-worthy road at 19 thousand feet, the highest altitude for such a road, at Umling-La-Pass in Ladakh. Even the most remote villages like Demchok in Ladakh, Joling Kong in Uttarakhand and Huri in Arunachal Pradesh have been connected by modern roads.

My government is also modernizing the Indian Railways at a fast pace. New Vande Bharat trains and new vistadome coaches have added new feathers to the Indian Railways. In the last seven years, 24,000 km of railway route has been electrified. Laying new railway tracks and double-laning are also progressing rapidly. Gandhinagar railway station in Gujarat and Rani Kamalapati railway station in Madhya Pradesh now provide new glimpse of

modern India. The railway arch bridge being constructed on the Chenab River in Kashmir is also emerging as a centre of attraction.

My Government has also done remarkable work in the field of public transport, enhancing ease of living for the poor and the middle class. Eleven new metro routes have commenced, benefiting lakhs of people in 8 States everyday. India is now also among the four countries in the world having largest driverless train networks. We have also developed Indigenous Automatic Train System in the country which symbolizes the growing capability of Make in India. The Government has also accorded approval for the construction of 21 greenfield airports in the country, among which is the country's biggest airport coming up at Gautam Buddha Nagar district in Uttar Pradesh.

More than 80 connectivity projects are also in progress under the Sagarmala program to connect the country's important commercial hubs with ports. So far, 5 existing National Waterways and 106 new waterways in 24 States have been declared as National Waterways, taking the total number of National Waterways to 111. Out of these, 23 waterways are viable for transportation of cargo. With the objective to modernizing infrastructure, more than 27 thousand circuit kilometres of transmission lines have also been laid by the Government.

In recent times, we have witnessed a new resolve of *Atmanirbhar Bharat* taking shape in the country. This resolve is getting further strengthened by the energy emanating from the slew of reforms. From new reforms in labour laws to reforms in banking sector, and to insolvency and bankruptcy code, this series of reforms is rolling on uninterrupted. Last year, more than 26 thousand compliance requirements have been reduced by different departments of Centre and States. Space sector has now been opened up for private sector, providing a horizon of endless possibilities. The formation of IN-SPACE last year is one such important step to enhance India's space capabilities.

My Government is also aware and proactive about the rapidly evolving drone technology and related opportunities. In this direction, the Government has notified the simplified Drone Rules 2021, and has also launched a PLI scheme for manufacturing of drones and drone-parts in the country. This will help India to secure its position in this critical technology of the future.

My government is working with utmost determination to ensure a safe and secure India. Due to the policies of the government in the defence sector, especially in defence production, the country is becoming increasingly self-reliant.

Of all the approvals accorded for modernization of armed forces in the year 2020-21, 87 percent were from 'Make in India' category. Similarly, in 2020-21, preference was accorded to 'Make in India' category in 98 percent of equipment related contracts. Our Armed forces have also issued a list of 209 military-equipment, which will not be purchased from abroad. A list of more than 2,800 defence equipment has also been issued by defence undertakings which will be manufactured domestically.

A contract has been signed with Hindustan Aeronautics Limited for manufacture of 83 LCA Tejas fighter aircraft. The government has also taken important steps for reorganization of Ordnance Factories into 7 Defence PSUs. Besides, the government is also committed to rapidly promote the private sector and start-ups in the defence sector. Our objective is that the products required by our Forces should be developed in India and also manufactured in India.

India has strengthened its standing in the rapidly evolving global environment through improvement in diplomatic relations. India chaired the United Nations Security Council in August 2021 and took several path breaking decisions. Under the presidency of India, for the first time, the Security Council held a comprehensive debate on the issue of maritime security. The Security Council, for the first time, adopted a Presidential Statement on this subject, and did so unanimously.

We have witnessed instability and volatility in our neighbouring country, Afghanistan. In spite of the prevailing situation, true to the spirit of humanity, India launched Operation Devi Shakti. Despite the challenging conditions, we successfully airlifted a number of our citizens and many Afghan Hindu and Sikh minorities from Kabul. We also brought back two swaroops of the Holy Guru Granth Sahib safely amidst difficult situations. From the humanitarian point of view, India is helping Afghanistan by delivering medical supplies and foodgrain.

Climate change is a major challenge confronting the whole world at present. India has emerged as a responsible global voice on the subject. At the CoP-26 summit, my government has announced that by 2030 India will reduce its carbon emission by 1 billion tonnes. India has also committed to

a target of becoming net zero emission economy by 2070. India has also taken the initiative of “Green Grid Initiative: One Sun, One World, One Grid” with the global community. It is the first international network of globally interconnected solar power grids. Our ambitions and resolves towards the environment are a testimony of our sensitivity towards nature.

My Government considers it a responsibility to preserve, enrich and empower India’s ancient heritage. It is a matter of pride that the Harappan site of Dholavira and the 13th century Kakatiya Rudreshwar Ramappa temple in Telangana have been declared as UNESCO World Heritage Sites. After the Kumbh Mela of Prayagraj, Kolkata’s iconic Durga Puja has also been included in UNESCO’s Intangible Cultural Heritage List.

It has also been a priority of the government that the priceless heritage of India should be brought back to the country. The idol of Maa Annapurna Devi, which was stolen from India a hundred years ago, has been brought back and installed in the Kashi Vishwanath temple. Many such historical artefacts are being brought back to India from different countries.

We are all aware that heritage and tourism are closely linked to each other. That is why, while India’s spiritual heritage is being rejuvenated, modern facilities and infrastructure are also being developed for the pilgrims and tourists. Swadesh Darshan and PRASAD schemes started by my government are playing a significant role in it.

The Fort Aguada Jail Complex has also been renovated and inaugurated on the occasion of Goa’s 60th Liberation Day. It is a memorial to the warriors of the unforgettable struggle to liberate Goa.

Today, in the Amrit Kaal of independence, our resolve of ‘Ek Bharat, Shreshtha Bharat’ is enabling us to write a new chapter of development on the basis of democratic values. Today the country is making special efforts for the states and regions hitherto left neglected.

The beginning of a new era of development in Jammu & Kashmir, and Ladakh region is a great example of this. My Government has started a new central sector scheme for the industrial development of Jammu & Kashmir at a cost of about Rs. 28,000 crore. Last year Qazigund-Banihal tunnel was opened to traffic. International flights between Srinagar and Sharjah have also started.

Many important steps have also been taken to provide better opportunities for education, health and employment to the people of Jammu

& Kashmir. At present, works are in progress on seven medical colleges and two AIIMS, one in Jammu and another in Kashmir. Construction of IIT Jammu and IIM Jammu is also going on in full swing.

The Sindhu Infrastructure Development Corporation has been set up to accelerate infrastructure and economic development in the Union Territory of Ladakh. Another chapter in this development journey of Ladakh is being added in the form of Sindhu Central University.

My Government is committed to sustainable development of all the states of the North East – Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim and Tripura. In these States, basic amenities and economic opportunities are being developed at every level. Rail and air connectivity are no longer a dream for the people of the North East, they are now able to experience them in reality. It is a matter of pride for the country that all the capitals of the North-Eastern States are now being brought on the railway map with the efforts of my Government.

A new airport is being set up at Hollongi, Itanagar. A modern new terminal has recently been opened at the Maharaja Bir Bikram Airport in Tripura. This development of North East will prove to be a golden chapter in India's growth story. Just a few days ago, January 21 marked the 50th anniversary of the creation of Meghalaya, Manipur and Tripura. The journey of these states, coinciding with 75 years of independence, is inspiring us for new resolves for their development.

Efforts of my government to establish peace in the North East have attained historic success. Just a few months ago, a settlement was reached between the Central Government, the State Government of Assam and the Karbi groups to end the decades-old conflict in Karbi Anglong. This has ushered in a new chapter of peace and prosperity in the region. Due to concerted efforts of my government, the number of Naxal affected districts in the country has also come down from 126 to 70 today.

My Government is committed to increase accountability of Government departments towards the citizens. All Ministries of Government of India are undertaking special drive for cleanliness and disposal of pending references. Under Mission *Karmayogi*, the Government has established the Capacity Building Commission for Civil Servants. Mission *Karmayogi* will be helpful for civil servants' career, and will also prepare them for new responsibilities of nation building.

Many important steps are also being taken in the country to make delivery of justice easier and more accessible. A platform has been set up for pre-litigation advice through tele-law program. To expedite the settlement of disputes, My Government has introduced the Mediation Bill, 2021 in the Rajya Sabha.

Today the country's achievements and successes are as limitless as the country's potential and possibilities. These achievements are not of one institution or establishment; these are the collective achievements of more than a billion citizens of our country. These are the fruits of the labour and sweat of billion plus people. These achievements are milestones in the long journey to achieve our ambitious goals, and are our motivations to move forward.

In the year 2047, the country will celebrate its centenary of independence. We have to work hard now for building a grand, modern and developed India of that time. We have to ensure that our hard work leads to fruitful results in the end. We all have a stake, and an equal stake in this journey.

I appreciate the manner in which all the Members of Parliament have discharged their responsibilities, and the two Houses have functioned with all precautions during this challenging time of Corona. You are the drivers of hopes and aspirations of crores of our people. It is with the same spirit that we have to keep working in future.

I have firm belief that together we will take our great *Bharatvarsha* to the pinnacle of its glory. With the same spirit, I once again congratulate all of you. My profuse thanks to all of you!

Jai Hind.