

## ADDRESS TO PARLIAMENT—23 JANUARY 1980

<b>Lok Sabha</b>	—	<b>Seventh Lok Sabha</b>
<b>Session</b>	—	<b>First Session after the 7th General Election</b>
<b>President of India</b>	—	<b>Dr. N. Sanjiva Reddy</b>
<b>Vice-President of India</b>	—	<b>Shri M. Hidayatullah</b>
<b>Prime Minister of India</b>	—	<b>Smt. Indira Gandhi</b>
<b>Speaker, Lok Sabha</b>	—	<b>Dr. Bal Ram Jakhar</b>

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.