

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 — Ekatm 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 Samridhi 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.