

[English]

THE PRIME MINISTER (SHRI RAJIV GANDHI) : Mr. Speaker, Sir, I am not an economist and, at the same time, I must say that on most such occasions economists disagree with each other as much as they agree with each other. When we talk about something like the Seventh Plan, the questions that are really in front of us are the political choices on the economic plans that have been given to us by the economists. The exercise has to be as political as it is purely economic because ultimately what we are working for is the development of the poorest people in the country.

I would like to give a quotation from Gandhiji who said :

“Recall the face of the poorest and the weakest man you have seen and ask yourself if the step you contemplate is going to be of any use to him.”

This is what we have kept in mind when we have formulated the Seventh Five Year Plan. Our thrust has been the poorest man has to become self-reliant and our goal must be growth with social justice. This Plan represents the collective effort of not only every one involved in the Central Government, but also in the Governments in all our States and Union Territories, and it is after every one has put his head together that we have produced the Seventh Plan which defines the objectives which we have set before the nation for the next five years. It is an instrument of consensus on the direction that we would like to give the country. Every plan must look at the problems at that particular time. Problems change as our developments are constantly changing and so there must be a positive outlook to tackle each problem as a new problem comes. But in tackling these new problems, we have tried not to deviate from the commitments of Panditji and Indiraji and the thrust, the directions, that we have given in this Plan, are those that were given by Panditji and Indiraji. The achievements of our planning process hardly need to be reiterated although I believe one of the Members from the opposite benches has said and if I may quote :

“The Sixth Plan has failed.”

I was just going to comment on that.

The Sixth Plan has been perhaps one of our most successful Plans.

(Interruptions)

[Translation]

Please let me speak for a while...

(Interruptions)

[English]

The Sixth Plan has been perhaps our most successful Plan. It has given us an average growth rate of approximately 5 per cent, higher than any other Plan and this has come about during a period of tremendous international problems on the developmental, financial and economic fronts India was one of the few countries which did not slide backwards. In fact, we performed better than we had ever performed. Some people think that this means failure ! In the Sixth Plan, the people below the poverty-line reduced from approximately 52 per cent in 1980 to 37 per cent in 1984. Hon. Members there feel that this is a failure. Perhaps he would like to have kept the poverty line with 52 per cent below it...

SHRI SAIFUDDIN CHOWDHARY : What is the position all over the country ?

(Interruptions)

AN HON. MEMBER : Statistically you can prove it, but not really.

SHRI RAJIV GANDHI : The Hon. Members have a vested interest in keeping people below the poverty-line, while we want to bring them up above the poverty-line. Their vested interest is to keep them below the poverty-line, because then they can criticise the Government.

SHRI SAIFUDDIN CHOWDHARY : You have to fight the vested interests. That is not taking place.

SHRI RAJIV GANDHI : But the proof is in the eating. We have shown the country that the promises that we make, we keep. And with due respects to my friend sitting across the House, that is why we are here and he is there. We saw the great planners sitting across this House when we were talking about the Sixth Plan...

SHRI SAIFUDDIN CHOWDHARY : We are not planners; we are learners.

SHRI RAJIV GANDHI :...in 1977-78 when suddenly the Plan started rolling. And as the Plan rolled, so the country rolled downhill.

Our Plans since 1952 have shown—not just India but shown the world—how a developing country can progress, how a developing country can consolidate, become self-sufficient and advance to the frontiers of science and technology in particular fields. We must congratulate not only our planners but also our scientists, technicians, our farmers, our workers, for this achievement...

SHRI SAIFUDDIN CHOWDHARY : That is right.

SHRI RAJIV GANDHI : I would like to thank the Hon. Member. Only with the guidance and direction of the Congress Government, this has been possible.

As I said, the priorities are in front of us—poverty eradication, social justice, self-reliance. The real question is how do we come about doing it. The basis is from our old policies. But we have to apply those policies, those thoughts, to India as it is today. If we look back to the First Plan and see what India was like and we see India today, there has been a tremendous change. The change has come about because of the Plan, and while keeping in mind the thoughts that were in the minds of Panditji at that time, we have to try and apply those thoughts to India as it is today. We cannot apply his methods for India then, thirty years later now. But his thoughts—yes; his ideas, his ideology—yes. That works even today provided we match it with the situation on the ground, with the development

that has taken place because of the policies of the policies of that period.

Punditji has said that if India is to advance, India must advance in science and technology. This has to be the basis of any development. Much has been said about appropriate technology. Of course, we only want appropriate technology. The question is what is appropriate for us. What is appropriate for us is seldom what is appropriate for the person who is trying to sell us something which he does not need any more.

We have to see that we get the best for the particular job that we have in mind. The best must relate firstly to the areas where we would like maximum development. We must start with agriculture. We must start with our farmer. Our farmer cannot progress without technology. Why have certain parts of the country had a green revolution? Because of the most advanced technology being brought to them. That has to be brought to the others.

At the same time we have got to look, to see how we can bring better technology to those that have become used to what is available to them. For agriculture, it is not only a question of giving better fertilisers or giving better seeds, giving better weather reports. We must also look at the technology for water management. How will we make the farmer to use less fertilisers to get better results? How we will make him to use less water to get better results? Conservation of our resources and an increase in the productivity on the other.

These two things can only happen if we use the best technology. Perhaps the biggest question, the farmer in India still faces is whether the monsoon is going to come on time. It is going to be ten days late or is going to be early? During the past few years there has been a tremendous change. Now we have satellites. He can switch on the television set, he can see whether clouds are there. He knows that in five days they will come. But it is still not accurate enough. We must be able to tell him whether we expect the monsoon or the rain in so many days. So he knows that and he ploughs his field now and is ready for it.

[Shri Rajiv Gandhi]

For this there is only one way. We have to get the most sophisticated super computer. There is no second way to go about it. If somebody says that high technology cannot help the farmer, he is absolutely wrong. It is not a question of appropriate technology which would today be interpreted to mean that we give him two bullocks but with a much better plough to pull behind the two bullocks. That does not help the farmer enough. We have to see, our target is to lift people up to a better living condition, to a better life. For this we have to have technology, technology starting with the farmer. Simple things to the most sophisticated things for better utilisation of water, fertilisers. Maybe we need some sort of cheap compact soil testing equipment which can tell him you put one bag of this fertiliser, but don't put that fertiliser. Something which can tell him don't put water for another four days.

These sort of things can be made available today. They can be developed cheaply enough for our farmers to be of practical use to our farmer. It is in these directions that we must give our thrust for technology. As the rural sector, the farm sector, increases its affluence, its other demands also start raising, and then this will spread to the whole of our industry.

Our thrust must next be on the small scale sector because that is where the next largest number of people are employed. Similarly we must see how the small scale can be benefited by new technology; how the small scale can be allowed to grow into the next larger size or bigger scale and somebody else comes into the small scale sector. The exercise must be of progression for all our people—small scale goes upto bigger, cottage comes to small and new people come into cottage. This sort of growth process must be there. Our policy should not be such that we clamp somebody into the small scale, and we clamp somebody into the cottage sector, and say if you jump or your production goes Rs. 5 more then suddenly you get hit by hard taxes so that the whole system becomes non-viable. There must be some growth potential built into the system.

Technology must also come into housing. Our housing is still too expensive. We must see how cost of housing can be reduced. It must be reduced to a level where it is available to the average person; it is available to the masses and not just to the few who can get access to it in the urban areas and in the towns and a few rich in the rural areas. We have done almost no work in this respect. Our houses are still constructed exactly they were maybe twenty-thirty years ago. There has been no real development in this line.

Education is one of the critical areas. Our system has delivered, it has helped India produce top-class scientists. It has helped India produce the best technologists. We have through our system produced top people in every field but today there is a dramatic change in development, in technology and in science and our education system is not ready or capable of coping with this load that is being put on it. And because of this deficiency in the system, or lack of flexibility in the system, we are generating a tremendous gap between the spiritual development of our people and their development technologically and scientifically. Our system must be designed to close this gap because only then really we will be able to use technology for the benefit of the country and mankind. If this gap grows, then we will become a slave of technology and technology will not be our slave to do our work. This is one of the more critical areas where a lot of thinking, a lot of discussion and debate is required and we hope that the new education policy will bring these ideas into fruition.

Our goals in the Seventh Plan have not changed. Our goal is to develop a socialist society and a society which gives full equality of opportunity; a society where disparities are removed; a growing dynamic society and not a static society tied down in itself. This again must be brought out by education.

We have recently clubbed together certain Ministries and labelled them 'Human Resources Development' not because we wanted to give a fancy paint job but because what we really want is to develop the human resources. Today from every corner people

yell 'population' what is happening ! What is happening ! Yes, it is one of our biggest problem. What we must do is to turn this problem into the biggest asset and that will happen if we are able to develop the human resources in our country and this is what we must attempt to do; develop them not just in teaching them technology, teaching them sciences or medicine or whatever...but also develop a sense of values and idealism, a commitment to the country, develop the cultural heritage that we have inherited. All this must be blended into one package.

We cannot do these things independently and expect to get one result. We have to see that our traditions, our heritage, the culture that is India today, does not remain static. Too often we are tied down to saying this is not what it was in the old book. We must also think ahead; we have to develop. Our culture is not just our art, our music, our dance. Our culture is how we live. It is our art, it is our music, it is our dance. But it is also chewing Plan and it is also all the other things that we do which we know are not good. Painting the walls, are colours this is all our culture. The culture is how we live and certain aspects of this have to be changed. The higher aspect of culture that is developed further must permeate down to the average Indian, must come down to the mass. It is no use having the best 'Bharat Natyam' closeted away in one little auditorium in Delhi. Whom does it serve, Sir? It does not go down to the people. So, this whole aspect must come under human resources development and that is why we have given perhaps the largest ever allocation to these sectors. We hope that with the input that we are getting from the country, we will be successful in producing a package which will achieve these ends.

Now, a criticism that I have been told by one of our friends across the House is that the public sector has been ignored (*Interruptions*) Partly I agree with my friend. But we have not ignored it. Certain States in the East yes, they have ignored it. (*Interrupt ions*)

MR. SPEAKER : Mr. Amal Dutta, have you heard it ?

SHRI RAJIV GANDHI : Sir, I have been very discreet. I did not mention any name, So, we were talking about the public sector. The public sector in this Plan has got the highest allocation that the public sectors ever had. And when we talk of the private sector, because our friends are interested in the private sector, who are we talking about in the private sector, Sir ? It is not the big industrialist. He constitutes a small percentage of the private sector. A very vast majority of the private sector is the small farmer and that is whom we are talking about and if you want to include public sector plus small farmer, I do not have the exact figure, but it must be a large proportion of our investment. Because they are the private sector, you might not like the label. But the fact in that the small farmer is the private sector and if you don't like it, you can try nationalising it in West Bengal.

SHRI SAIFUDDIN CHOWDHARY : We cannot make a plan. When we come to Delhi, we will do what is best (*Interruptions*)

SHRI RAJIV GANDHI : I do not know, Sir, May be they will do the 91st Plan. Sir, the public sector, as I said, has the highest allocation that has ever had. The public sector has been the key to our development, as an industrialised nation. It has been the path-finder of India's industry and even today it will be the path-finder in taking India's industry into the next generation of industrialisation. We have

18.00 hrs.

in many ways completed one cycle of industrial development. Now, we must go in to a more sophisticated cycle where quality, productivity and efficiency are vital and important. Every time an industry is inefficient, the cost is paid by the sacrifice of some anti-poverty programme. If a public sector unit loses a hundred crores there is a hundred crores less from some other productive programme. It is a hundred crores less from an anti-poverty programme.

Public sector is not there to make losses; it is not there as a social hand-

[Shri Rajiv Gandhi]

out to labour. We must understand this. Because if we are going to spend hundreds of crores in keeping a plant running to keep, may be two thousand labourers or workers employed, we can give them much better benefits without wasting that money on a plant which is not viable. This basic fact we must face. It might not be easy but we are not here to squander the money of the poorest people of India and we must not let it happen.

PROF. N. G. RANGA : It has been a white elephant till now.

SHRI AMAL DATTA : This is exactly our charge against you so far. I am glad you are admitting it now.

SHRI RAJIV GANDHI : What I was really talking about was the requests made by some of the Hon. Members who came to see me in the last session when they wanted us to nationalise some of their units.

SHRI AMAL DATTA : They can all be made viable. Just because of your managerial inefficiency they are not viable today.

SHRI SAIFUDDIN CHOWDHARY : All the institutions are becoming sick due to mismanagement; for example the Hindustan Construction Company Ltd.

SHRI AMAL DATTA : What about your steel industry ? You are losing crores of rupees (Interruptions).

SHRI RAJIV GANDHI : Somehow, Mr. Speaker, Sir, such concentrations of sickness seem to take place in one particular area.

SHRI SAIFUDDIN CHOWDHARY : If they are doing bad, it is your responsibility... (Interruptions).

SHRI RAJIV GANDHI : Do not feel so guilty about your public sector.

SHRI SAIFUDDIN CHOWDHARY : We are saying that public sector is not doing well and that is your responsibility. You cannot say, it is bad and so, give it up. Make it efficient.

SHRI RAJIV GANDHI : We should have big injections which we keep giving to West Bengal to keep it up. We will send you a crate of glucose injections.

SHRI SAIFUDDIN CHOWDHARY : What is due to everybody should be given.

SHRI RAJIV GANDHI : Some times we give what is due to everyone like we did in the last Plan. I can only talk of the last Plan at the moment. One particular State got a very high allocation for power. They complained of no power and low generation and I believe almost a thousand crores in the particular State was left unspent in the Sixth Plan because they did not use it for power generation.

SHRI AMAL DATTA : Do you mean that the money was there and it was not spent ? ... (Interruptions).

SHRI RAJIV GANDHI : I would like to have a clarification. Did this happen in West Bengal, because the Hon. Gentleman got up and asked this ?

SHRI SAIFUDDIN CHOWDHARY : Why should you be so parochial to industrial that we can ask questions about West Bengal only ?

SHRI RAJIV GANDHI : I did not mention any State. The Hon. Member felt that it happened there.

MR SPEAKER : No interruptions please. Please do not get agitated.

SHRI AMAL DATTA : Last year in spite of 8th Finance Commission's recommendations, West Bengal was denied Rs. three hundred crores. Please do not forget that.

SHRI RAJIV GANDHI : That is why some States took Rs. three hundred crores of worth of overdraft.

SHRI SAIFUDDIN CHOWDHARY : allow this thing to go on? What is this
rose.....(Interruptions) going on. Not allowed.

MR. SPEAKER : Mr Chowdhary—not
allowed. I have been too lenient. Take your
seat now.

(Interruptions)*

SHRI RAJIV GANDHI : If the Hon.
Member is calmed down and cooled down,
with your permission, I can continue Sir.

SHRI AMAL DATTA : I do not want
to controvert the Prime Minister every time,
but I can only wish that he knows things
before mentioning. Unfortunately, speaking
and showing ignorance by the Prime
Minister I cannot appreciate.

MR. SPEAKER : The problem with
Amalji is that he always gets carried away.

SHRI RAJIV GANDHI : I am very
sorry if I speak and show their ignorance.

SHRI RAJIV GANDHI : Our basic
thrust is, like I said, alleviation of poverty.
In alleviating poverty, we have to, on the
one hand, do major projects which will be
productive and through higher productivity
generate wealth, which we must then deploy
in anti-poverty programmes and a certain
proportion back into the productive pro-
grammes. Our anti-poverty programmes
have been extremely successful during these
last five years. We have strengthened them
and we have modified them slightly where we
felt that there were some weaknesses. We
hope that with the anti-poverty programmes
and with the major development projects in
the Seventh Plan, our poverty level will drop
down to 25 per cent at the end of the
Seventh Plan.

SHRI AMAL DATTA : It is not our
ignorance. You are stating that a thousand
crores of rupees were unspent. It is not the
question. The money was not simply there.
And it is their fault, if the money was not
there. When we asked Rs. 300 crores, it was
denied to us right away.

SHRI RAJIV GANDHI : I believe that
the Hon. Member is talking about some de-
ficiency in West Bengal during Sixth Plan. I
was not referring to any specific State.

SHRI AMAL DATTA : You were re-
ferring to West Bengal.

SHRI SAIFUDDIN CHOWDHARY :
That will be a great thing.

SHRI RAJIV GANDHI : Obviously, he
knows something which I do not know.

SHRI RAJIV GANDHI : You will have
noticed that the only part of the House that
was happy at the poverty line dropping was
that part of the House.

SHRI AMAL DATTA : We are members
of Parliament. We have a right to know.
We represent the nation. You can make it
clear as to which State you are referring to.
It is no good making ambiguous statements
in Parliament.

SHRI SAIFUDDIN CHOWDHARY :
What is there? I express my happiness.
What is wrong in it?

(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER : You always get too
much agitated when you speak. You are
carried away by your vehemence.

SHRI V. SOBHANADREESWARA RAO :
The other part of the House is responsible
for increasing the poverty line.

(Interruptions)

(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER : Nothing goes on re-
cord. Are you not tired now? How can we

SHRI AMAL DATTA : can scarcely
believe their statistics, poverty line going
down and all that.

[Translation]

SHRI BALKAVI BAIRAGI (Mandsaur) :
Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Prime Minister has
caught them red-handed today.

[English]

SHRI RAJIV GANDHI : In this plan,
we have generated perhaps the highest
number of mendays that have ever been
generated till now. We estimate that 40
million jobs will be generated during this
Plan.

SHRI AMAL DATTA : All anticipations !

MR. SPEAKER : Does it hurt you ?

SHRI RAJIV GANDHI : You know
Sir, some people are upset when poverty is
removed. Some people are upset when jobs
are created. What can we do about that ?

SHRI AMAL DATTA : We shall be
the only people who would be helping you.
The other side will not help you.

SHRI SAIFUDDIN CHOWDHARY :
Take it in good sense.

SHRI AMAL DATTA : Your prede-
cessor knew it when we came to her rescue.

PROF. N. G. RANGA : You can help
by making the public enterprises profitable.

SHRI RAJIV GANDHI : That, I would
accept. I would like to thank the Hon.
Members. We entirely agree with him. We
would not have been here, if it were not for
them. They showed the country what they
could do. That is why the country elected
us. Thank you very much.

SHRI SAIFUDDIN CHOWDHARY :
It is all aid.

SHRI RAJIV GANDHI : In completing
the Seventh Plan, perhaps our biggest pro-
blem will be mobilisation of resources. And
we must look at it not just from the positive
side of mobilising more resources for which

we must do everything, but we must also see
how we can use our resources more efficiently;
whether it is power, whether it is a particular
industry, whether it is in agriculture, efficiency
has to be the key word. Because with the
demand of growth from the people, there is
no other way except the maximum mobili-
sation of whatever resources we have. This
will involve a strong will on all our part.
And I am sure that even some Members
from the Opposition will help us in this task.
We will need a certain dedication, a certain
commitment to the country, to our basic
values, a certain selflessness to achieve the
task that we have set out for ourselves. This
cannot be done by just one group or another
group, it has to be a task which is done by
all of us working together. It has to be a
cooperative endeavour not just within this
House, but all over the country involving
746 millions of our people. It will require
sacrifices and it will require a certain dedi-
cation and commitment to India; Swadeshi,
as Gandhiji would have said. Swadeshi today
has changed a lot. It is not limited to the
only one or two items which were Swadeshi
40 years ago. That is part of our develop-
ment. But the basic voice that Gandhiji
raised for Swadeshi has not changed. That
we must keep in mind, because it is only
with that, that, our plan will get the required
thrust that it needs.

MR. SPEAKER : Now we will take up
half an hour discussion. Shri Suresh Kurup.

SHRI SURESH KURUP (Kottayam) :
Mr. Speaker, Sir....

(Interruptions)

SHRI V. SOBHANADREESWARA
RAO : Prime Minister has said many things
about agriculture, except remunerative
prices.

SHRI SAIFUDDIN CHOWDHARY :
Land reform is the basic thing, he has not
at all mentioned it.

MR. SPEAKER : It comes in that.
