

The Special Session of the 13th Lok Sabha

AGENDA: Reckoning with the Attack on the Indian Parliament and the Republic's Demand for the Prevention of Terrorism Act

FREEZE DATE: December 18, 2001

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“Terrorism has become a festering wound. It is an enemy of humanity.”

— Atal Bihari Vajpayee

On December 13, that wound cut straight into the heart of the Indian Republic. Gunfire has stopped, but reverberations haven't. Terror forced its way into the nation's most sacred democratic sanctum and opened fire on the very chamber where the mandate of a billion people becomes law. The Parliament of India was sieged, its sandstone walls torn by bullets and its members metres away from an unprecedented national rupture. In those minutes, India confronted a truth it could no longer ignore in the 21st century, the Republic is not insulated. Terror has evolved, in method, in ambition, and in its choice of targets.

The attack unfolded in an uncertain new world forged in the crucible of 9/11. Nine Indians became victims of what should have been an unremarkable winter day inside the country's most secure institution. The nation was left reeling as it pondered: *Was this Pakistan striking back after the humiliation of Kargil, or was there a darker hand within our own borders?*

With the Prevention of Terrorism Ordinance already in effect and pressure building for its conversion into a permanent Prevention of Terrorism Act, India faced a recurring question, how much power can a democracy surrender in the name of defending itself? Supporters demand exceptional tools for exceptional threats, but India's own history warns otherwise. MISA normalised sweeping detentions; TADA empowered the State far beyond necessity. POTA risks becoming the next entry in this lineage, framed as security reform but functionally primed for excess, opacity, and selective enforcement.

If the Parliament, the beating heart of Indian democracy, can be threatened so brazenly, what does it imply for the courts, the states, the civil administration, or the ordinary citizen who believes the Republic's institutions still stand safe? Someone, somewhere, failed and yet in this moment of vulnerability, the House stands divided, its coalition government strained by competing compulsions at a time when unity should be instinctive.

The stakes could not be higher as this House convenes. Every word spoken, every position taken, and every decision made will shape not only how India responds today, but how it defends itself in the years to come. The weight of the Republic now rests on each of you, the Parliamentarians.

Jai Hind!