

This year there is one thing new; not only the people assembled here are able to see me but people in 2,400 villages spread over in six States in the country are able to participate along with us in today's historic function. They also are able to witness this historic occasion and hear whatever is happening. Something new has happened not only in the history of India but, perhaps, also in the history of the entire world when rural programmes have been started through the satellite at a time when TV has not covered fully even the cities. For this achievement we are grateful to our young and bright scientists, whose work and labour have enabled India to take a big stride towards progress. Similarly, during this year our scientists performed another great feat when they put a satellite in space. You all have heard about the satellite, Aryabhata. All this is symbolic of the nation's progress.

We have unfurled the flag here today and we do so every year because it represents our urge cherished since pre-Independence days, to unfurl free India's flag on the ramparts of the Red Fort. An opposition leader once remarked : what is this flag, but a mere piece of cloth! Surely, this is a piece of cloth but one for which thousands of freedom fighters had sacrificed their lives. For this same piece of cloth our brave soldiers painted the Himalayan snow. with their blood. This piece of cloth is symbolic of the unity and strength of India. It is because of this that we revere this piece of cloth and always keep it aloft. We are never to let it dip low and every Indian, high or low, man or woman, young or old or child, has to remember this always. This is a piece of cloth all right, but it is dearer to us than our lives.

Like the calumny about the national flag, misunderstanding was also created recently about our Independence. Freedom is not a magic which can independently eradicate poverty and remove our difficulties. Independence only opens a door, which removes the stagnation of centuries. That is all that Independence means. It does not mean the licence to do whatever we may want to do. Rather it offers us an opportunity to do our duty.

Independence does not merely mean a Government by Indians. It

means that the Government should be capable of taking independent decisions courageously. It must also mean that such a Government should be capable of thinking independently in the interest of the country as well as in the interest of world peace. All this together would mean Independence.

We became free not to destroy whatever we had or violate our cherished ideals, but because we had to lift the people, who had remained oppressed for centuries and also because we had to fight and vanquish the evils that had crept in due to feudalism, casteism and superstitions, and which were responsible for our backwardness. We must do away with them and uplift the country to progress. It was for this that our great leaders guided us and opened the door of Independence.

Since we became free, much has happened in the country and we have made a lot of progress. I have referred to the Aryabhata and also to the other communication satellite, but apart from that we have made great progress in every direction, including agriculture, industry, education and health. It is true that the benefits of this progress have not reached the poor, nor could that happen immediately. We have first to lay strong foundations for the country and all these years we have been busy laying those foundations. All of you know the difficulties that we encountered and all of you, who are assembled here and the millions who are listening to my voice as well as those who are able to see me in the distant States, have gone through difficult times and faced difficulties courageously. And, because you had courage, hope and faith, you were able to surmount those difficulties.

The path we chose ourselves was the path of democracy. But, what does democracy mean? Like freedom, democracy too does not mean that everybody is free to follow his individual path. People can opt for themselves policies, they can follow a different line of thinking, they can raise their voice of protest, but all this has to be done within a certain set of rules. They cannot adopt a course that would cause pain to others or weaken the country or allow alien influences to condition our policies and

tamper with our course. I have just now said that we take our decisions independently. For some years, and particularly at the present juncture, false propaganda and rumours are being indulged in, but I wish to reiterate that our policies are not the policies of one or the other power bloc.

We do not belong to this or that bloc, nor do we belong to any third bloc. We go ahead keeping in view only the interest of India. I want to make it clear that we have never allowed any other country to interfere in our affairs. We are not letting it happen now and we will not let it happen ever. This does not mean that we do not want friendship with other countries. We want friendship with all, particularly with our neighbours, with whom it is necessary to have friendship and co-operation. Our endeavour is to develop friendship and co-operation even with those countries who are not our neighbours, because in the world of today we have to move together and help each other. Because we are not moving together and because quite often we let tensions arise, the world is not able to progress the way it ought to, and science and new discoveries are not able to benefit millions and millions of people who must benefit from them. Amid all tensions, disputes and misunderstandings, our policy has always been to remove misunderstandings, and wherever there are disputes, try to settle them through discussions and conciliation, rather than war.

Within the country also we have followed the same policy. Unfortunately, some people thought that they had to adopt a different course. This different course did not represent any particular policy because people subscribing to different points of view had joined hands together. These people did not see eye to eye with each other either regarding the country's foreign policy, or its policy at home, and yet they joined together. It cannot be claimed, therefore, that the agitation was started on the basis of some policy.

We saw that very many evils which existed earlier spread further. They increased instead of decreasing. Why did that happen? Why did indiscipline spread? The students were exhorted to stay away from schools and colleges, the workers were asked to stop work in the factories. Thus,

whether one was in administration or in any other profession indiscipline infiltrated everywhere. Everyone thought of taking advantage of the opportunity and serving his own selfish interests. Everyone forgot about the country and did not keep in mind the direction we had to follow, the programmes we had to implement, the long journey we had to make the difficulties confronting us, and the dangers we faced.

Despite the progress that we had otherwise made, the last year, as you all know, was a year of economic difficulties. There was inflation, increased unemployment and scarcity of essential commodities. This situation prevailed not only in our country, but in the entire world. We did not lose heart and we boldly faced the situation. We took strong measures against black-marketing, hoarding, smuggling and corruption, and these measures started to have their impact on rising prices.

But these measures did not make our opponents happy. On the contrary, it somehow infuriated them further. They decided, therefore, to launch all over the country the Gujarat and Bihar type movements, aimed particularly against the Central Government. The opposition consisted of many parties, including the factions, who did not believe either in democracy or in non-violence. You can very well visualise what would have happened to the country had such an agitation been allowed to be launched. Would it not have added to the misery of the people? Would it not have weakened the country? Such would have been the consequences at any time, more so, at a time when in a changing world we are faced with all kinds of dangers and the people are greatly concerned with their survival and progress. You can very well imagine the impact of launching of such an agitation at such a time would have had on our children and on everybody else.

We, therefore, had to take certain stringent measures after careful thought. We took these measures with a heavy heart but we were helpless. In a way, it created an unusual situation, but in a sense these measures were taken to arrest the unusual situation that had continued for some years. You have seen the impact these measures have had. The prices

started falling, and we witnessed a new wave of discipline. The students who were not prepared to sit for their examinations took them voluntarily. The people in every walk of life also applied themselves to their tasks.

Some prices did increase recently but this price increase is a common phenomenon during the monsoon. There have been natural calamities also. In Bihar, U.P., Punjab, Assam and at some other places there were serious floods. I have deep sympathies with the flood-affected people, and we are making all efforts to provide relief to them as soon as possible.

But, with all this we can claim that the rate of price rise, which had not been controlled even last year, has been totally arrested this year. The rate of increase in unemployment also had been halted last year but unemployment exists and it can be removed only when we accept discipline and increase production. It will be removed when all students or teachers, traders or consumers, writers or artists or those belonging to thousands of other professions--would stop thinking only of themselves. Only when they become an instrument of change in their profession and community, the country will truly be able to progress fast.

It is our earnest endeavour to look after those members of the opposition who do not happen to be outside. I have written to the Chief Ministers to instruct their officers to ensure that no injustice or excess is done. All law-abiding citizens must always be helped. Whether it is the police or other officials, they must act as friends of the people. If any person sincerely realises that he has committed a genuine mistake, he should be helped to be reformed.

The present occasion is similar to the one when with great hopes free India's flag was first unfurled, as you might recall, not here but at the India Gate in New Delhi. We had felt that a new opportunity had come our way. Soon after we were engaged in solving a number of problems; evils like indolence, corruption, inefficiency crept in. Since we were busy tackling more important issues, these evils got a chance to grow. Today, we have an opportunity to eradicate them, set right our national policies and work

unitedly as one man to build a new India. Every nation is faced with some problems. Whatever the problems, India has always tried to solve them during peace and war, with patience and courage.

I see a large number of our brave soldiers, of Army, Air Force, Navy and police in front of me. People at times tend to refer to the police in inimical terms. But they too are sons, brothers and fathers, as they also are from among the people. If sometimes they err, they should be directed to the right path and create an atmosphere of friendship and cooperation.

We have always been proud of our brave soldiers, and we always will be proud of them. They brave the seasons and guard our frontiers with determination. They know that it has never been our policy to attack any country; our policy has always been that of friendship. We have always to be vigilant but we will not launch an offensive, except against aggression.

Today, a new opportunity has presented itself to us to move forward, particularly on the economic front. With the co-operation and help of the people, the pace of progress can be accelerated. I have been receiving offers of co-operation from groups of people, including students, and I am glad that they are now concentrating upon their studies. Many of them are simultaneously devoting themselves to social service. The workers are engaged in increasing production. The farmers, as always, are engaged in hard work. I am glad that the rains have been good this year and their labour will certainly yield a good harvest.

All of us have a duty to perform. We have the duty to work for the advancement of our community and bring about in it a new awareness. We also have to consider what each one of us can do, not only in of his or her own field, but also in respect of tasks concerning the community. Take, for example, the question of cleanliness of your house, its vicinity and the roads. It is not the duty of the Government or a Municipality or of certain officials alone to ensure cleanliness. It is the duty of the entire public, of each and every citizen. Similarly, there other things to take care of. There should be no wastage; we may buy only what is absolutely necessary; we should not hoard. If the prices go up, housewives should try to find out why

it was happening and whether they could check it. Whenever there has been a collective efforts, they have always succeeded. We have also to save our forests by planting more trees. The people have also to ensure the success of the family planning programme. There are many other activities, which may be called governmental activities that affect each one of us, as also the future of the country. All of us should work together to make these programmes a success. We have to show a new way to our children.

We were not happy to declare emergency, but we had to under the compulsion of circumstances. But, every dark cloud has a silver lining. Stringent measures were taken just as bitter pills have to be administered to a patient in the interest of his health. We should use the opportunity to cleanse the political, economic and other aspects of the national life, and bring some charm and freshness to it. We have learnt a lot from science, but we have to learn much more. We are no better or worse than other countries. Every country has its good points and bad points and so have we.

But, India has also its tradition of honouring sacrifice and service. Its special characteristic has been to develop spiritual strength. While we may learn many things from other countries and not close our minds to new ideas, we cannot ignore the roots we have in our culture. Our culture stands for a synthesis of the spiritual and scientific values to evolve a new man. This is the demand of times and the need of the society.

Many years ago, Jawaharlal Nehru had said: "Freedom is in peril, defend it with all your might." I would reiterate Freedom is not endangered by our not allowing some people to speak out. It is not a good thing to impose this restriction and it has to go. I have emphasised this on two earlier occasions. But freedom is imperilled when we forget to understand the true meaning of freedom and of democracy and when we don't realise where the interests of the nation lie. If we have to save our freedom we have to bring about once again the unity, determination and courage which will enable all to work unitedly and increase production.

It is the endeavour of the Government to remove obstructions that hamper progress. At the same time, we have to consider how these hurdles were created. The obstacles came because some people were bent on exploiting the situation to their advantage. Had those people not taken undue advantage, there would have been no need to curb their activities. All of us have to ponder over these problems. Real freedom will come when we remove poverty from the country. Real democracy will come when socialism and secularism are fully established. Some people, who in the recent past kept raising slogans of democracy, did not believe in socialism and were in fact indulging in communalism.

Now is the time for us to think afresh over all these problems. We have also to understand the functioning of the Government. Some people accuse me of concentrating all power in my hands. But the orders that I may give have to pass down to Ministers and then on to big and small officers at various levels and finally to the patwaris in the villages. In the process, the orders are sometimes implemented and sometimes not. At times, some people inadvertently modify these orders. At other times, they get altered deliberately. Some people exploit the orders to their advantage, while some others are always busy preventing their implementation. All these things happen, and this is the one main reason why we could not implement some of our major policies.

I meet not thousands but millions of people. There would hardly be any person in the world, who would meet such a large number of people coming to me almost every day from all corners of the country. I receive many reports every day, but the country is so vast that it is not possible to get all the information. Some information comes late and some does not come at all. Therefore, all of you, wherever you might be, have to bear in mind that it is our duty to defend democracy, I have to see that the programme of eradication of poverty moves vigorously ahead, despite attempts by powerful elements to obstruct it. I have to ensure that the streets, the villages and the cities remain clean and beautiful. I have also announced the 20-Point Economic Programme. There are many big and



small tasks to complete. Until and unless everyone of us does not accept his or her responsibility with regard to these tasks, the danger of mutilation of these programmes will always remain.

There is a new thinking today and the people should ponder over it deeply. They should not be swayed by slogan-mongering. They should not vacillate and be misled. Instead, they should move resolutely and keep their objective in view. When that is done, as I have emphasised many a time, no one would be able to stop India from marching ahead. No one, within or without, who is opposed to India becoming strong, can prevent it from marching ahead. We have, therefore, assembled here today to take the pledge to work hard, to make sacrifices and to serve the nation, in order to achieve real freedom and democracy. This pledge has to be taken by all, both young and old, in order to build the nation that may draw from our tradition and also benefit from the modern knowledge.

We are gradually developing our resources, but our greatest assets are our courage, morale and self-confidence. Only when these remain unwavering, will we be able to build India of our dreams. Only then will we be able to serve the poor, provide adequate employment to the people of all religions and classes, and keep our pledges to provide them with their requirements. I ask you all to have confidence in yourself and in the future of the country. Ours is not an easy path; it is full of difficulties, bristling with thorns. It is not a path of rest and respite, but of hard work. But, if you move on this path you will be able to find a new world, you will achieve a new contentment, because you will realise that you are building a new India and creating history.