

Today again is the birthday of Free India. I greet you all. We come here every year to unfurl the flag. This is no mere ritual or custom; it is a duty.

This is the day when we recall those years when people of all religions, all castes, all languages, all States, rich and poor, women and men, old and young, were all one and united. What was our slogan? 'We may lose our head but India must become free'. To achieve this goal we did not care for the insults and humiliations inflicted on us, and, put into our freedom struggle all our physical, material and moral resources. Many families were ruined, many lakhs of people sacrificed their lives and many jails were filled. In this Red Fort itself, there were prisoners who had passed through the jaws of death. There is no village in India which does not have its own saga of courage and bravery of its people. Today, we remember all that and pay our homage to those freedom fighters whether they were in our peaceful and non-violent movement or whether they followed other paths. Today we have to tell these old accounts of freedom struggle specially to our younger generation, because it is from that seed that the New India is sprouting. The plant is still frail, we have to nurse it with our sweat and hard labour, and with all the care make it grow just as we plant trees to make India green.

I had spoken from this place a year ago. During this year, like in other years, you have faced many difficulties. Your problems are known to me and I view them not only as a Prime Minister but also as a woman and a mother. But, if there were problems and difficulties- and they exist also- there were successes and achievements too. APPLE, which was inaugurated yesterday, is one such achievement. For the first time, through this satellite APPLE, not only those who are present here but lakhs of others in different parts of the country are able to listen and watch today's function and thus participate in it. This is not a small achievement for a nation which only a few years back was enmeshed in the mire of colonialism.

You may ask that if we can perform such big tasks for which we are

all proud and happy and congratulate our scientists and engineers, why is it that we do not accomplish other lesser jobs? Why cannot we control prices? This is a moot question. The prices are still high and I know the difficulties you face, specially my sisters who have to run the homes. I would, however, like to tell you that though prices have not come down, the rate of increase in prices has certainly been controlled to some extent and the situation is improving gradually. There are many reasons for the rise in prices. One is less production and we are engaged in increasing it. But another reason is-- we have some selfish people in our country, as elsewhere also, who try to take advantage out of such problems. In trying to satisfy their self-interest, they forget the overall interest of the country. Even today, hoarding, blackmarketing and profiteering are going on, because those who indulge in these anti-social activities had received encouragement a few years back and have still not come into our net. Although in some areas there has been some impact of the action taken by us, it is still not as much as it should have been. People demand from us as to why we do not take stern measures. But, if we try to take even slight stiff steps, so many obstacles come in the way. Some steps have been taken and these have had some effect; more such measures will certainly be taken against the anti-social elements.

Some shortages occurred because of the nature and the weather and sometimes even because of our mistakes. However, we are making an all out effort to increase production. In fact, agricultural production has gone up. As you all know, agricultural production this year has been exceedingly good. You may ask: If wheat production has gone up, why are we importing wheat? This is because here, in the country, an effort is being made by some people to purchase and hoard it with a view to raising the prices later. This may cause suffering to many people, especially the poorest or those who live in remote areas. This is why, even though we did not need it immediately, we made the purchase as wheat was available easily and at low prices abroad. As one should be prepared all the time to face problems, we took this step so that we may protect our people from

difficulties.

There has been increase in industrial production also. Our emphasis has been to improve the infrastructure on which depends all production, progress and development, whether of the farmers or of the factories. There has thus been growth in energy, coal and rail transport system though we have not been able to accomplish all that is needed.

In these years, there has been considerable improvement in social services like health, education and others. Even then it is not enough and we cannot reach them to the people. Why? Because, while these services increase, our population increases at a still faster rate. So, whatever may be the number of new schools, colleges and universities, and, howsoever many new hospitals and dispensaries are opened, the number of people who need them is always more.

Whether it is a question of inflation or population or any other question, the job cannot be completed unless there is fullest co-operation from all of you. The Government has heavy responsibility which, through your vote, you have entrusted it with; but in a democracy the ordinary citizen also has an equal amount of duties. The atmosphere gets vitiated if people are spendthrift and keep on buying things whatever may be the price and whether they need a thing or not. I would even say that in these difficult times anyone who acts against the interest of the society acts against the nation. How to check these elements? Laws and rules are made but they cannot always be fully implemented because it is not for the government alone to implement them. At different levels, many people contribute to complete this work and the slightest lapse anywhere can dislocate the entire programme and the policy. We want your co-operation in this also. I do not mean in the least that you take law in your hands. I want to say that you should create such an atmosphere in the society that people who want to do wrong things are not able to prosper and are identified and made to feel ashamed before others. If you create such an atmosphere, you will see how quickly the situation can be reformed.

Whatever we do now, like this purchase of wheat from abroad, some

people raise their voices against it. Who are behind them? Voices are raised by people because they are provoked to do so by others. What are the forces behind them? It is these forces that want that the prices of foodgrains should go up in the market, not that the farmers should get a higher price.

There are many such things which either get stuck in the courts or some other obstacles come in the way, because of which they remain unresolved and get delayed. We have to create a new atmosphere in our society so that everybody may understand his duties. Like the freedom fighters I just mentioned, all of you have also to act as soldiers to safeguard the freedom. You have to involve yourself in this task with the same spirit of sacrifice and service. This is not someone else's work, not of any Government or of any political party only. This is the work of the country, of the common citizen of India, of the poor, of the backward, of the middle class, in fact, of all the people. In the conditions of today some people may earn profits, but if the country does not become strong, they will not benefit from profits for long; they will not be able to remain happy for long. We have to keep all these matters in view.

In today's world, not only in our country but in other countries also, wherever I have gone or where others have gone and have described the situation, we find there is violence, crime and lawlessness everywhere. We are not concerned with what happens in other countries, although it does influence the situation here. We have to see that we bring about improvement in our own attitudes. We should spread our own humanism and bring back again basic moral values in the society, which is the foundation of all religions, from which not only we, in India, but I think, the entire humanity has departed to take a wrong road. With all this wisdom, knowledge and capability, instead of using it for good causes, how is this power being used? We see that big powers are using their resources not in development work, not in helping the poor, but in increasing their armaments - bigger and bigger and more sophisticated ones. What for? For the annihilation of people, or, destruction of houses, farms and fields or

nations. This is being done knowingly by the human race. Is it the path India should follow? Time has come when every Indian must consider this matter in depth and understand his responsibility.

Before we tell others anything, we have to set things right in our own home. In this country where peace used to prevail, where people always lived together amicably — though sometimes small quarrels take place why do disturbances take place on petty matters, sometimes in the name of languages? These are the things which come in the way of our progress and development. We have to remove these from our path. If there is any cause behind it we have to find it and root it out. We have to create an atmosphere in which no impediment comes in the way of our development and progress. This is the message of our Independence Day, this year and every year.

We have reached one stage in our progress, but the journey is still very long. Stockpile of armaments is increasing all around us, posing increasing danger not only to India but to the entire region and, I think, to the whole world. When there is danger, everybody suffers but burden falls more on those who are poor and have shortage of resources, commodities, money or the like. Therefore, while others have to be vigilant anyway, we Indians have to be more vigilant and alert.

We have to give a new direction to our society. We have to learn many things from our history and heritage. If there are superstitions or other evils, we should not have the least hesitation to remove them. We have to develop our own strength. Everyone has his share of problems and difficulties, individuals as well as countries. You all know what I have suffered as a mother, but, for me much bigger is my duty towards you who are like my children. And, that is why these things can hold back neither me nor you. Time waits for none. Our children are growing, whether you help them or not. Their's and other people's demands are increasing, and rightly so, because if some people are getting things, why not the others — the poor and the backward.

At this time, all of us must develop the feelings of unity and strength.

We have always strived for friendship with our neighbouring countries and others. But, when they spurned and attacked us, we did face the aggression with courage. And, I congratulate and express gratefulness again on your behalf to our jawans and officers of the Defence Forces for the way in which they kept our borders secure, and, I know they will continue to do so. But our effort is that there should be no war; there should be friendship with our neighbours and with far-off countries. Nobody need consider it as our weakness. It is not because of any weakness; we do it for the sake of our ideals. It is our effort that those ideals should guide our country.

It is our policy that all regions of the country should progress and develop — including the hill regions, the desert areas and the people living in the forests. In the Five Year Plan, there are schemes for everyone — farmers, workers, students, harijans, adivasis, poor people and those belonging to middle class. Millions of new opportunities for employment will open up for people and I have confidence that our youth will take full advantage of them. They will also, I am sure, find new avenues for self-employment. It has been our constant effort to push forward schemes that are beneficial to the farmers and the workers.

There was some misunderstanding because recently an Ordinance was issued which prevents strikes in essential public services. I want to assure the workers that this Ordinance is not against them. It has never been our intention and we will never do anything to suppress them or create difficulties for them in any way. But it is necessary that the public services are kept going, not because that these are governmental programmes, but because it is in the interest of the good of the country. These things are required by the common man, and are needed for the strength and security of the nation. Workers have always discharged their responsibilities and I have confidence that they and our farmers, our intellectuals and other sections will continue to discharge their responsibilities.

Today is a special day, being Raksha-Bandhan. This is not a religious

festival. It is a social festival for cordiality and for friendship. This is the day when people extend their hands of friendship. What for? For protecting each other. On this day we seek the co-operation of all countries in maintaining peace and in protecting the humanity. To our own countrymen, we say that they should celebrate this day not only in the manner of brother-sister relationship but see how they can protect Mother India, how the unity in the country could be further strengthened and how each individual can be a protector of the nation.

Earlier, I had told you about a slogan. Now I want to say that the flag under which we are standing is not just a piece of cloth. This is a symbol of the sacrifices made in our struggle for freedom, later, of the sacrifices by our brave soldiers on our borders in various wars, and now of those who with their hard labour are engaged in the struggle for India's progress, and also of our promising youth. Our flag and our National Anthem are no ordinary things. They unite the country and bind it together. That is why I want to say that 'the glory of the flag must be protected even at the cost of life'.