

◆◆◆ My heartiest congratulations to all of you on the anniversary of our Independence. Wherever you may be, at the highest mountain peaks of the Himalayas or on the shores of the Indian Ocean; on the desert sands of Rajasthan or in the green jungles of the North East, may my greetings reach all of you.

◆◆◆ Today is also the festival of Raksha Bandhan. The power of friendship can transform even a simple hand-spun thread into an unbreakable relationship. On this auspicious occasion, I extend my good wishes to all of you, especially to all my sisters.

◆◆◆ This is the first Independence Day of the new century. While looking back at the century just past, we must work hard to convert the challenges of the new century into opportunities.

◆◆◆ We must make our Independence last forever. We must reiterate, today, our resolve to defend our nation.

◆◆◆ Today is a day of sacred remembrance. It is a moment for introspection. We offer our heartfelt gratitude to all the known and unknown martyrs. The memory of their martyrdom will forever live on in our hearts. Their sacrifices will always inspire us.

◆◆◆ Today, we especially remember Mahatma Gandhiji. He was not only the foremost leader of our Freedom Struggle, but he was also among the greatest personalities of the 20th century.

◆◆◆ On today's auspicious day, we extend our greetings to the people of all the countries in the world. We wish that the 21st century would bring the message of peace, fraternity, cooperation, and steady progress for the entire world.

◆◆◆ Today, we send our best wishes to millions of Non-Resident Indians

and Persons of Indian Origin living in other countries. Wherever they may live, they are always emotionally attached to India. We wish all of them success and prosperity.

◆◆◆ Today, I extend my felicitations to the people of the three new States that have found their place on the map of India after the reorganisation of Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, and Bihar. We are confident that the new States of Chhattisgarh, Uttaranchal, and Jharkhand will soon earn their rightful place in the Union of India.

◆◆◆ We have succeeded in our commitment of creating these three new States. After the formation of these states, we have to work together for their development so that they become shining examples of success.

◆◆◆ The new century is a Century of the Youth. India, too, which has lived for thousands of years, has now become a young nation. Nearly seventy percent of our population is less than the age of 35. These young men and women are more ambitious, more aware, and more active than their predecessors. They not only think big, but they also work hard to realise their dreams.

◆◆◆ I have full faith in India's youth. It is our responsibility to fully support our young men and women in building a bright future for themselves and their Motherland.

◆◆◆ Dear Countrymen, last year when I had addressed you from the ramparts of this very Red Fort, our country was going through an extraordinary situation. The Lok Sabha had been dissolved and fresh elections announced. It was in these circumstances, that we had to face the aggression in Kargil. And India emerged victorious in this war.

◆◆◆ One year later, democracy has become stronger in the country. India's international standing has risen. Our voice is being heard attentively

in the capitals of the world.

◆◆◆ India is on the move. An India full of self-confidence is marching forward on the path to progress.

◆◆◆ It is an India that is as determined to win against all adversities as were our brave jawans and airmen who drove back the enemy's forces.

◆◆◆ Our hearts are filled with ever-lasting gratitude towards the brave soldiers of the Kargil and all previous wars.

◆◆◆ Pakistan would be committing a terrible folly if it thinks that it can secure anything through the undeclared war that it has been waging against India. Kashmir has been an unbreakable part of India, and it will remain so.

◆◆◆ Our neighbour must realise that the clock cannot be turned back. I would advise the rulers and also the people of Pakistan to pay heed to the following verse from the lyricist, Sahir Ludhianvi:

Gone is that time, gone is that age,

When ~Two Nations~ was the slogan;

Gone are those people,

Whose purpose was Partition!

One, now, are all Indians,

One, now, are all Indians,

Oh India. know this!

Oh World, know this!

Oh World, know this!

◆◆◆ The 21st century does not permit the redrawing of borders either in the name of religion or on the strength of the sword. This is the age for resolving differences, not for prolonging disputes.

◆◆◆ The people of Jammu, Kashmir, and Ladakh are tired of violence and bloodshed. They are craving for peace. We need to apply the salve of brotherhood on the wounded body of Jammu and Kashmir.

◆◆◆ That is why, I recently said that India is prepared to apply the balm for Kashmir's agony within the framework of Insaniyat (humanity).

◆◆◆ The world knows who has derailed the move to end hostilities and to start the peace process. The world knows who has torpedoed these efforts.

◆◆◆ On the one hand, Pakistan says it is willing to participate in talks. On the other hand, it continues to be deeply involved in violence, killings, and cross-border terrorism. Activities of the terrorists and proposals for peace talks cannot go together.

◆◆◆ India's willingness and ability to deal firmly with violence, terrorism, extremism, and separatism should not be underestimated.

◆◆◆ Dear Countrymen, we have to build a magnificent nation. There is no other country in the world, which is so ancient, so big, so populous, and so rich in diversities; that has preserved its democracy, its unity, and its culture; and that is fast emerging as a modern and prosperous nation.

◆◆◆ We have achieved success, too, in this endeavor. Every section of

our society has contributed to this success.

◆◆◆ In the present times, India is called upon to pursue two major imperatives. These are: Security and Development. They are complementary to each other. Without security, there can be no development; without development, our security is incomplete.

◆◆◆ Now we have to make determined efforts to meet the economic challenges before the nation. We have to accelerate and broaden our development process, so that no child of Mother India remains hungry, homeless, unemployed, or is without access to medical care.

◆◆◆ We have to reduce regional and social disparities.

◆◆◆ We have to make our brethren belonging to Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Other Backward Classes, and minorities equal partners in our developmental process.

◆◆◆ Therefore, let us together resolve to make this decade, the Decade of Development.

◆◆◆ To realise this goal, we have decided to achieve the target of doubling India's per capita income in the next ten years.

◆◆◆ Dear Countrymen, to achieve this ambitious target, we have to undertake many important reforms in our economy. At the same time, we need to implement necessary reforms in our administration, our judiciary, in education, and in other areas.

◆◆◆ Reforms are the need of the hour. For example, the world has changed much in the last fifty years; and so has India. There have been many far-reaching political and economic transformations throughout the globe.◆◆◆

◆◆ ◆ To reform is to turn the inevitability of change in the direction of progress.

◆◆◆ To reform is to improve the life of every citizen.◆◆◆

◆◆◆ Take for example, the reforms in the power sector that the Centre and various State Governments are presently carrying out. These will reduce the losses of our electricity boards, stop the theft of power, and ensure adequate availability of power for increasing production and employment.

◆◆◆ Similarly, the reforms that we are implementing in the telecom sector will enable us to provide cheaper telephones, mobile phones, and Internet services in all parts of the country.

◆◆◆ There is no scope for either apprehension or fear about our economic reforms. I remember that some people had expressed similar fears even during the Green Revolution. These fears later proved to be baseless.

◆◆◆ The perspective of our economic reforms is based on our own concept. You know that almost all political parties have, at different times, and in different ways at the Centre and in different States, been adopting the economic reforms programme.

◆◆◆ I urge our farmers, workers, other producers, industrialists, and our intelligentsia to contribute to building a consensus in favour of the economic reforms.

◆◆◆ In this connection, I would like to express my special appreciation to all the central trade unions. I met their leaders three days ago, and we had a very constructive dialogue. They have withdrawn their proposed nation-wide strike. The interests of our workers will be fully taken into

account in the economic reform process.

◆◆◆ This year, the Government is going to take many big and important steps to accelerate our economic and social development and bring its benefits to the largest number of people.

◆◆◆ I wish to congratulate our farmers for ensuring that we have not faced a scarcity of foodgrains despite a rapidly rising population. Today, there is no shortage of food; rather there is a shortage of facilities to store our food stocks.

◆◆◆ We have formulated a National Agriculture Policy for the first time since Independence. This Policy aims to increase agricultural production by four percent every year. Concrete steps would be taken to check the declining investments in the agricultural sector and to facilitate increase in these investments.

◆◆◆ For the first time since Independence, the Central Government has devised a well-conceived and time-bound programme for rural roads. This hundred per cent Centrally sponsored scheme, which is called the ~Prime Minister's Rural Roads Scheme~, aims to connect, within the next three years, every village that has a population of more than one thousand, through good all-weather roads. In the next seven years, every village with a population of more than five hundred will be similarly connected. For this project, the Central Government is making a provision of Rs. 5,000 crore in its first year. It will be launched on Gandhi Jayanti this year.

◆◆◆ The National Highway Development Project is an ambitious one. A four-lane Golden Quadrilateral connecting Delhi, Mumbai, Calcutta, and Chennai will be ready by 2003. The North-South and East-West corridors will be ready by 2007.

◆◆◆ Khadi, village industries, and small-scale industries are the backbone

of India's economy. We would like the benefits of economic reforms to reach them too. There will be a national convention of small-scale and cottage industries on the 30th of this month, where we shall announce many important decisions.

◆◆◆ In a very short time, India has become a strong power in Information Technology. In software exports alone, India is expected to have exports of more than Rs.2,00,000 crore by 2008. Through this, lakhs of educated persons are likely to get attractive employment opportunities, both in India and abroad.

◆◆◆ To reach the benefits of Information Technology to the common people, our Government has taken many important decisions in the last two years, and will take many more in future.

◆◆◆ I want to see every school and every village to have access to computers and the Internet in as less time as possible.

◆◆◆ We are committed to ensuring that every village and hamlet gets access to clean drinking water in the next four years. This year, the allocation for the scheme has been increased by Rs. 2,000 crore and its implementation will be intensified.

◆◆◆ Before the end of this year, the Government will announce an Integrated National Health Policy, the aim of which will be to quickly achieve ~Health For All~. The policy will also ensure that every citizen is provided with primary health care. Ayurveda, Yoga, Unani, Siddha, and Homeopathy will be given their rightful place.

◆◆◆ Recently, the rapidly spreading disease of HIV/AIDS has become a grave challenge to our nation. I appeal to all sections of society to fully participate in building awareness about this epidemic. They should also make necessary changes in their behaviour so that this disease can be



controlled.

◆◆◆ The most valuable investment that we can make in India's future is to ensure that every child gets education. We have decided that by 2010, every Indian child will get education up to class eight. We have launched Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (Education for All campaign) to achieve this goal. Education until graduation has been made free for women. All poor families should take advantage of this.

◆◆◆ Science and technology have become the main engine of economic growth. We should ensure that every vehicle of economic development is equipped with this engine. Towards this end, the Government is taking concrete steps to remove the gap between academia and industry.

◆◆◆ Dear Countrymen, a bright future is knocking at India's door. We can, however, realise this future to the extent that we are able to further strengthen our national unity, secularism, social goodwill, and our democratic system.

◆◆◆ India is a land of diversities. We have, in ample measure, geographical diversities; linguistic diversities; religious diversities; and diversities in customs and traditions. Despite these diversities, or perhaps because of them, India has always remained united.◆◆◆

◆◆◆ We are one in many, and many in one. The whole world is amazed at how India has successfully sustained this magic not just today, but for many millennia.

◆◆◆ This may be magic for the rest of the world; but for Indians, it is life itself.

◆◆◆ Religious intolerance and hate have never been part of India's liberal culture. I appeal to the people of all faiths and castes not to create

imaginary enemies, and not to resort to the path of using the sword that inflicts wounds on oneself.

◆◆◆ Recently, a few unfortunate incidents have spoiled communal peace and goodwill, in some places. The Government will not tolerate the activities of any organisation that spreads communal discord or incites violence.

◆◆◆ As Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar said, our independence is incomplete without social justice. In the new century, India needs more social justice. However, that kind of social justice (Samajik Nyay) is needed which also promotes social harmony (Samajik Samarasata).

◆◆◆ The policy of reservations is one of the important guarantors of social justice for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and Other Backward Classes. The problem of backlog in reservations was persisting for some time. Recently, we amended the Constitution and solved this problem.

◆◆◆ Women are the backbone of our social system and culture. Our dreams of India's future can only be realised if our women are educated, are made economically prosperous, are empowered politically, and are enabled to play a bigger role in society.

◆◆◆ We have promised to provide reservations to women in the Parliament and the State Legislatures. There is now a need to quickly bring about a consensus to implement this revolutionary idea. I have had several opportunities to meet many women who have become members and chairpersons of panchayats and municipalities by winning from reserved seats. They have, through their performance, proved that they are not second to men, either in the democratic process or in administration.

◆◆◆ The North-Eastern States have a special place in the nation's life and in India's development. The implementation of developmental projects and

programmes has been suffering from many hurdles. Now, a special cell has been created in the Prime Minister's Office to remove these hurdles and speed up the developmental process. This cell will closely monitor the developmental works in the region. There has been an improvement in the situation, thanks to the cooperation of the people and State Governments of this region.

◆◆◆ It is sad that the biggest impediment to faster development in the North-East has been the extremist organisations that are fomenting violence and trouble in the region. I appeal to the leaders and followers of these organisations to give up this dangerous and futile path. The Government is presently engaged in talks with some organisations in the region so that peace and development can be restored in the North-East. I am confident that these efforts will bear fruit.

◆◆◆ India is a Union of States. Our States have an important role to play in ensuring that the fruits of development reach every Indian home. We are committed to decentralisation of power. We have decided to give our States more financial and administrative powers. We would like our Panchayati Raj institutions to also benefit from decentralization of power, so that their functioning becomes more efficient and effective. We have taken concrete steps in this direction.

◆◆◆ In the last two-and-a-half years, we have made continuous efforts to increase dialogue and coordination between the Centre and the State Governments. All States have contributed to this process. This has improved cooperation and concord between the Centre and the States. Consequently, there has been an increasing convergence in our viewpoints and goals. For this, I thank all the State Governments and their Chief Ministers.

◆◆◆ We shall intensify our campaign against corruption in high places. Our country cannot make expected progress in development without

probity in administration and in public life.

◆◆◆ One of the big failings in our national life has been that people expect the Government to solve even those problems, which they could easily resolve through their collective efforts. The Government, after all, has limited resources. In addition, experience has shown us that, those programmes which are implemented without people's participation, rarely yield the expected results.

◆◆◆ Let me illustrate. Be it population stabilisation or dealing with natural calamities, conserving water and electricity, or keeping our public places clean and beautiful, all these initiatives can succeed only when our citizens participate enthusiastically and in an organised manner.

◆◆◆ Dear Countrymen, on the first Independence Day of the 21st century, let us draw inspiration from all the good and glorious aspects of our past. However, let us not become obsessed with the past.

◆◆◆ I have been emphasising repeatedly that India should turn its attention to the challenges and opportunities of the future. We should not be stuck in the contentious issues of the past.

◆◆◆ Come, let us look to the future. We have to create a prosperous, self-reliant, and self-confident India. Indeed, we have already embarked along this path. We will march further in this direction. We are being counted among the ranks of successful nations.

◆◆◆ We must not stop. Rather, we must step up the speed of our journey.

◆◆◆ I call upon our farmers, workers, artisans, employees, youth, and, indeed, all our citizens, to make their contribution to a happy and prosperous India.

◆◆◆ I ask our entrepreneurs to hoist the flag of their capabilities and prowess and demonstrate to the rest of the world that Indian industrialists are second to none in any competition.

◆◆◆ I appeal to the Non-Resident Indians to contribute their fullest to this momentous task.

◆◆◆ I exhort our scientists and engineers that they scale new heights of knowledge and science to earn a bright name for themselves and their country.

◆◆◆ I appeal to India's sportspersons that they take our tricolor to triumphant positions in the arena of international sports.

◆◆◆ The entire nation sends its best wishes to our sports contingent that is taking part in next month's Olympic Games at Sydney.

◆◆◆ Come, let all of us contribute our mite to the creation of a Parishrami Bharat (industrious India), Parakrami Bharat (achieving India), and a Vijayi Bharat (winning India).

◆◆◆ Our motto for all ages has been:

Let us walk together

Let us speak in one voice

Let our hearts beat together

◆◆◆ In other words, let us march forward united, all of us together, and taking everybody together.

◆◆◆ Let us make the 21st Century, India's Century.

◆◆◆ This is our resolve. This is our aspiration.

◆◆◆ Thank you.

◆◆◆ Jai Hind!