

Sixteen months have passed since the people gave the mandate to the Janata Party to run the government. Last year when I addressed you on the same day, I had spoken about the problems facing the country and the tasks ahead. During the last one year from August 15, many things have happened and are happening at home and abroad. The first task was to restore the freedom of every citizen, the freedom of the press and the independence of the judiciary. This has been done. These freedoms have been restored. I have every faith that they will remain inviolate. It is necessary that the people should be fearless, strong and dedicated, and should do everything with the good of the country in mind.

We have to work hard and get rid of many ills inherited from the past and not only to regain but even excel the past glory of a happy and prosperous India which had a place of honour in the world. It does not take much time for weaknesses to creep in but it certainly takes time to remove them. This has been my experience. But I have no doubt that we should try to remove the ills as fast as we can. We cannot and should not rest till we achieve our cherished ideals. We have to march forward together. It is only then that we can accomplish the task.

It is clear that things have improved in many ways. But even then complaints are loudly voiced that prices have risen, and there is growing unrest. But it is my experience that those who complain are the very people who do nothing to improve matters but only worsen matters. On this day I do not want to enter into any controversy about this as it may make our task even more difficult. But one thing is clear : conditions on the price front have not deteriorated. Prices which were going up for 10 years are not rising now. It is also clear that the prices of some commodities have even come down. We want the prices to come down further but unless prices of all commodities come down, it will not benefit the growers and production might fall. This general reduction should be our aim in every field and we are engaging in this task.

During the last 10 years our economic growth has been 2 per cent but last year it was 5 per cent. We do not want to boast about this so long

as the progress does not satisfy everyone. But it is a fact that there has been progress despite obstacles. For two years, the people were gagged, their minds were almost closed and it was natural that when they got freedom there should be some unusual activity. There have been strikes in some industries. We have to find solutions for these. But whatever solutions we find, we should keep in view the interest of the entire country, and not of any particular section at the cost of others. We have to make people understand this and only this way can we move forward.

At some places people indulge in rowdyism and then blame the government. It is true that the Government should look after this and we are trying to do that. But whatever we do has to be according to the law and cannot be autocratic. We have to take the people with us. This is the path we are following, and we are getting results - good results. But I can well understand that the people will not be satisfied unless results are apparent in all spheres. Doubts arise in the public mind on many occasions. I consider it the duty of every worker to remove the doubts. We can make the progress that we want only if there is contentment and peace in the country and every one feels that he should do nothing which might harm the country or his neighbour. We are engaged in this task, the results are coming and I am sure that soon we will be able to bring about a situation when all of us will move forward together.

But it so happens that our old ills crop up and create problems. It is a matter of shame for all of us that there should be any atrocities on Harijans. It is a disgrace for the country. But it is only by working together that we can eradicate the ignorance and the evil which have entered our society over the centuries. I have no doubt about this nor about the fact that we have to take stern action against those who indulge in wrong deeds over this matter. All of you must have heard of the incident outside my residence the day before yesterday. It is a matter of shame for those who indulged in such action. Unless they understand this they will continue doing these wrong things. They had come to see me. They had assured the police that they would be peaceful and would not disturb the peace. In the beginning,

they were somewhat peaceful. Five or six of them saw me. They said that the land had been given to the Harijans and other backward poor, was pasture land, and should be taken back and converted into pasture again. This is what the farmers demanded. These grazing lands were given in 1970. There is some other land also in the grazing land. I do not agree that his (giving of the land) has created any difficulty for anybody. But the farmers insisted that these lands not be given to those people. A few thousand people had gathered from nearby villages a few days ago and had decided to create trouble. This trouble they created the day before.

I told them I could not agree to their demands. The land had been given to Harijans, it would remain with them and nobody could take it back. This has to be understood clearly. They asked why were special privileges given to Harijans? These privileges should be given to all the poor people alike whether they were poor Harijans, Brahmins, Rajputs or others. I told them that the Constitution gave certain privileges to Harijans because they had suffered for centuries and for no fault of theirs had been forced to live in a miserable condition. The responsibility was ours, of the entire society. It was necessary to give them some privileges to remove their difficulties and to enable them to live on par with others. They said the Constitution must be amended. I said "How can you say this?" Then they were angry and they would have it done. I said "if this is your decision and you are bent on creating trouble, you please go. I will not talk to you". They taken went out and incited the people outside and what did they do? All of a sudden, they became unruly. They had some lathis and arms with them when forced police starting firing. But we must understand that if the crowd is bent upon creating mischief, harms others and listens to no one, then there is no way but to open fire. Nobody is happy to resort to firing. But it is for the people to tell such element that so long as they indulge in such wrong acts, the people would criticize them and support the Government when it deals with them sternly. I believe such things will go on happening so long as the people do not express themselves clearly. Therefore, it is necessary to face such a situation and I am confident the people will always support us, they are supporting us. But it needs a lot of fearlessness, discipline and

dedication to the interest of the country.

The task we are engaged in now is vital and it is necessary to complete it more speedily. It is therefore that we are continuously engaged in improving the efficiency of the administration. I believe, there is no example in the world of the way in which the administration had been distorted. But why should I find fault with the Administration. The fault was of those people who were running the administration. Those at the helm of affairs issued orders and the people did not have the strength and courage not to do wrong things. They should have refused wrong order, and resign from the service. It is not very easy to give up jobs. We have not yet reached the stage when it is possible to take up another job after giving up the previous one. This makes people anxious.

We, however, have to create within ourselves, the force which can prevent misuse of the administrative machinery. We want to strengthen the administrative machinery in the manner, that it works fearlessly. In this task we have also to enlist the cooperation of all. This we are doing. We are happy that our efforts are producing some results. But we have to make all efforts in the direction so long as this machinery does not become fully efficient and the people are not convinced that the administrative machinery is there for the service of the people and not for passing orders. I am sure that we will get all cooperation from the people in fulfilling this task.

Many disturbances take place in our country. At places Hindus and Muslims quarrel among themselves. We have also to ensure that this does not happen at all. We can be proud only if such incidents do not take place anywhere at all, and everything in the country goes on in an orderly fashion. This is the only country where secularism has flourished for centuries. In difficult times of the British, this concept was perverted and we were forced to adopt wrong practices, which continue to with us even today. In order to eschew these practices, all of us have to work with dedication. These are people in the country who create an atmosphere of

violence. I have been meeting the leaders of the opposition regularly to fight this violence and to find a way out. I am happy that the leaders in the Opposition too, are giving serious thought to the problem. I am happy that they are taking the problem seriously. But they too, at times, find themselves helpless because of compulsions of politics. I can foresee some difficulties it but we have to carry our work forward. The opposition is as necessary as the ruling party for the proper running of the democratic order. That is why we do not want weak opposition. The opposition should be strong but they must keep in the mind the interest of the nation in view and work for it. I agree that this is what their hearts also but it takes time to give up old habits, which are difficult to give up. The measures, I am sure, will succeed and I am grateful to the opposition for the cooperation it is extending me.

You all know that we have a good image in foreign countries and among our immediate neighbours. The prestige of India has gone up in all countries but some people in the Opposition say things are to the contrary. They are not ashamed to say it. I am unable to understand how this Government, the Janata Government, is selling out country to foreign hands. Those who were doing this previously are today saying this. I do not know with what face they do so. The prestige of our country has gone high in every land and our relations with all countries are on the basis of equality. I can go any country to ask for help, my visits are meant to strengthening fraternal relations and I have not asked for any other thing from any country I have visited. Why should I ask anybody. I have no doubt the prestige of the country will go up in the time to come and it will become strong, which is possible only if we are able to stand on their own feet. If any friendly country comes out to help us we will accept it and should be grateful for it. But there should be any compulsion for us to ask for anything. But when we get help, we should be prepared to help other countries. That is why we are working steadily in cooperation with other countries and are giving help to other as a part of our duty. This is the reason why our relation have improved with our immediate neighbours like

Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Burma, Afghanistan and Iran.

I am happy and grateful to these countries for the cooperation they are giving. I am convinced that our relations with Pakistan would also improve. We are also working in improving our relations with China. They also have shown their willingness for this. We welcome it and are convinced that our relations with that country also would improve.

You can also share this conviction and we can move forward with great confidence. We have to remove whatever uneasiness there may be. This cannot be done without discipline. I have full faith in discipline and in the purity of means. This is what Gandhiji taught us. On this point I will not make any compromise with anybody we will pay whatever price I have to pay for it. The country can become strong only if it moves forward in a disciplined manner and puts up pure means. This is exactly what the Janata Party is doing. Some people say that the Janta Party is becoming weak. It is wrong because only those say all this who want to see us weak. I have a doubt about that the party will emerge stronger from all this. I invite your cooperation, as also blessings, in this task. Jai Hind.