

Fellow countrymen, Armed forces at the borders, brave soldiers of the Army, Navy and Air Force, toiling farmers, Workers, my countrymen living abroad and dear children.

I congratulate you all on the Golden Jubilee of the Nation's Independence. I salute those martyrs whose sacrifice won Independence for the country. My tributes especially to the family members of those whose patriotism and sacrifice freed the country from the shackles of British imperialism and gave the country deliverance from century old slavery and humiliation. We salute the vanguard of freedom fighters whose efforts are recognised by the whole country.

On this occasion, I remember with gratitude those innumerable martyrs who suffered in jail, in anonymity but who always nurtured the hope to see a free India. I don't know whether you have heard of Ashfaq, Bismil who gave the message of supreme sacrifice while awaiting the gallows by saying "Sarfaroshi ki tamanna". (Urdu couplet) Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Sukhdev also had the same song on their lips when they were being led to the gallows. I on behalf of the nation, salute them, today.

Last night, the President recalled the contribution of those great leaders whose sacrifices and leadership ended the slavery of hundreds of years. The countrymen recall with gratitude the great leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, Abdul Gaffar Khan, Netaji Subash Kalam Chandra Bose, Sardar Patel, Babu Rajendra Prasad, C. Rajagopalachari and founder of our Constitution Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar.

Today we remember those lakhs of families who suffered humiliation and lost their lives at the time of partition. Ours is an ancient civilization. In these last fifty years, the culture of this country has been enriched further and this in itself reflects unity and secularism. Our country is moving towards modernity while keeping its heritage intact. This is as old and ancient, as it is young and vibrant. There is a certain attraction in this land whereby people belonging to different cultures and languages were able to mingle freely and enrich our civilisation. The greatest contribution of this

country to society is Democracy under which 50 crore voters elect their representatives from Panchayat to Parliament. We are proud of our Democracy. On this historic occasion, as I address you from the ramparts of the Red Fort, which has witnessed several historical events, history is unfolding before my eyes. As you must have seen last night the Members of Parliament were listening to the speech of Jawaharlal Nehru which was delivered 50 years ago. Mahatma Gandhi's voice was inspiring the country, once again. Netaji who was the symbol of sacrifice has said that freedom and sacrifice are synonymous. A new India was awakening with fresh hopes on 15th August, 1947. The first Prime Minister of the country Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru had reiterated the plea given to the future generations by the freedom fighters. This commitment which was towards the nation and its people.

Fifty years ago, while on the one hand in the Central Hall of the Parliament the country was looking towards the future with hope on the other, it was witness to the menace of communalism at its worst in areas like Punjab and Bengal which were partitioned. In the name of religion, innocents were being stabbed, women folk were being openly humiliated and barbarism was at its height. Human values were nowhere in sight. Lakhs of men and women, old and young and children including myself were crossing the border from both sides with tears in the eye and smile on the face, with no hope for the future and darkness behind. Even during this painful hour, we remembered Gandhiji who inspired us and showed the path of a secular democratic India even putting his life at stake. It was assumed and later confirmed by posterity that had we chosen some other path, the country could not have stayed united or progressed.

Ours is a country of diversities. We follow different religions and speak different languages. Quite often our eating habits and life styles also vary. We have witnessed diverse aspects of history for the last several centuries. The struggle for Independence has united all these diversities into a firm chain. The slogan "Unity in Diversity" was inscribed firmly in our hearts. Every word of this meant sacrifice, patriotism and a firm faith in

destiny.

Gandhiji raised a unique army of soldiers who had no weapons and they were forbidden from even talk about violence. This was a new definition of valour given by Gandhiji. People's faith in Gandhiji led the lawyers to give up practice, students left their schools and colleges and started filling up jails. Farmers left their fields and labourers their factories. In the last days of the struggle, things came to such a peak that the youth working with the Indian Navy also revolted. The country was witnessing a new kind of revolt. The roots of imperialism were shaken in the face of this struggle.

I take pride in this fact and I wish to reiterate that the freedom was won by the common man of this country -- it was not gifted. It is for this reason when the Constitution of India was framed, its opening line said, "We, the people of India give to ourselves this Constitution". This constitution and this great country gave us the democracy, fundamental rights which enshrined equality of religion, caste, creed and gender and it is under this democratic system that 36 crore people exercised their franchise in the previous elections, a shining example of the largest democracy of the world. Gradually the African and Asian nations started attaining freedom. British imperialism started losing ground after India's independence and we witnessed the last chapter of British imperialism closing recently in Hong Kong.

The struggle for independence started from this Red Fort in 1867 and later the British imperialists prosecuted the brave soldiers of INA in this very same Fort. Netaji Subash Chandra Bose gave the slogan "Lal Qila Chalo". Lal Qila became the symbol of India's struggle for freedom. The freedom fighters used to sing "Kadam Kadam Badhaye Ja, Yea Zindagi hai Quam ki, Tu quam pe lutaye ja".

Today while addressing you from the ramparts of the same fort and look back at the history with pride, I also want to speak to you about the future of the nation. When Gandhiji dreamt of India's future, he had said that the country will attain the real freedom only on the day when a Dalit

would become the President of this country. This is our great fortune that today on the eve of golden jubilee of independence, we have been able to fulfil this dream of Gandhiji. In the person of Shri K.R. Narayanan we have been able to fulfil the dream of Gandhiji. Our President of whom the whole country is proud of, is from a very poor and downtrodden family and today he has endowed the Rashtrapati Bhawan with a new pride and respect. It is a matter of further happiness that the President has a very high place among the intellectuals of this country. This is a feather in the cap of our democracy that the backward sections of the society today are attaining their rightful place in society. All the countrymen today whether they are from minorities, scheduled castes or scheduled tribes are working unitedly for the development of the country.

Women constitute an important part of our society. Our religions and cultures put the women folk on a very high pedestal but I am constrained to say it, with a sense of sorrow and regret that our politics, apparently, is hesitating in giving the women a place of equality, There was a revolution a few days back in the Panchayat Raj elections, about one lakh women rightfully became the leaders of Panchayats and Municipal Corporations. When I go to any city and meet the lady mayor or the lady sarpanch, I feel very happy and proud. In this I also see the future of India. These days we are trying and I want to reiterate the promise which I made in Parliament to give women their rightful place in the country's politics. We must remember that unless and until women are given their rightful place, no society or country can progress. Women should get the equal place in every field whether in the political, economic or social arena.

It is very unfortunate that even today in some families when a girl child is born, they feel bad about it. Unfortunately, some families get the girl child aborted when they learn about it in advance. My government has formulated two policies to stop this menace. The first is that doctors have been legally prohibited from revealing the sex of the child in the womb. The second policy is perhaps more important, that the government, from today, itself will give financial help to the families to whom a girl child is born, if

they are living below the poverty line. Later scholarship will be given when the girl child starts going to school.

I appeal to all countrymen and political and social institutes and also to those women who have been recently elected in the Panchayats to work unitedly to change the atmosphere in the country so that small girls are looked after well. They should get full opportunity to blossom and men and women should have equal place in society. This country will become great only when the men and women of this country work unitedly and take the country ahead.

I would also like to say that whether they are boys or girls, unless and until our future generations go to school, the society cannot make further progress. My government has already acceded the right to education as a fundamental right for every child and we have presented the amendment bill in the Parliament. The next scheme is to open more schools and raise the standard of education. Our country will have a bright future only when every child below 14 years will go to school every morning wearing a colourful uniform. The children should not be deprived of childhood joys and should not be forced to labour. That is why I want to emphasise that all of you should contribute your mite in this endeavour of government.

Now, with great sorrow and seriousness I want to draw your attention towards the ill of this country which is called corruption. Corruption is eating into the vitals of the country. The country is in greater danger from those who occupy higher offices and betray the nation by accepting bribes. If the country's enemies attack us from outside, our gallant army is capable of facing them and they put their lives at stake in the most difficult circumstances. But if somebody from inside becomes a traitor by accepting bribes and betrays the nation, he creates a greater danger to the country. The corruption is rampant everywhere. It seems that whether it is a matter of government purchases, paying of taxes, paying of custom duties, some people think and that corruption is their birthright. I make a promise to you that the long arms of law will be further strengthened to ensure that no one who accepts bribes escapes the grip of the law. I take it as my first and

foremost duty and also as a promise to the nation that an accused, whether he belongs to politics or government would not be exonerated if he commits such a sin.

It is all the more unfortunate that common men face more difficulties because of petty corrupt practices. Even the slightest of work cannot be completed without bribing somebody, whether it is a police station, a village patwari, municipality, an electric station, telephone department or the revenue department. Everywhere the sin of corruption is there. The common man especially the poor and the middle class just feel helpless. On several occasion, I have seen this feeling of helplessness written large on their faces.

The nexus between corrupt and politics has taken a turn for the worse today when criminals are entering politics. When I see the dark clouds ahead, I feel more determined to eliminate this challenge of corruption. All of us will have to work unitedly to eradicate corruption. Government alone will not be able to do this work. When the cancer worsens we all have to pay attention towards it.

The first thing which we have to do is electoral reforms which are being discussed for a long time now. Some work has been done in this regard but that is not enough and perhaps will not be able to meet the objectives. Corruption will prevail till the day when money is collected in the name of fighting elections. Therefore, complete reforms are imperative. The second thing towards which I have drawn your attention is the criminalisation of politics. Criminals are aligning with the political parties and I am here to break the nexus with courage and determination. I honestly believe that every political party finds fault with the others but overlooks its own greater faults. If a goonda belongs to the other political party we consider him a goonda but if he belongs to party we make him sit by our side and give him respect and regard. Legally we have to meet this challenge but simultaneously I call upon all political parties to do a soul searching. This is the biggest challenge before politics and the politician, today, if he has to become the leader of tomorrow. Last week I had been to

Mumbai to the anniversary of 9th August. There I had said something which I want to repeat today. The bribe takers should not be allowed to escape the law but we, who are compelled to offer bribes should take a pledge and start a new type of satyagraha-non-cooperation — and assert that we would not give bribes whatever be the difficulties and delays. It will be a new form of satyagraha.

This satyagraha can take us very far. Today we do not have any leader of the stature of Mahatma Gandhi but all of us can unitedly achieve this objective. The philosophy of Gandhiji is today inspiring us to form committees in localities, villages and cities to help each other so that those who give bribe and those who take bribe come out of this compulsion. I don't know whether some of you remember this or not, I have seen this with my own eyes that when Gandhiji had started salt satyagraha, people had their doubts about its outcome and they used to question how it was possible to remove imperialism by making salt. I recall that when my father decided to join the salt satyagraha, his fellow lawyers told him that you are a literate person whereas Gandhi is an old man and he has lost his senses. They used to ask if it were possible to make British imperialism give way by making salt. But Gandhiji had confidence in himself. He was a farsighted man. People followed him. The issue which had started from a handful of salt ended with the end of British rule, from this very Red Fort.

I give you my word that my government shall not compromise with corruption, in any kind of circumstances and I call upon you to help me in this task. There was a time when taking bribe would lead to social boycott. It was a matter of great insult if anybody aligned his name with a bribe-taker. All of us should work unitedly to create an atmosphere in the society, which would emphasise that we do not vote for the corrupt, we do not keep any kind of relationship with any criminal and we do not give any respect to such persons in society.

The struggle for the country's independence achieved success when the youth joined it. There was enthusiasm in that commitment and the same commitment and will to sacrifice led the nation to the freedom. Today

once again, I call upon you to join this new struggle against corruption. There are some aspects of corruption which relate to the government policies. My government has taken a decision that whenever there is a big government purchase, whether it is of defence or some other department, its procedure should be very transparent so that people do not have any doubt about it. You must have noticed that a few days back, our Defence Minister had announced the formation of a committee which will approve the purchases of arms and fighter planes and other defence equipment. The members of this committee are people of the highest integrity and the country have full faith in them. Such committees should be formed in all Ministries and departments who make large purchases. This committee should work in an open way so that people can see that there are no kickbacks involved. There should be nothing in it which even the slightest measure smells of corruption.

A few days back, all the Chief Ministers from all over the country had come to Delhi on my invitation. They had all unitedly decided that we will give Right to Information to our people through a new law. Under this Right, every citizen will have the right to seek information on any of the contract or purchases. None of the contracts or purchases would be concealed behind the veil of the Official Secrecy Act. This Right to Information law is already under formulation and would be presented in the next session of Parliament. I have also advised the Chief Ministers to form special courts to expeditiously deal with corruption cases. Some states have already done it but others have not. This is a very important task and I have also prayed to the Supreme Court to help us in punishing the corrupt.

My government has formed a National Commission which would recommend abolition of outdated laws which are not required now and will suggest reforms in the present laws to ensure early settlement of cases in courts. The Civil Code and the Penal Code should be changed so that cases do not remain in the court files for long years.

The Lok Pal Bill will be presented in the next session of Parliament and this will act as another watch tower on official deals. I have noticed that

there are several cases before the CBI which have not yet been opened and enquiries are continuing. I have told the officers that such cases should be resolved expeditiously.

Another thing which I want to tell you, is that if any of you have a proof against any Minister in my Cabinet, you please come forward and give it to me. I give you my word that I would order a thorough enquiry into the complaint without caring for the status of the person concerned and action would be taken against him under the law. We will not let such persons remain in politics.

My countrymen, the Indian community today is emerging as a big economic giant before the world, after the hard work of fifty long years. Earlier, even the needle for sewing clothes used to be imported. I recall that before partition, there was a very rich businessman in Karachi who made a big fortune by importing needles. Today, when we take a look at our industries and factories, we raise our head with pride on our achievements in these 50 years.

We attained political freedom 50 years ago and today, we have to march forward towards economic freedom. Our schemes including the 9th Five Year Plan which will come before you in a few days' time will lead the country towards the goal of economic independence. The 50 years hard work of our countrymen has borne fruit. Today the world considers India as a very big market, a market not for only purchasing goods but market because of our industries. Our labourers and our farmers are taking the country on the path of economic progress by their hard work. Today no country in the world can remain isolated. The United Front government has formulated a Common Minimum Programme. This programme is multifaceted and our effort is to touch upon those sectors of the economy where some kind of stalemate has crept in. You are all aware and you remember that in the last fifty years this country has strived to set up a large number of Public Sector Units. Some companies are facing problems and we are trying to resolve those. Ever since I have taken over I have paid special attention to Public Sector and where there was talk of closing down

ten big companies, they have been revived. My policy is that as far possible, Public Sector Companies should be infused with fresh life so that the country increases its wealth and the people's prosperity.

Today, whether it is Delhi or outside, within the country or city we understand that new roads need to be built. Industries have to increase for which the infrastructure issues like Power, Post & Telegraph and Telecommunications have to be addressed. Unless we do so our economy may not be able to progress. That is why the United Front Government is focussing and stressing on these issues. I am proud to state that our economy grew at a rate of nearly 7% last year.

This has happened for the first time in our history that as we attain new objectives and now we aim even higher. We strive and aspire that together, with the efforts of labourers and farmers our growth rate should move towards 10%. Ours is primarily an agricultural economy. The real strength of the country is the farmer, his effort and production. In the last 50 years our foodgrain production has increased 4 times. Import of foodgrains for the people is the thing of the past. Our population has increased tremendously but I am grateful to the farmer for making us self-sufficient in food-grains. You will be happy to know that with the efforts of our farmers, our food-grain production was 20 crore tonnes, last year. This includes both rice and wheat. Our country has experienced both green and white revolutions. Due to the white revolution, India today is the world's biggest producer of milk. Our focus today is to improve agriculture production. That is why the areas that receive scanty rainfall need special attention. In areas where agriculture is totally dependent on rainfall - dryland farming, the stress is on improving agricultural production by using science and technology. We have to do a lot for the hard working farmers, so we have decided to give special emphasis on the welfare of agricultural labour especially landless labourers. Since he is backward and in extreme poverty there is need for his insurance so that in case of his unfortunate demise, his family members do not lack food. In the field of agricultural reforms there are some more issues which are under consideration and we will try

to introduce a Bill in the next session of Parliament.

The slogan of "Garibi Hatao" was given a long time back. The policy of my Government is how to translate it into reality. Today I have said that in our agricultural economy around 60 to 65% people are dependent on agriculture. It is with extreme sadness that I say that the land reforms have not been implemented honestly. Our country cannot progress unless the people who actually work on fields get the land and until the landless farmer is able. Therefore, I exhort you, especially those states where land reforms have not been implemented to lay stress on this and to formulate such a programme that within the next one or two years will translate this into reality. Poverty and illiteracy are two sides of the same coin and they should be eradicated. The welfare of the labourer and poor classes should not be promoted not only with agriculture but by setting up of cottage and small scale industry. Unemployment especially of the educated unemployed needs to be addressed. It has only one solution and that is economic progress and advance. I assure you that our next plan would lay stress on this. Eradication of illiteracy is another essential ingredient for the development of the country. The nation cannot progress long as its people are illiterate. Somebody has once which I would like to repeat that "Tell me one country where people are literate and is backward; and tell me one country where people are illiterate and the country has moved forward".

Today we are concentrating on this. I remember the days when I was in college and Gandhiji had raised the slogan of "Each one teach one". The country would greatly benefit if each person - whether he is studying, working in an office or doing some job in the village decides to teach one illiterate in a year. I invite you to contribute in this mission. There are some states in our country which have experienced this revolution. We can talk of Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Mizoram and Tamil Nadu to a great extent, areas where we have grappled with illiteracy and it has resulted in decreasing population rate. An educated woman contributes greatly in this mission. If an educated woman understands how the growing population can be stopped, how families can be kept small the danger to our development

due to population explosion can be stopped.

A short while ago I was talking of science & technology. The Green Revolution of our country was the direct result of this technology. It is a matter of pride that thanks to our scientists we can both make and launch our satellites. There is a new future for the youth of today and science, technology and computer show a new path. I recall Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru's statement that it is not enough for everyone to become a scientist or technologist, it is more important to inculcate a scientific temper among our children and youth. When a child switches on an electric bulb and asks how it functions he should not be scolded. He should be made to understand how electricity is produced and used. When a child acquires a questioning nature, scientific temper is created and it will eliminate the era of superstitions.

Long ago Lord Buddha had said that the people should not have blind faith in anything. Do not believe because I am saying so. Also do not believe that it is written in a book. Question everything -- what, why, how, when, these questions raise our thought process would change and the country will progress. Today I am proud to share with you that, where 10 years ago this country had pledged its gold to import petrol, today we have three thousand crore dollars. This is our hard earned money. Our businessmen have earned it. Our industrialists have earned it. Our exporters have earned it and a large portion of it has come from the people who closely watch the economic developments and invest when they find their capital adequately safe. A substantial contribution has come from non-resident Indians.

Today, we all envisage a new future for the country. I am reminded of Gandhiji's statement which said that he would consider the country to be free when he can wipe the tears from every eye. It is true that we have wiped some tears. But we cannot honestly say that today there are no tears in the eyes of our millions. Today therefore, the major issue before me is how to eradicate poverty. The poverty of scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and those below the poverty line irrespective of their religion or faith.

So we need to lay special emphasis on such programmes and plans. As I was mentioning earlier, at the time of independence, our population was 32 crores and in these 50 years it has increased 3 folds. It is possible that it will touch 100 crores in the coming few years. It is a fact that despite the increase in population, there is food for everybody. We have to give special attention to those who still remain below the poverty line -- whether they are one third or 25%. We have to try and control the growing population and there are very strong reasons for this. The biggest reason is poverty because poverty, illiteracy and low status of women lead to an increase in population. The Government will present a national population policy and draft a new law for the same. Today my attention is drawn to slums where people live in extremely dirty surroundings. Similarly, pollution which is harming the health of our children is a cause for concern. Some years ago I had visited Sweden. At that time we felt that poverty alone breeds pollution. Today we have seen our country falling into a vicious circle. On the one hand, pollution breeds poverty and on the other hand prosperous people are causing greater pollution. Their cars emit smoke. They do not pay attention to this and do not object to accumulating filth in their surroundings. Therefore, if we all do not come together and try to break this vicious circle; if we do not fight against pollution the country will not be rid of filth and disease. The Government has framed a lot of policies for cleaning the rivers and lakes. These policies have succeeded to an extent but still a lot of work remains to be done. But I emphasise that if the Government keeps cleaning rivers and we keep polluting them, the purpose will be defeated. So we should awaken the people to launch an anti-pollution campaign and see to it that industries do not emit pollutants. Neither should fertilizers and insecticides be used in such a way that the ground water is polluted and it becomes difficult to get clean drinking water. This is why there is a shortage of clean drinking water. Though we have had a comprehensive environment policy, my topmost priority and foremost challenge on the 9th Plan is to provide clean drinking water to everyone.

The weaker sections of society and I am especially referring to "safai karmacharis" are today the most backward sections of society. They have

been denied

social justice so far. The Government has established a "safai karmachari" Commission to look into this. The Government is also trying to remove difficulties of night soil workers. Our attention is especially focussed on "safai karmacharis". Our attention is and will be on the backward sections and their upliftment. It is then that they will achieve economic independence. This independence will come when people from the backward classes; safai karmacharis, scheduled castes and scheduled tribes, receive a place of respect in society. You may have seen that in many Government offices there is extravagant expenditure. I have decided to set up a new Commission to look into this.

I wish to spend a few minutes on India's foreign policy. You know that the foundations of our foreign policy were laid during our freedom struggle by Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru. About Gandhiji it was always said that he was born in India, but his political birth took place in Africa. That is why we have had strong emotional relations with the nations of black Africa. When our independence came 50 years ago it was said that the winds of change would also sweep Africa and the rest of Asia. And indeed, soon, one by one the countries of Africa and Asia threw off the yoke of colonialism. These new independent nations came together to create an organisation called NAM. Our foreign policy was started by Jawaharlal Nehru. He said an independent nation's foreign policy should always be independent. That is why India has never been part of any bloc. When the world has been divided into various blocs India made sure that it did not get involved in bloc politics. We are proud of our non-aligned foreign policy.

You may remember that I refused to sign the CTBT, and even today we are firm on this issue. We will not sign the CTBT under pressure and until the nuclear weapon states destroy their stockpiles. I can proudly say that I have given a new direction to our foreign policy. This policy has been referred to by the media and intellectuals as the Gujral doctrine. Under the doctrine we wish to improve relations with our neighbours, and we are

progressing towards this. But we have to keep one thing in mind, that while relations can be improved we will not compromise on our security. Our armed forces have proved many a time that they can defend the nation if faced by an outside threat. Our history shows that we have never lost in wars because our people were not brave. Whenever we lost it was because we did not have the state of the art weapons. If our opponent had canons we fought with swords, and this was a mismatch. Our soldiers could only die displaying the highest bravery, our women folk could commit jauhar. I give my promise, we will never allow this to happen again. I promise our Navy, Air Force and Army that they will not remain technologically backward, and they can face the enemy eye to eye. Our scientists and technologists are today able to produce weapons which we do not have to buy from abroad. The cold war has ended. Inimical forces are becoming friendly today. Therefore our foreign policy lays stress on regional cooperation with countries in South Asia.

The region can stand the world if we move forward with the spirit of sharing. You have witnessed development of new friendly relations with Bangladesh. Our relations with Sri Lanka have also improved. Our traditional relationship with Nepal has been further rejuvenated. New levels of friendship have been established with the States of Bhutan and Maldives; an environment of friendliness is emerging. We have raised the concept of regional cooperation. Nepal, Bangladesh, Bhutan and the Indian States neighbouring Assam can help each other in progress and this area which was lagging behind in development since partition can move forward.

I am happy to announce that recently Nagaland has started its march towards peace. Ceasefire has been agreed after 30 years of militancy and I am hopeful that in the days to come peace would be restored in the entire North-eastern region. But one thing should be clear to all of us that there would be no compromise with terrorism. People using arms will be strictly dealt with. The country is eager to welcome back the misguided youths They are our brethren and children and if they give up arms and ask for their right, we will ensure them.

Today, I would like to refer to Pakistan also. Recently, Indo-Pak relationship have improved a bit. It is a matter of satisfaction to a level. We have already had Secretary-level talks and efforts are on to have a second round next month. Today after years of confrontation both sides have taken initiatives towards the establishment of peace. Indo-Pak friendship would benefit the two countries. It will in fact benefit the entire South-East region and would enable the Seven Nations in the region to open a front against poverty and backwardness. I want to state on behalf of India that we want to establish good friendly relations with the countries of the region including Pakistan. But we must accept that if friendly relations can be established only when we do not interfere in the internal affairs of each other and territorial sovereignty of each country is honoured. Today, India has the capability to protect its national independence, unity and integrity and there would be no compromise on secular unity and integrity.

We want friendship while protecting our territorial integrity. It is a matter of happiness that the situation has changed in the State of Jammu and Kashmir. We have succeeded in uprooting terrorism there. Today the democratically elected Government is in operation. I take satisfaction on stating that after five to seven years of terrorism, Kashmir has come out of the dark. The success was achieved only after the people of the State including women, youth from both Hindus and Muslims set up a front against terrorism. I, therefore request my neighbouring countries to take a pledge not to interfere in the internal affairs of each other and to honour each others' borders. I want to reiterate that India is willing to offer a number of concessions to the neighbouring countries for their economic prosperity but there can be no compromise on the issues of sovereignty, terrorism and secular unity. Our foreign policy has led to further improvement of relationship with neighbouring countries. Our relationship with the countries of Asia and Africa, Russia, Japan and China and Korea have improved. The relationship with China is also improving. You have witnessed emergence of better relationship with the European powers. European powers are today making heavy investments in our country. Our relations with the Americans are old and friendly. Our economic ties with

America have been strengthened and we intend to further improve them.

I want to give a message to the overseas Indians - they are living far away from the motherland and are proud of the achievements of India and have great love for their motherland. My Government would extend fresh concessions to the Non Resident Indians. These would include concessions in visa, acquiring of property and children education so as to further strengthen the emotional ties. Before I conclude, I once again congratulate my countrymen.

Before concluding, and I am saying this to those friends who may not have understood me in the language in which I was talking, I only want to say that I greet you all on this very happy occasion when India is finishing half a century of its Republic and entering into a new era, an era of progress, an era of peace, an era of leadership in which it wants to be a foremost country in economic development, in industrial development, agricultural development. It also wants to be an example in the world over in social justice. It wants to uplift all those sections of society which have not been given their fair deal. We shall give them a fair deal.

And may I also repeat what I have said at length in Hindi that our war against corruption is wholehearted, honest and candid and for this we have to build a massive movement in which we all can join so that corruption, both in politics, politicians and also in public life, ends. And at the same time, this movement must focus on small corruption, in police station, in villages, in government offices where we must start a new type of Satyagrah, that Satyagraha - non-cooperation with the ones who are corrupt; refusing to give into corruption. It needs courage. Sometimes, it is difficult but it is daring. Gandhiji's main heritage is this: That non cooperation can achieve wonders. Let us achieve it once again.

And also on this occasion, once again, I want to express my feelings of gratitude to the freedom fighters and also on behalf of the nation I want to thank them and also appreciate their sacrifices. I want to tell them with a sense of gratitude that the United Front Government has decided that whatever small, meagre - what is called pension is given to them, it is being

doubled from today. And also it is being linked with the DA Index so that if the prices go up, so shall their pension. I hope, and I pray that the veteran freedom fighters will accept the nation's small gift on this happy day.

Last year, standing from here, my worthy colleague Shri Deve Gowdaji had made a promise about Uttarakhand. I want to restate that promise. We will take the needed steps in this direction very soon.

And in the end, once again, our attention to national unity, to secularism, to our shared civilisation, to our common civilisation, “Sanjhi Sanskriti” “Mustaq Ganga Jamuni Tehzeb”.

We, the 96 crore Indians, professing different languages, living in different parts of India, having different historical division, we are one. We shall remain one.

We are all moving together and are now standing on the threshold of greatness. India is about to enter this new edifice of greatness which is waiting for us. It is waiting for our future, younger generation.

So today, let us come together and pledge to build a nation which will be united in spite of the diversities, different languages, are there but it will remain united. We will follow our faith, our own religions but will remain united. We will end class differences. We will build a nation where there will be no lower class or upper class, a nation where women will be honoured. And they will get their due.

We shall make a country, a country of equals; a country which is socially just; a country where woman gets her status, where the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes and minorities occupy a place of primacy.

So the same song comes to my mind which we sang yesterday night. “Sare Jahan se Achha, Hindustan Hamara”. And before concluding this speech, all of you would join me with full strength to say “Jai Hind”.