

Address by the President of India, Pranab Mukherjee to the Joint Session of both houses of Parliament

Honourable Members,

1. In this Basant season of renewal and growth, I welcome you all to the Joint Sitting of the Two Houses of the Parliament. I am confident that your deliberations will live up to the trust reposed in us by our fellow citizens, and going forth, we will all be partners in the progress and development of our great country.

2. During my address to the Joint Sitting last year, I had outlined the visionary initiatives undertaken by my Government towards building an India that strides into the future with confidence. A strong and forward-looking India that places within the reach of its people the opportunities and development promised by our Constitution. This development philosophy is captured in Sabka Sath Sabka Vikas, the fundamental tenet, which guides my Government.

3. Deen Dayal Upadhyaya spoke of Ekatma Manavata Darshan which envisages Antyodaya, where the empowering rays of opportunity reach the last person. This principle guides all the programmes of my Government. My Government, in particular is focused on "Garibon ki Unnati" (Poverty Eradication), "Kisaano ki Samridhi" (Farmers' Prosperity) and "YuvaonkoRojgaar" (Massive Employment Generation).

Honourable Members,

4. The overriding goal for my Government is poverty eradication. Gandhiji said and I quote "Poverty is the worst form of violence" (unquote). The essence of progress lies in bringing a sense of fulfillment to the poor and the deprived, the marginalized and vulnerable sections of the society. The poorest of the poor are entitled to the first charge on the nation's resources. Removing the scourge of poverty and destitution is our most sacred moral responsibility.

5. My Government is pledged to making this goal possible through financial inclusion and social security, the two wings on which human aspiration takes flight. To this end, my Government has placed great emphasis on food security, Housing for All and subsidies that reach those who need them the most, when they need them the most. Last year, I had spoken of the ambitious Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojna. Today, I am proud to say that it is the world's most successful financial inclusion programme. Under the programme, out of over twenty one crore accounts opened, fifteen crore accounts are operational with an aggregate deposit of over Rupees thirty two thousand crore. The programme has gone beyond mere opening of bank accounts, to becoming a platform for poverty eradication, by offering basic financial services and security to the poor.

6. To universalise social security, my Government has launched three new insurance and pension schemes; namely, the Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana, the Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana and the Atal Pension Yojana, which afford insurance cover to hitherto uncovered sections of society.

7. Government is committed to provide Housing for All by 2022. The Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana, launched on June 25, 2015, envisages construction of about 2 crore houses to benefit primarily slum dwellers, urban poor and people from economically weaker sections and lower income groups of society. The Mission intends to cover all 4041 statutory towns in coming 5 years. In its first year alone, 2011 towns/cities in 27 states have been included under this Mission. A total of over four lakh twenty five thousand houses have been sanctioned with a project cost of over rupees twenty four thousand six hundred crore.

8. Targeted subsidies ensure that benefits reach the deserving. Direct Benefit Transfer has so far been extended to 42 schemes funded by my Government. PAHAL has become the largest direct cash transfer program of its kind in the world, with nearly 15 crore beneficiaries. Since June 2014, the food security coverage has more than doubled to cover over 68 crore persons.

9. The Give-It-Up campaign in tandem with the Give Back programme has released subsidized fresh connections to 50 lakh BPL families. More than 62 lakh LPG consumers have voluntarily surrendered their LPG subsidy under the campaign. The highest number of new cooking gas connections to the rural poor were distributed in 2015.

10. Dr. Ambedkar had said and I quote "Political Democracy cannot last unless there lies at the base of it a social democracy" (unquote). Social justice with inclusion is the first promise of our Constitution and the poor and the backward are the focus of my Government. The Scheduled Castes and The Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act has been further strengthened by suitable amendments. The 125th Birth Anniversary of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar is being celebrated across the country to foster the spirit of social inclusion. 26th of November, the day on which the Constitution was adopted, is now celebrated as Constitution Day to deepen Constitutional values amongst the citizens of the country. My government is working to preserve the Panchatirthas, the five sites of Dr. Ambedkar's legacy.

11. Education empowers people and to serve this end, my Government has allocated more than 50% of the Ministry of Minority Affairs budget to scholarship funds. Two new schemes; Nai Manzil and USTAAD aimed to empower the minorities, have been launched. Currently about 20,000 madarasa children are undergoing skill training under the Nai Manzil scheme. Everlasting Flame, an exhibition to showcase the life, history and the culture of the Parsi community is being organized next month.
Honourable Members,

12. "Kisaano ki Samridhi", the well-being of farmers is vital to the nation's prosperity. Acknowledging this fundamental reality, my Government has renamed the 'Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperation' as the 'Ministry of Agriculture, Cooperation and Farmers Welfare' and taken several measures for the same. My Government has recently launched the farmer-friendly Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana, with the biggest-ever Government's contribution to crop insurance and with lowest-ever premium rates for farmers. It has many firsts to its credit like national coverage of post-harvest losses due to inundation and unseasonal rains, no capping on Government subsidy, and use of technology for early and accurate settlement of

claims. Assistance to farmers afflicted by natural calamity has been increased by 50% and eligibility norms have been relaxed.

13. Soil Health Cards will be distributed to all 14 crore farm-holdings by March, 2017 and will result in judicious application of fertilizers, lowering input costs and bettering soil health. To promote organic farming, Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana is being implemented under which 8,000 clusters have been developed so far.

14. The Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchai Yojana promises assured irrigation, expanding cultivated areas by improving water use efficiency and enabling drought proofing. My Government is committed to the philosophy of "Per Drop More Crop" and "Jal Sanchay for Jal Sinchan".

15. To provide the best market price to farmers, the unified National Agriculture Market is working towards setting up a common e-market platform to connect 585 regulated wholesale markets, thereby making India One food zone, One Country, One Market. This will immensely benefit our farmers in getting fair and remunerative prices. Targeted policy interventions in the last year have brought down sugarcane arrears from over Rs.21,000 crore to Rs. 720 crore.

16. My Government notified the New Urea Policy-2015 with the objective of maximizing indigenous production and improving energy efficiency. The policy will lead to additional production of 17 Lakh metric tonnes annually in the next three years. Providing 100% neem-coated urea has not only improved efficiency but has also helped in plugging subsidy leakages by preventing illegal diversion of subsidized urea to non-agricultural use. The highest ever urea fertilizer production was achieved in 2015.

17. My Government recognizes the important role of Animal Husbandry, Dairy and Fisheries sectors in the socio-economic development of the country. India continues to be the biggest milk producing country with an impressive growth rate of 6.3%. Implementation of Poultry Venture Capital Fund and Rural Backyard Poultry Development has led to highest ever egg production. A Blue Revolution is underway to ensure the integrated development and management of fisheries, with a central outlay of Rupees three thousand crore.

18. To fully harness the agricultural potential of eastern States, the government is taking several steps to usher in Second Green Revolution in the region. My Government has taken steps for strengthening agricultural higher education, setting up 109 new KVKs and three new Agricultural Technology Application Research Institutes. A 24x7 Kisan Channel has been launched to provide information on policy initiatives, prices and other agriculture related subjects for the benefit of farmers.

19. The food processing sector helps increase farmers' income. The Food Processing Fund has been operationalized last year to provide affordable credit to designated Food Parks. In the last 19 months, five new Mega Food Parks have been operationalized. Under the Cold Chain Scheme, 33 projects have been made operational during the last 18 months.

20. Rural development is one of our top priorities. The grant of over Rupees two lakh crores by the 14th Finance Commission over a five year period from 2015-16, exclusively for Gram Panchayats has been received with great enthusiasm by the States. This will move development activity closer to the people and enable them to decide how they want to improve their villages and wards. Shyama Prasad Mukherji Rurban Mission has also been launched for 300 rural growth clusters for developing skills & local entrepreneurship and providing infrastructure amenities.
Honourable Members,

21. Youth are the future of our country and ensuring YuvaonkoRojgaar through massive employment generation is a top goal for my Government. We are driving job creation through an integrated set of initiatives including Make in India, Start up India, Mudra, Skill India, etc.

22. My Government's innovative initiatives have helped India jump up 12 places in the latest rankings by the World Bank on Ease of Doing Business. Notably, the Make in India initiative has achieved a 39% increase in FDI inflow despite an adverse global investment climate.

23. My Government has fostered competitive cooperation among various States to enhance Ease of Doing Business. State Governments are being encouraged and supported to simplify procedures, introduce e-enabled processes and invest in infrastructure to improve investment climate. Procedures have been simplified to enhance ease of approvals/clearances. Dedicated Commercial Courts and Commercial Division in High Courts have been established. For speedy resolution of commercial disputes, the long overdue amendments to the Arbitration Act have been made.

24. Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises provide large-scale employment. Banks have cumulatively disbursed over Rupees one lakh crore to more than 2.6 crore borrowers under the PM's Mudra Yojana, of which 2.07 crore are women entrepreneurs. Udyog Aadhar Portal has been set up to facilitate online registration of MSMEs. My Government has decided to set up rural livelihood and technology business incubators to boost entrepreneurship in the agriculture and rural sector. The Start-up Village Entrepreneurship Programme is a new vertical to strengthen the livelihoods of artisans and weavers. In its first phase, about 1.82 lakh village enterprises will be created and strengthened in 125 Blocks across 24 States creating employment for about 3.78 lakh persons.

25. To strengthen the employment intensive segments of textile industry, my Government has launched an Amended Technology Upgradation Fund Scheme with an allocation of about Rupees eighteen thousand crore over a 7 year period.

26. A series of reforms have been initiated to help convert job seekers into job creators. My Government has launched the Start-Up India campaign which would deepen, expand and support the innovation eco system in the country.

27. The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme has been revamped to ensure the efficient disbursements of wages, increased transparency and creation of productive assets. Mission Antyodaya - an intensive Participatory

Planning Exercise has reached 2569 most backward blocks, to identify the kind of assets to be created.

28. My Government's mission of skilling India has gained momentum and during the last year about 76 lakh people have been trained.

Honourable Members,

29. My Government aims to create a Shikshit, Swasth, Swachh Bharat, an educated, healthy and clean India. In a reflection of how the spirit of Swachh Bharat has manifested in our primary schools, over four lakh seventeen thousand functional toilets for girls and boys have been constructed.

30. New Institutes of excellence in higher education have been set up. Two Indian Institutes of Technology, six Indian Institutes of Management, one Indian Institute of Science Education and Research and one National Institute of Technology have started functioning. My government has given impetus to research through the launch of IMPRINT India whereby scientific goalposts have been identified in 10 fields of research ranging from Defence to Sustainable Living. To enable increased interaction between foreign faculty and our students, under the aegis of GIAN, my government has in the first cycle invited 400 foreign academicians to 'Teach in India'. National Institutional Ranking Framework has been launched for higher educational institutions. The National Scholarship Portal provides a one-stop platform for applications of all scholarships.

31. Sports is the best way to Swasth India. My Government successfully hosted the 12th South Asian Games from 5-16 February, 2016 at Guwahati and Shillong, in which more than 3500 sportspersons from all the SAARC countries participated. The games were the biggest ever sporting event in North East India.

32. I am happy to inform that we have successfully eliminated Maternal and Neonatal Tetanus well before the global targeted timeline of December, 2015. The largest number of children ever fully immunized in a single year was in 2015.

33. My Government is leveraging KAYAKALP, an inter-institution ranking system to bring about extensive improvement in cleanliness in our health institutions, reduction of hospital-acquired infections and better service delivery.

34. My Government has placed strong focus on holistic healthcare, strengthening Ayurveda, Yoga & Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha & Sowa-Rigpa and Homoeopathy systems of medicine. The first International Day of Yoga was celebrated on 21st June, 2015 world over with immense enthusiasm.

35. To address the problems of malnutrition in a holistic manner, my Government is ensuring convergence of the actions of various Ministries and programmes with a clear focus on measurable outcomes. Infrastructure required for effective implementation of the Integrated Child Development Scheme is being strengthened in convergence with other programmes. Two lakh Anganwadi buildings are being constructed in 2,534 most backward Blocks under Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme over a period of four years.

36. My Government has launched the Sugamya Bharat Abhiyan, a nation-wide campaign for achieving universal accessibility for ensuring that persons with disabilities (divyang) participate in all areas of community life. During the last year, 342 camps were conducted, aids and assistive devices have been distributed to over 1.7 lakh persons with disabilities (divyangs).

37. The Swachh Bharat Mission, with its focus on behavioral change is becoming a community movement to herald an overall change in the quality of life and well-being of the people, particularly the poor. Focusing on generating wealth from waste, my Government has formulated policies on mandatory procurement of power from waste to energy plants, co-marketing of compost by chemicals and fertilizer companies, and use of construction and demolition waste.

38. My Government firmly believes that economic development and environmental protection can co-exist. At the crucial Climate Summit in Paris, India's position for climate justice, sustainable lifestyles and clean development was widely supported. Real time online monitoring of 1487 industries and industrial units in seventeen highly polluting categories and of Ganga Water Quality has started. To reduce air pollution, target for emission standards for motor vehicles have been drastically brought forward to achieve Bharat Stage - VI norm by 2021. The Project Tiger coverage has been expanded and the latest estimation shows an increase of 30% over the last count.

39. My Government has launched Jal Kranti Abhiyan, a people-centric program to spread awareness on water conservation and management involving all stakeholders including Gram Panchayats. As part of the Namami Gange Programme, my Government is implementing several projects in all 118 cities and complete sanitation solutions for 1,649 gram panchayats, on the banks of the holy Ganga.

Honourable Members

40. My Government has taken several measures to improve the quality of governance. Significant steps have been taken to reform institutions, simplify procedures and repeal obsolete laws. Close to 1800 obsolete legislations are at various stages of repeal. NITI Aayog is actively engaging with States in policy formulation in the true spirit of cooperative federalism. People's participation in policy making through initiatives like MyGov has now taken firm roots. My Government has taken up an initiative for providing 500 e-governance services through Public Private-Partnership in 12 states of the country. My Government has dispensed with interviews for posts at junior levels in Government of India to ensure absolute transparency in recruitment to Government jobs.

41. While on the one hand, my Government has taken measures to eliminate the scope for corruption, on the other hand, it has been unsparing in punishing those who are found guilty of corruption. Stringent amendments to the Prevention of Corruption Act are also on the anvil to address the perceived gaps in anti-corruption law.

Honourable Members

42. Robust infrastructure development unlocks opportunities for all. My Government has initiated the Smart Cities programme, envisaging city development in a challenge mode. In the first phase of the Smart City program, twenty cities have been selected

after intense competition among ninety eight cities. Second and third phases of the programme are on the anvil.

43. To enhance the availability of clean energy, my Government has envisaged increasing the renewable energy capacity manifold to 175 GW by 2022 by encouraging various initiatives, including offshore wind energy policy, bundling of thermal power with solar power, setting up solar parks in States, etc. Installed solar capacity has almost doubled in the last 20 months and crossed 5000 MW. Today under my Government, solar power is affordable and accessible to thousands of people.

44. Since the Government assumed office, energy shortages have been reduced from 4 to 2.3%. My Government is committed to providing electricity to all the census villages by May 2018. My Government has launched the Ujwal DISCOM Assurance Yojana (UDAY) for financial turnaround of Power Distribution Companies of States/UTs. Eighty-three per cent of the capacity addition target of 88,537 MW for 12th Plan period has already been achieved.

45. My Government has focused on commissioning major transmission projects for reducing congestion in transmission. I am happy to share that Available Transfer Capacity for South India has increased by 71% from May, 2014 to December, 2015. This has resulted in cheaper and abundant power in South India, finally moving towards the goal of One Nation, One Grid, One Price. To revive gas based power generation capacity, my Government implemented a new initiative of supply of Refined LNG. This has ensured revival of stranded gas plants with installed capacity of 11,717 MW. In the year 2015 India witnessed the highest ever generation of electricity.

46. My Government has introduced critical amendments in the Tariff Policy for ensuring availability of electricity to consumers at reasonable and competitive rates. Two ambitious National LED Programmes have been launched for cities for Street Lighting and LED bulbs for Domestic Lighting. Over 6 crore LED bulbs have already been distributed. Through a bulk procurement strategy, the cost of LED bulb has been brought down from Rs.310 in January 2014 to Rs.64 in January 2015.

47. My Government has introduced dynamic and comprehensive reforms in the Coal sector and conducted transparent auction/ allocation of over 70 coal blocks. These will immensely benefit the eastern States in the years to come. Strong emphasis on increasing coal production has resulted in a record 9.8% growth in CIL's coal production and highest ever output of coal. This has also led to reduced imports of coal.

Honourable Members,

48. To give a boost to the mining sector and to bring in transparency in the allocation of mineral resources, the Mines and Minerals Development and Regulation Act, 1957 was amended and auction of mines has commenced. For systematic exploration in potential mineral bearing areas using state-of-the-art techniques, National Mineral Exploration Trust has been established. Pradhan Mantri Khanij Kshetra Kalyan Yojana will implement developmental and welfare projects in mining affected areas for

minimizing adverse impacts and ensuring sustainable livelihoods for the affected people.

49. My Government has recently dedicated to the nation the Assam Gas Cracker Project with an estimated cost of more than Rupees nine thousand nine hundred crore. The project is expected to generate employment for about one lakh persons, both direct and indirect.

Honourable Members,

50. My Government has initiated several ambitious measures for improving sanitation standards at Railway Stations and Trains. "Samman" guides us in our endeavor to phase out the open discharge of sewage from trains and combat manual scavenging. All new coaches are now being fitted with bio-toilets. Focus has also been on Doubling, Gauge Conversion and capacity enhancement works in Railways. Commissioning of Broad Gauge and electrification have been at all-time record levels. The highest ever increase in railway capital expenditure was achieved in 2015.

51. A landmark agreement with Government of Japan will make the Mumbai-Ahmedabad high speed rail corridor a reality. My Government also awarded two mega projects for setting up diesel and electric locomotive factories at Marhaura and Madhepura, respectively.

Honourable Members,

52. By March 2019, under the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana, one lakh seventy eight thousand rural habitations will be connected with all weather roads. My Government has revived a majority of the 73 stalled road projects, completed construction of 7,200 km of highways and awarded 12,900 km of highway projects which is the highest ever number of new highway kilometers awarded.

53. My Government has formulated an umbrella scheme, Bharatmala at an estimated cost of over Rupees two lakh sixty seven thousand crore for development of national highways. To ensure connectivity to Chardham during all seasons, a project of over rupees twelve thousand crore has been taken up. A special Green Highways Policy 2015 has been launched for making highways green and a pilot policy for conversion of diesel buses into electrical buses has been taken up. The country recorded the highest ever production of motor vehicles in 2015. Guidelines have been issued for protection of Good Samaritans from harassment in road accident cases.

Honourable Members,

54. To rejuvenate the Shipping sector with focus on Make in India, my Government has launched a scheme for financial assistance to domestic shipyards. Several steps for improving the operational efficiency of major ports and for simplifying rules and processes have been initiated. In 2015, India achieved the fastest average turnaround time in ports and the highest ever quantity of cargo handled by major ports. My Government is keen on promoting extensive use of inland waterways and coastal shipping as an alternative mode of transport.

55. My Government is also working on a new Civil Aviation Policy with thrust on connectivity to small cities. Domestic Air Passenger traffic has registered a substantial growth during the year.

Honourable Members,

56. Setting up world-class infrastructure for Electronics manufacturing across the country remains a priority for my Government. Twenty nine Electronic Manufacturing Clusters are under development. The recent interventions and subsequent rationalization of duty structure in mobile handset manufacturing industry has led to near doubling of mobile handset production in the current year. Transparent and efficient auction of spectrum has fetched highest ever price of about Rupees one lakh ten thousand crore. Policies like Spectrum trading and sharing have been finalized for optimum utilization of resources.

57. The country recorded the highest ever software exports during 2015. Under BharatNet, the architecture and design of the National Optical Fiber Network is being revamped to rapidly take broadband connectivity to our villages. By spreading the network of Common Service Centers and setting up BPOs in small towns and linking land record modernization with the use of space technology, my Government is taking the benefits of Digital India to common citizens. The Digital India Programme will give a big boost to citizen empowerment and knowledge economy.

58. The IT Modernization Project involving computerization and networking of 1,55,000 Post Offices in the country, will be completed by 2017. The proposed Postal Payment Bank of India will further boost financial inclusion.

Honourable Members,

59. My Government has embarked on several significant projects such as National Supercomputing Mission, Improving Fuel Efficiency and Controlling Emissions. My Government has launched Science & Technology of Yoga and Meditation (SATYAM) initiative to explore the modern scientific roots of our traditional wisdom.

60. Building upon the success over the past year, my Government's endeavour is to scale new heights in Space. Focus will be on completing the constellation of the Indian navigational satellites in 2016 to cater to indigenous navigation and location-based services.

Honourable Members,

61. Varanasi and Jaipur have been declared as the first two Indian cities to be part of the UNESCO Creative Cities network. Thirteen Circuits and thirteen pilgrimage sites have been identified for development under Swadesh Darshan Scheme and PRASAD Scheme respectively.

62. Radio has once again emerged as the people's medium. Establishment of new radio stations has received a fresh impetus. The good response to the successful and transparent bidding for the first batch of private FM Radio for phase III comprising 135 channels in 69 cities augurs well for the medium.

Honourable members,

63. India is a haven of stability in an increasingly turbulent global economy. GDP growth has increased making India the world's fastest growing economy among large

economies. Inflation, fiscal deficit and current account deficit have all decreased. India recorded the highest ever foreign exchange reserves in 2015.

64. The Indra dhanush programme has been launched to revitalize public sector banks and ensure credit flow in the economy, with committed minimum recapitalization of Rupees seventy thousand crore. In addition, we have undertaken major governance reforms, brought in private sector talent and moved to a fully transparent and meritocratic recruiting process. We have also issued 23 banking licenses after a long hiatus of ten years.

65. The Government's concerted efforts to tackle the menace of black money have started yielding results. With the enactment of the Black Money (Undisclosed Foreign Income and Assets) and Imposition of Tax Act, 2015, a stringent legislative framework has been put in place to combat the menace.

66. The Government has launched the Gold Monetization Scheme and Sovereign Gold Bond Scheme in November 2015 to ensure productive utilization of idle assets.

67. The Government has taken a number of measures to put in place a simplified, progressive and non-adversarial tax regime by incorporating internationally prevalent best practices in tax administration. A gamut of taxpayer facilities, viz., e-filing of returns and various forms, electronic processing and retrieval of documents and online grievance redressal are now available to the citizen.
Honourable Members,

68. My Government is fully committed to firmly deal with all challenges concerning the security of the country. Terrorism is a global threat and strong counter-terrorism measures are necessary worldwide to eradicate it completely. Let me congratulate the security forces in successfully foiling the recent attack at the Pathankot air base by terrorists. Firm and effective steps will be taken to deal with any situation arising out of cross-border terrorism.

69. There has been significant improvement in the overall security situation in the North-Eastern States and Left Wing Extremism affected States. This has been made possible through sustained efforts and measures taken by the intelligence agencies and security forces in collaboration with the State Governments.

70. The country had to face severe drought and floods in some States. The unprecedented floods that submerged Chennai in December last year brought untold human suffering and economic loss. My Government stands with the people who have faced natural calamities and has immediately forwarded physical and financial resources to the States to handle such disasters. An amount of more than Rupees thirteen thousand crore has been released under State and National Disaster Response Fund.

Honourable Members,

71. Defence procurement procedure has been streamlined with a focus on indigenously designed, developed and manufactured weapon systems. We are working to ensure that our Armed Forces will be equipped with the most capable and sophisticated armaments in the world.

72. In our country "Shakti", which means power, is the manifestation of female energy. This Shakti defines our strength. My Government has approved the induction of women as Short Service Commission officers and as fighter pilots in the IAF. In the future, my Government will induct women in all the fighter streams of our Armed Forces. My Government has initiated several measures to ensure safety and security of women which include nationwide Emergency Response Systems, a Central Victim Compensation Fund, Cyber Crime Prevention against Women and Children, and Organized Crime Investigative Agency and an Integrated Emergency Response Management System for women's safety on the railways.

73. We are indebted to those who inspire by their selfless service and their supreme sacrifice in the line of duty. Acknowledgement must not hinge on ceremony or noble gestures of gratitude alone. In spite of huge financial implication of more than Rupees seven thousand crore per annum, my Government has fulfilled its commitment to implement four decades old demand of One Rank One Pension.
Honourable Members,

74. My Government has continued to pursue a bold and proactive foreign policy. The primary objective has been to accelerate national development with emphasis on improving India's access to capital, technology, resources, energy and skills. States have been made partners in our diplomatic efforts.

75. Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam: the world is one family. My Government is committed to this principle and its expression is most resonant in the steps we have taken in reaching out to our neighbours. Last year, my Government adopted the historic Land Boundary Agreement with Bangladesh, leading to the peaceful exchange of disputed territories between our two countries. The signing of the Motor Vehicles Agreement between Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal, will provide seamless connectivity and further strengthen ties. We have been a friend in need to Nepal during the devastating earthquake of April 2015. We opened our skies, became a key transit hub and essential enabler so that assistance from other countries could reach Nepal in its hour of need. My Government is committed to forging a mutually respectful relationship with Pakistan and in creating an environment of co-operation in combating cross border terrorism. My Government believes in a secure and prosperous future for our neighbourhood. India remains committed to providing support to the people of Afghanistan in realising their dream of building a stable, inclusive and democratic nation. Dedication of the Afghanistan Parliament to its people by Prime Minister Modi was our contribution to Afghanistan's pursuit of peace and prosperity.

76. We reached out to the world, both on land and sea. Of 54 participating nations, the India-Africa Summit, attended by Heads of States and Governments from 41 countries, has rejuvenated India's relations with the continent, ushering in a new era of engagement and fraternity. My Government will not let oceans separate us, and has activated engagement with the 14 Pacific Island countries and revitalized civilizational links with our vibrant Act East Policy. India's second International Fleet Review, attended by 50 foreign navies, reinforced our cultural, commercial and strategic connect with our immediate and extended maritime neighbourhood.

77. My Government has played a proactive role in addressing climate change by launching an International Solar Alliance that has been universally acknowledged. We

remain at the forefront of the global fight against terrorism. Sustained Indian efforts have led to concrete action for reforming the UN Security Council. India has also provided strong leadership and new vision to regional and international groupings like BRICS, G-20, WTO, East Asia Summit, ASEAN and the SCO.

78. My Government has enhanced NRI and PIO engagement by making it easier for them to get passports and offered Visa on Arrival by extending Electronic Travel Authorization facility to a large number of countries. Today, our citizens living and working abroad know that the Government is committed to protecting their interests and helping them in distress. This was manifested in OperationRahat, in which we successfully evacuated 4,748 Indians from Yemen. We also extended our assistance to other nationalities. We evacuated 1,962 Foreigners belonging to 48 countries.

Honourable Members,

79. My Government is focused on SabkaVikas, beyond just the economic advancements that dominate headlines. To realiseSabkaVikas, we must ensure that the poor and deprived are truly empowered to take advantage of opportunities to improve their lives. SabkaVikasmmeans that backward sections of society are equally valued and are genuine stakeholders in the country's progress. SabkaVikas implies that we tackle the pollution, traffic, and garbage problems that plague our cities. And, lastly, SabkaVikas is Development for the entire world, which is why we have to be a responsible member of the global comity of nations helping all humanity solve major challenges such as terrorism, climate change, and financial instability.

Honourable Members

80. Our Parliament reflects the supreme will of the people. Democratic temper calls for debate and discussion, and not disruption or obstruction. Aa No BhadraKratvoYantuViswataha - let noble thoughts come from all directions, should be the spirit behind debate in this temple of democracy. Being a member of this great institution bestows great honour as well as important responsibilities. My Government will constantly strive for smooth and constructive conduct of Parliamentary business. I urge all Members of the Parliament to discharge their solemn responsibilities in a spirit of cooperation and mutual accommodation. Let us all collectively endeavour to build a flourishing and prosperous India.

81. We owe a great debt to our freedom fighters. It is time to repay that debt, by building the country that they envisioned and fought for. In the words of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose, "Nationalism is inspired by the highest ideals of the human race, Satyam, Shivam, Sundaram", let us embrace those ideals as we stake our claim on the future.

Jai Hind