

## ADDRESS TO PARLIAMENT—5 JANUARY 1976

<b>Lok Sabha</b>	—	<b>Fifth Lok Sabha</b>
<b>Session</b>	—	<b>First Session of the Year</b>
<b>President of India</b>	—	<b>Shri Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed</b>
<b>Vice-President of India</b>	—	<b>Shri B. D. Jatti</b>
<b>Prime Minister of India</b>	—	<b>Smt. Indira Gandhi</b>
<b>Speaker, Lok Sabha</b>	—	<b>Shri Bali Ram Bhagat</b>

HONOURABLE MEMBERS,

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you all and particularly to have in our midst the representatives of Sikkim, which became the 22nd State of the Indian Union in May, 1975. It will be the endeavour of Government to ensure speedy development of this neglected hill State.

Last year, while noting the positive trends in the economy arising out of the firm measures taken by Government, I drew attention to the efforts of some groups to disrupt the existing system and institutions and the danger this posed to the stability and progress of our country. I appealed to them to follow the path of discussion to bring about changes and welcomed suggestions for reform. It is most unfortunate that this appeal was not heeded. Groups and elements of widely differing persuasions joined together to paralyse the country's economic and political life. They clutched at every opportunity to create confusion in the minds of the people and to foment chaos and disorder. Their activities seriously threatened internal security. They were directed towards undermining Government's vigorous efforts to curb economic offences, increase production and ensure the smooth and speedy movement of goods in order to stem the rising tide of inflation, stabilise the economy and bring relief to the people. The nation's interests demanded firm and decisive action.

The declaration of emergency on June 25, 1975, the 20-Point Economic Programme launched on July 1, 1975 and the steps taken to tone up efficiency in all spheres of national life have had a dramatic effect on the health of the nation. Diffidence and apathy have given place to confidence that we can face our problems successfully if we are disciplined and united, and do not allow our energies to be frittered away. Our people have given overwhelming support to the steps taken by the Government and have

welcomed the change in the atmosphere in the country. Strengthened by this, decisive action has been taken by Government on a wide front. Inflation has been checked. The overall price level has come down by 10 per cent when compared to the peak level reached in September, 1974, the fall in the price level of food articles being nearly 20 per cent. Stringent action has been taken against economic offences. Shortage of coal, power, intermediate goods like steel and cement and the dislocation and inefficient working of the transport system had severely strained the economy during 1973 and early 1974. This year production has increased and performance improved significantly in all these sectors. With the co-operation of workers, industrial peace has been maintained, save in a few isolated cases. Several distortions and imbalances that had developed in the economy have been corrected. As a result of this, the privileges enjoyed by some groups have been reduced. But it should be remembered that no single group can further its interests in isolation. The interests of each group are dependent on the soundness of the economy as a whole.

New vigour has been imparted to the implementation of programmes for the uplift of the poor. Rapid progress is being made in allotment of house sites to the landless, implementation of land reforms, increasing agricultural wages and giving relief from debts.

The problem of poverty cannot be solved in a short time. We can make a dent in it only through sustained hard work and discipline in all walks of life. The new spirit that has been generated over the last few months should therefore be maintained unimpaired.

The 20-Point Economic Programme will continue to be implemented with zeal. Government invites the full co-operation of the people as it is a peoples' programme and cannot be implemented by official agencies alone.

We have a record *kharif* crop this year. The maximum quantity of grain will be procured so that farmers will not have to sell below the procurement price and in order to have sufficient stocks to meet any unforeseen eventuality.

We aim to extend irrigation to five million more hectares before 1979. Disputes between States have delayed a number of projects. Government will try to get acceptance of the concept of water as a national asset to be utilised to the best advantage of all the people. A National Water Resources Council with adequate powers to prepare master plans for river basins will be constituted. Meanwhile, efforts have been intensified to settle as many disputes as possible by bringing the concerned States together. As a result, agreements have been reached regarding some projects in the Narmada basin, the Rajghat project on the Betwa river and the Kadana project on the Mahi river. The recent agreement amongst five States on the

utilisation of a major portion of the waters of the Godavari River is a landmark in the settlement of inter-State water dispute by negotiations. The Godavari basin covers a tenth of the area of the country and the agreement will enable the construction of projects to irrigate five million hectares of land.

The outlay on the annual plan this year is 25 per cent higher than last year's. This will be further increased next year with emphasis on priority sectors so that the impulses of growth are quickened. Simultaneously, steps will be taken to ensure the modernisation of industries like textiles and sugar, which are engaged in the production of mass consumption goods and have been suffering from obsolescence and sickness.

Industrial licensing policies and procedures have been under review. Controls which are no longer relevant will be removed to increase production in priority areas and widen the entrepreneurial base, consistent with the objective of curbing the concentration of economic power.

International economic events of the last three years have imposed severe strain on our balance of payments. A big increase in exports is essential to achieve a self-reliant economy. Several measures have recently been initiated to promote exports. Special steps will be taken, with the assistance of State Governments, to increase exports of handlooms and handicrafts. A review of policies and procedures is being made so as to remove constraints and obstructions.

Measures to improve administrative efficiency will continue and will be expanded. Our administrative procedures and attitudes have remained largely unchanged, specially in the field of financial administration which affects the working of all wings of Government. Government has decided upon a comprehensive scheme of reform of financial administration, which will be put through this year. The maintenance of accounts of the Union will be departmentalised and separated from Audit Rules and procedures for payment of salaries and pensions, maintenance of provident fund accounts, remittance and withdrawal of moneys, and for sanction of expenditure will be simplified and modernised. Methods of evaluation of performance will have to be changed in order to make the administration at every level result-oriented and accountable.

A major achievement in the field of health is the eradication of small pox. Strict vigil is being kept against the recurrence of this scourge. The campaign against other communicable diseases is being intensified.

We are aiming to reduce the birth rate to 30 per thousand in the next three years. To achieve this, the family planning programme will have to become a mass movement. New schemes of incentives and disincentives are being evolved to increase the acceptance of a small family.

Along with other countries, we observed 1975 as International Women's Year. The problems faced by women in a number of areas have been studied in detail. The Ordinance guaranteeing to women equal remuneration for equal work will come before you this session. A National Plan for Women is being prepared, the implementation of which will help to remove some disabilities from which they suffer.

I congratulate our space scientists and engineers on the construction of our first Satellite, Aryabhata. The successful working of the Satellite Instructional Television Experiment is a landmark in the practical application of science and technology for the benefit of the rural population. This Experiment will help us decide on the use of television as a means of mass communication in rural areas.

The importance of developing new sources of energy has been recognised and work is being intensified in a number of areas. Biogas plants and the utilisation of solar energy are being given high priority.

I shall now deal with our relations with other countries.

We remain firm in our conviction that normal and friendly relations between all the countries of the subcontinent are essential for the progress of their peoples.

Recent events in Bangladesh have caused us anguish and concern. We were shocked and grieved by the brutal assassination of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the members of his family and his associates. Nevertheless, we have treated developments in Bangladesh entirely as an internal affair of that country. We are therefore distressed by the false propaganda that is being carried on in some quarters. In recent talks between representatives of the two countries, we have reaffirmed our desire for a peaceful border and a stable, strong and independent Bangladesh in which the interest and welfare of all sections of its people are safeguarded. Bangladesh emphasised its desire to continue the policy and ensuring equal rights to all its people, irrespective of caste, creed and religion.

I regret that the progress of implementation of the Simla Agreement has been slow because of disappointing response from Pakistan, which has continued a campaign of misrepresentation of India.

Our traditional bonds of friendship with Bhutan are growing. The programme of economic co-operation has taken a giant stride with the starting of work on the Chukha hydro-electric project.

Relations with our friendly neighbour, Nepal, were further strengthened by the visit to India of their Majesties the King and Queen in 1975. As a result of the discussions held during the visit, there is better appreciation of the mutual advantages of a joint approach to the utilisation of waters of the rivers flowing into India from Nepal.

With Sri Lanka we have strengthened the tradition of informal and mutually beneficial exchanges and collaboration on matters of common interest. We have improved our economic, cultural and scientific links with Burma\*.

We have sought to strengthen our relations with our neighbours in South-East Asia as well as with Japan and other countries of East Asia. We rejoiced at the ending of the prolonged hostilities in Indo-China and have welcomed the negotiations leading to the reunification of the two Zones of Vietnam. We believe that a reunited Vietnam and stable and economically strong Cambodia and Laos will constitute forces for peace and stability in South-East Asia. I visited Indonesia in March, 1975, where I found a growing awareness of the possibilities and mutual advantages of increased economic, industrial and technological co-operation between Indonesia and India.

We have close and friendly ties with Afghanistan, based on historical and cultural affinity and on similarity of approach to current problems. We are gratified that programmes of technical and economic co-operation are making good progress.

Our understanding and mutually beneficial exchanges with Iran have grown and become more varied. An important landmark in this process has been the signing of agreements for the development of the Kudremukh Iron Ore Project.

Economic, commercial and cultural contacts with the Arab countries continued to make progress. My visit to the Arab Republic of Egypt and the Sudan gave me deeper insight into the problems of West Asia. Government reaffirms its belief that lasting peace in West Asia will not be achieved until Arab territories seized by force are speedily vacated and the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people restored.

We greet Mozambique, Angola, Cape Verde, Sao Tome and Principe on their achievement of independence from centuries of Portuguese colonialism. We also welcome the emergence to independence of Comoros, Surinam and Papua New Guinea.

We cannot but condemn armed intervention by South Africa in the internal affairs of Angola. India has steadfastly supported the organisation of African unity and will join with Africa in all measures to end apartheid, to liberate Namibia and to end racist minority rule in Zimbabwe and South Africa.

India's relations with the Soviet Union and countries in Eastern Europe are characterised by a spirit of warm friendship, understanding and mutually beneficial co-operation in a widening variety of fields. These countries have consistently supported India on all issues of vital concern. In the last few months, a number of high level visits have been exchanged and I visited Hungary and Yugoslavia.

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\* Now known as Myanmar.

In Europe, the successful conclusion of the conference on Security and Co-operation marks an important step in the consolidation of peace. This spirit of *detente* should extend to other parts of the world where conflict and tension persist. Our economic co-operation as well as relations in the fields of trade and science and technology with the E.E.C. and other countries of Western Europe has continued to expand.

We desire a mature and constructive relationship with the United States of America. A serious effort should be made to understand each other with a view to strengthening peace, stability and co-operation.

The next conference of Heads of State and Government of non-aligned countries will be held in Sri Lanka in August this year. We are glad that the validity of non-alignment has come to be recognised more widely. At the same time attempts are being made to weaken and dilute the non-aligned movement. We shall continue to strive to preserve the fundamental principles of non-alignment and the solidarity and effectiveness of non-aligned countries.

The most striking feature of the world economy is dominance by a small number of rich countries. The developing poor countries bear the brunt of the burden. As each year passes, the problems of these countries become more acute. This trend must be reversed urgently and steps taken to establish a new world economic order. The consensus reached at the seventh special session of the United Nations General Assembly marks the beginning of a dialogue. In the Paris Conference on International Economic Co-operation, we contributed constructively in an effort to evolve equitable solutions to the problems of energy, the pricing of raw materials and industrial products and of the economic development of poor countries. We hope that concrete agreements for action will be reached in relevant international forums as early as possible.

Hon'ble Members, in view of the uncertainties of the international situation, especially on our subcontinent and the neighbourhood, the continuing challenge of forces of disruption at home and the need to accelerate our social and economic programmes, the nation should remain vigilant and disciplined. There must be constant effort to improve performance and bring about changes and reforms in every sphere of national life.

Before concluding, I should like to refer to the unprecedented tragedy in Chasnala Colliery, which has plunged the whole nation in deep sorrow. The work on clearing the mine of the flooded water is in progress. Several friendly countries and a number of organisations within the country have come forward to assist us in this operation. Government will spare no efforts to mitigate the sufferings of the affected families and to improve conditions of safety for workers.

Your present session will be a short one, but the agenda is heavy. In addition to pending business from the last session and the conversion of Ordinances into Acts of Parliament, you have to consider the Bill on urban land, which will be introduced during the session. There is not a minute to waste. I am sure you will provide the clear, bold and firm lead which the people expect. I summon you to your labours and wish you all success.

Jai Hind.