

ADDRESS TO PARLIAMENT—18 FEBRUARY 1983

Lok Sabha	—	Seventh Lok Sabha
Session	—	First Session of the Year
President of India	—	Giani Zail Singh
Vice-President of India	—	Shri M. Hidayatullah
Prime Minister of India	—	Smt. Indira Gandhi
Speaker, Lok Sabha	—	Dr. Bal Ram Jakhar

HONOURABLE MEMBERS,

I welcome you to this first session of Parliament in 1983. The year ahead is full of challenges and opportunities, which will require the united efforts of Parliament, Government, and the people.

On the economic side, the need is to tone up the economy, enhance production and productivity, eliminate non-productive expenditure and contain prices. In the midst of inflationary pressures in several countries, we can take legitimate pride in our success in containing inflation. Wholesale prices in mid-January 1983 were only 2.8 per cent higher than 12 months earlier. And this in spite of widespread drought affecting 48 million hectares and 312 million (31.2 crore) people. The public distribution system was expanded and made more efficient. About 50,000 fair price shops were opened in the last three years. This year the Central Government would be releasing to the States about Rs. 7,000 million (Rs. 700 crore), the highest in any year for relief to victims of drought, floods and cyclones. Our sympathies go to the people hit by these natural calamities and we admire their courage and the sense of duty of relief workers.

The performance of our infrastructure and our industry has maintained improvement. Between April and December 1982, power generation rose by 7.2 per cent and production of coal by 4.2 per cent, cement by 10.2 per cent and fertilizers by 9.6 per cent. The railways increased the movement of freight by 3.5 per cent. The ports have, by and large, eliminated the waiting time of vessels. There has been a recovery in steel production. The high prices of oil continued to be a burden on the economy but domestic production of crude during the period rose by 30.6 per cent. Against 10.5 million (1.05 crore) tonnes in 1980-81, production was 16.2 million (1.62 crore) tonnes in 1981-82 and is anticipated to be 21 million

(2.1 crore) tonnes in 1982-83. In spite of the difficulties of balance of payments, unfavourable seasonal conditions, and the severe constraint on resources, the economy achieved reasonable growth for a second successive year. The turnover of public sector has increased by 21 per cent in the first nine months of the current year. There has been significant expansion in the small industry sector which has maintained a rate of growth of around 10 per cent. Despite the problems faced by *kharif* and *rabi*, procurement of rice and wheat was higher than in any previous year. Government have given farmers the benefit of higher procurement prices.

The increase in exports is being maintained. In the first seven months of the current financial year exports are expected to be about 17.8 per cent higher than the provisional figure of Rs. 39,600 million (Rs. 3960 crore) in the corresponding period of the previous year. The trend towards rapid increases in imports has been curbed. Although the overall import bill may show a rise to meet the developmental needs of our economy, it will be possible to check the growth of imports further with the accelerated programme of oil exploration and production and increased investments in other sectors such as steel and fertilizers. Prices of the raw materials which developing countries export have fallen sharply, while the prices of manufactured goods which we import have gone up considerably. The high interest rates in the West have further aggravated the situation for countries like India.

The world is going through a critical economic period. Many countries are in the grip of recession and have been cutting down investment. We, however, were able to maintain the tempo of our development. Central Plan outlay has increased by 27 per cent and the total outlay on Central and State Plans put together has gone up by 21 per cent. The Revised Twenty-Point Programme, which was announced on 14 January 1982 with its emphasis on the service of the poor and the weak, has shown heartening results. This year, more than 330 million additional man days of rural employment will be generated under the National Rural Employment Programme. There has also been significant spurt in the activities of Khadi and Village Industries Commission and efforts have been consciously made to link these with the overall effort towards rural employment. Drinking water facilities have been extended to a further 24,000 problem villages. More than 540,000 house sites have been provided. Loans from the Housing and Urban Development Corporation will help the construction of 225,000 dwellings. An additional irrigation potential of 2.35 million hectares is being created during the year.

As a token of the debt which the nation owes to persons who brought us freedom, the Government have enlarged the Freedom Fighters' Pension Scheme.

Government are vitally concerned with the welfare of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and have evolved a three-pronged strategy. This consists of the Special Component plans of State Governments and Central Ministries, special Central assistance in addition to the States' Special Component plans, and the Scheduled Castes Development Corporations. Special Central Assistance for tribal sub-plans has been stepped up from Rs. 850 million (Rs. 85 crore) to Rs. 950 million (Rs. 95 crore) for 1982-83.

The social and economic advancement of the economically weaker sections and of the backward classes of our society will continue to be given priority in Government's development programmes. A centrally sponsored scheme of fishermen's insurance has been launched.

There was a surge of popular support to and participation in the Family Planning Programmes. During the period April 1982 to January 1983, the number of acceptors of all family planning methods was 16 per cent higher than that for the corresponding period of the previous year. Programmes for the control of leprosy, blindness and tuberculosis are being implemented with renewed vigour under the Revised Twenty-Point Programme.

Our concern for industrial workers equals our concern for agricultural workers and farmers. The amendments to the Industrial Disputes Act provide for internal machinery to settle grievances and ensure that labour courts give decisions within a stipulated time.

Programmes and strategies for improving the quality of education, eradication of adult illiteracy and universalising elementary education in the age group of 6-14 continued to receive high priority with special emphasis on the education of girls.

Two significant events of last year which will have a far-reaching impact on the future of our young people, and their physical and mental alertness are the creation of a Department of Sports and the successful holding of Asian Games. The manner in which the Games were organised has been widely acclaimed. The construction and upgradation of 17 stadia and sports facilities conforming to international standards proved our capacity to rise to major challenges. This infrastructure will serve our sportsmen and sportswomen in the years to come.

The Games also provided the occasion for the extension of television to many new areas and the introduction of colour telecasting. Our television policy will give special attention to the needs of our rural population and the utilisation of this powerful medium for education and development.

It has been an eventful year for our science and technology. We have formulated and announced a Technology Policy Statement setting out the considerations that will guide our decisions in the development of indigenous technology and the import of such technology as will strengthen us. We shall pursue our search for technological self-reliance. We are paying

attention to both basic science and to new areas like biotechnology, immunology, fast breeder technology in nuclear science and ocean engineering. Our second scientific expedition is now in Antarctica continuing important experiments and surveying the area for setting up a permanent manned station in future. Our work in the survey of polymetallic nodules on the ocean floor has been rewarded with our recognition, at the Conference of Law of the Sea, as a pioneer investor. We are the only developing country so recognised.

INSAT-1B which will be launched this year will help us attain a high level of telecommunications, television and meteorological capability. It will incorporate the modifications required in the light of our experience with INSAT-1A, the basic design of which was sound.

Honourable Members are aware of the problems we faced in ensuring continuity of fuel supplies for our Tarapur nuclear power reactor. These have now been sorted out in consultation with the Governments of France and USA.

I shall now turn to the domestic political scene. Divisive and disruptive forces are at work fomenting violence and weakening the national fabric. These must be fought resolutely. Government have taken the initiative to associate the Opposition in discussions on major issues like those relating to Assam and the Punjab, and this welcome trend must continue. Communal and anti-national elements have been indulging in objectionable activities in many areas and these will have to be effectively curbed. Extremist organisations have been active in certain north-eastern States and territories. We have adopted a well-coordinated drive to combat these activities and maintain peace and normalcy. Meanwhile the tempo of development effort all over the north-eastern region has been stepped up.

Elections have recently taken place in Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Tripura and the Union Territory of Delhi and in Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Kerala and West Bengal earlier. Polling has just concluded in Meghalaya and is in progress in Assam. These elections have been part of our democratic tradition and a constitutional obligation.

The international situation has deteriorated. The escalation of foreign military intrusion in the Indian Ocean in disregard of the wishes of littoral States, the continuing war between Iran and Iraq, the increasing recklessness of Israel and the sufferings of the Palestinians, the aggressive acts of the racist regime of South Africa against its own people and its neighbours and the lack of progress in the Disarmament Talks and in North-South dialogue are all matters of concern. Political solutions are yet to be found to the situations in South-West and South-East Asia.

Certain developments in our neighbourhood have worsened our security environment. The entire nation is exercised over the acquisition of sophisticated weaponry by our neighbour, Pakistan. Our own policy has

been to pursue initiatives and improve relations with our neighbours. It is hoped that the meetings that have taken place with the President of Pakistan and between officials of the two countries will eventually lead to the conclusion of an enduring relationship of peace, friendship and cooperation.

We have also had talks with the Chief Martial Law Administrator of Bangladesh. These have led to a strengthening of friendly relations. The third round of official-level talks with China on the boundary question and other bilateral matters took place in Beijing last month. Our relations with Bhutan, Nepal, and Sri Lanka have maintained their even course.

Our policy of non-alignment has helped us work unswervingly for the objectives of peace, friendship and stability throughout the world and in our region. As Honourable Members are aware, the Seventh Conference of Non-Aligned Countries will take place early next month in New Delhi. We are playing host to it at the unanimous request of the non-aligned community. It will be the largest gathering of Heads of nations to be held in our country. It is our ardent hope that the summit will make an important contribution to the solution of the problems besetting the international community. Later in the year another major conference is being held in the Capital—the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting. We must put all our energies into the task of making a success of both these conferences.

I should also refer to the visits of my predecessor to Ireland and Yugoslavia and our Prime Minister to the United Kingdom, Saudi Arabia, the United States of America, Japan, Mauritius, Mozambique and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the visits to India of the Presidents of Tanzania and Greece, King of Bhutan, the Presidents of Mozambique, Algeria, Nauru, Pakistan, France, Egypt and Nigeria, the Prime Ministers of the United Kingdom, Nepal and Mauritius, the Chairman of the P.L.O., the Chief Martial Law Administrator of Bangladesh as well as other statesmen. These exchanges have been of mutual benefit.

Hon'ble Members, the economic and political crises in the world have led to a sharpening of tensions which India can withstand only through vigilance, unity and the optimal use of its own productive capacity. Apart from fighting corruption and inefficiency, it must be ensured that differences are not aired in a manner which provokes violence or weakens our secular democratic fabric. In the last three years we have been able to maintain stability and progress. It is my earnest entreaty that the entire nation will work together to maintain India's integrity and enhance its welfare and good name.

I urge Honourable Members to approach the vital tasks before them in a spirit of cooperation and harmony. I wish you all success in the budgetary, legislative and other business that awaits you.

Jai Hind.