

## ADDRESS TO PARLIAMENT—17 JANUARY 1985

<b>Lok Sabha</b>	—	<b>Eighth Lok Sabha</b>
<b>Session</b>	—	<b>First Session after the 8th General Election</b>
<b>President of India</b>	—	<b>Giani Zail Singh</b>
<b>Vice-President of India</b>	—	<b>Shri R. Venkataraman</b>
<b>Prime Minister of India</b>	—	<b>Shri Rajiv Gandhi</b>
<b>Speaker, Lok Sabha</b>	—	<b>Dr. Bal Ram Jakhar</b>

HONOURABLE MEMBERS,

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to this first session of the Eighth Parliament. I felicitate the members of the new Lok Sabha and trust that they will make a significant contribution to the nation's progress.

For India, 1984 was a year of trial and tribulation. But in the midst of sorrow and anguish, there was also hope and strong affirmation of the principles the nation has chosen and cherished.

In the earlier part of 1984, subversive and anti-national elements stepped up their activities in Punjab. The process of dialogue was frustrated. A serious threat to the unity and integrity of the country was posed by extremists and terrorists. The Army had to be called in aid of the civil authorities. The series of events which compelled the Government to use the Army to deal with the threat to India's unity and integrity have been chronicled in the White Paper issued on July 10, 1984.

On October 31, 1984, our beloved leader and Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi, was assassinated in an act of perfidy.

A Commission of Inquiry headed by Justice M.P. Thakkar has been appointed to enquire into the facts and circumstances leading to the assassination.

Indira Gandhi has joined the ranks of the immortals of world history. The saga of her life will inspire generations to come. Every moment of her life was devoted to the consolidation of the unity of India and to the strengthening of the Indian people in all spheres. No memorials can fully capture the magnificence and radiance of her personality. The best homage

that we can pay to her memory is to follow the path she illumined till her last breath.

Disturbances and violence in Delhi and in some other parts of the country, following Indira Gandhi's assassination, resulted in loss of life and property. Stern and effective action was taken to control the situation within the shortest possible time. My Government extend their deepest sympathy to the families which suffered during the violence. Rehabilitation of the affected persons is a priority task to which both the Central and State Governments are attending with a sense of urgency.

Government express their deepest sympathy with those families which were victims of the gas tragedy in Bhopal. Rehabilitation of families which have lost their bread-winners is being attended to. Action is also being taken to secure compensation for the affected families. Government are undertaking a thorough examination of the location policy and safety measures of industrial establishments with a view to preventing the recurrence of such disasters.

The maturity and strength of India's democratic system were demonstrated by the smooth and orderly election of Shri Rajiv Gandhi as the new leader of the Congress (I) Parliamentary Party. Elections to the Lok Sabha were promptly called. The fair and peaceful manner in which they were held is tribute to the democratic genius of our people.

The elections of 1984 mark the resurgence of Indian nationalism, transcending all barriers of community, caste and region. The unprecedented mandate received by the ruling party under the leadership of Shri Rajiv Gandhi shows the overwhelming concern of our people for the unity and integrity of the nation and their desire for a strong and stable Government at the Centre.

The unambiguous verdict of the people is also for continuity of the basic policies which have given strength to our country with dynamic responses to changing situations.

The economy has made significant progress during the last five years. The average growth rate in the Sixth Plan period is likely to hit the target level of 5.2 per cent. Foodgrains production rose from 109.7 million tonnes in 1979-80 to 151.5 million tonnes in 1983-84, exceeding the year's target by as much as 9.5 million tonnes. Agricultural production in the current year is expected to maintain its buoyancy. The enterprise and hard work of our farmers and agricultural workers have written a new chapter of high achievement of which all of us can be proud. The most noteworthy feature of the acceleration in agricultural growth is the spread of the Green Revolution to the Eastern and the Central regions of the country.

Industrial production during the Sixth Five Year Plan has also recorded an increase of nearly 24 per cent upto 1983-84. In the first six months of the year a growth rate of over 7 per cent has been recorded. This will give a strong thrust to the economy. The working class, in accordance with its traditions, has made a notable contribution to the increase in production.

There has been a remarkable improvement in the performance of infrastructural industries during the Sixth Plan period. By the end of 1983-84 coal production had increased by 32.9 per cent and electricity generation by 32.6 per cent. Production of crude petroleum had registered a growth of 121 per cent. Production of fertilizers and cement have also registered increase of 52.3 per cent and 53.6 per cent, respectively. During the current year these sectors have registered further growth.

The price situation has shown considerable improvement. During the current year till the end of December 1984, the wholesale prices rose by only 4.8 per cent as against 7.7 per cent in the corresponding period of 1983. The annual rate of inflation as at the end of December, 1984 was 5.4 per cent as against 10.7 per cent at the end of December, 1983.

The success in containing inflationary pressures was due to the efficient management of the demand and supply position. Efforts were made to check the pace of monetary expansion and also to restrain government expenditure. On the supply side a number of initiatives were taken to increase availability of essential commodities. Larger production in response to Government policies of providing remunerative prices and of supply of key inputs, adequate imports of essential commodities wherever needed and the building up of large buffer stocks of foodgrains have helped in this process. The public distribution system has played a key role in maintaining price stability.

The external payments position has continued to improve. It may be recalled that the Government had voluntarily given up the balance part of the SDR 5 billion available under the IMF arrangement after drawing only SDR 3.9 billion. The reserves position has since been further strengthened. Foreign exchange reserves increased from Rs. 4265 crores at the end of 1982-83 to Rs. 5498 crores at the end of 1983-84. They increased further to Rs. 6250 crores at the end of December, 1984. However, this is an area in which there can be no room for complacency.

Through the 20-Point Programme, vigorous efforts continued to be made for the alleviation of poverty. In the first four years of the Sixth Five Year Plan the Integrated Rural Development Programme covered 4.7 million families belonging to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and 7.9 million families of economically weaker sections comprising various other communities. This, together with an additional 19.45 lakh families covered during the current year upto November, 1984 bring the total number of families covered under the Programme to 14.5 million. The National

Rural Employment Programme (NREP) and the Rural Landless Employment Guarantee Programme (RLEGP) have substantially expanded employment opportunities for the rural poor. In implementing these programmes special emphasis has been given to benefiting women and minorities.

Under the rural drinking water supply programme, out of 2.31 lakh problem villages 1.52 lakh had been covered till March 31, 1984. During 1984-85, nearly 42,000 more villages will have been covered.

Additional irrigation potential of 11.5 million hectares is expected to be created during the Sixth Plan. The total irrigation potential of the country by the end of the Sixth Plan is expected to be of the order of 68 million hectares against the ultimate potential of 113 million hectares. The multi-purpose development of Narmada Valley has been taken up.

The all-round progress of the economy in the Sixth Plan testifies to the soundness of the strategy of planned development and is a tribute to the dynamic leadership provided by Shrimati Indira Gandhi. Government are now formulating the Seventh Five Year Plan in the light of the Approach Paper. The priorities in the Seventh Plan were summed up by Shrimati Indira Gandhi as 'Food, Work and Productivity'. The country has now to make disciplined and vigorous efforts to reach a higher stage of development in which the imperatives of technological advances and social justice reinforce each other.

The new Government have inherited a coherent and principled foreign policy from Jawaharlal Nehru and Indira Gandhi. The continuity and wide acceptance of our foreign policy rests on our firm adherence to the principles and purposes of the United Nations Charter, commitment to non-alignment and stout opposition to colonialism, old and new, and racial discrimination.

As Chairman of the Non-Aligned Movement, India has worked together with other nations to build a just world order and helped reduce tensions and resolve conflicts between member States. The single most important challenge today is the threat of nuclear war. Last year, Leaders of Argentina, Greece, Mexico, Sweden, Tanzania and India collectively called upon the nuclear weapon States to declare a nuclear freeze and to substantially reduce nuclear stockpiles. In a few days from now, the leaders of these six countries will meet in New Delhi to consider what further action they can take to contain the nuclear peril.

We welcome the resumption of talks in Geneva between the USA and the USSR and hope that they would lead to meaningful disarmament measures.

Government attach high priority to developing close relations with all our neighbours. We are keen to see progress in the South Asia Regional Cooperation framework.

The militarisation of the Indian Ocean is continuing. This brings tensions and the possibility of conflict close to our shores. Government are committed to the objective of demilitarisation of the Indian Ocean so that the tensions are removed from this region and the littoral States, which are mostly developing countries, can devote their resources, attention and energy to the all-important tasks of development.

The induction of sophisticated armaments in our neighbourhood is a matter of grave concern. We hope Pakistan will respond positively and constructively to the several initiatives taken by Government.

The ethnic violence in Sri Lanka is a matter of deep concern to us. We are convinced that use of force cannot lead to a solution. A political process, in which all the concerned parties are involved, can alone result in a just settlement. Conditions must be created in Sri Lanka to enable the return of the large number of refugees who have been forced to take shelter in India.

Our relations with China have shown improvement. We shall persevere in seeking a solution to the boundary question.

Our friendly relations and cooperation with the Soviet Union and other socialist countries continue to develop.

We welcome the increasing cooperation in economic, scientific, cultural and educational fields with the United States of America.

We have noted with satisfaction the uninterrupted development of our bilateral relations with countries of West Asia, South-East Asia, and the Pacific region, East Asia, Africa, Western Europe, Central and South America and the Caribbeans.

We are distressed at the unprecedented drought and famine in parts of Africa. We have contributed 100,000 tonnes of wheat for famine relief and have offered medical help. The world community must come to the aid of the African nations in distress.

During the past year, I paid State visits to Argentina, Mexico, Mauritius, the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen and the Yemen Arab Republic. The late Prime Minister visited the USSR, Libya and Tunisia. We also had the privilege to host visits by the King of Bhutan, the Amir of Qatar, the Presidents of Sri Lanka and Yugoslavia, the Federal Chancellor of Austria, the Prime Ministers of Czechoslovakia, Japan, New Zealand and Vanuatu, the Secretary General of the Communist Party of Vietnam and the Chairman of the Burma Socialist Programme Party. All these exchanges have helped in further promoting friendly ties and cooperation between India and these countries. Leaders of 102 countries were in New Delhi in early November to attend the funeral of Shrimati Indira Gandhi, bringing to us the sympathy of their peoples in our hour of sorrow.

I now turn to future tasks. The Prime Minister has already expressed Government's determination to find solutions to the problems in Punjab and Assam.

Government are committed to a clean public life. They intend to initiate wide-ranging discussions on electoral reforms with political parties and would welcome their cooperation.

In consonance with the objective of a healthy political system, Government intend to bring forward in this session of Parliament an anti-defection Bill.

Government will pursue vigorously the reforms of the administrative system in order to make it more efficient and responsive to the people's needs and aspirations.

Textile industry is in a poor state of health and this problem needs immediate attention. Government will formulate and announce a new policy for the industry.

Comprehensive reforms will be introduced in the educational system and a new National Education Policy will be formulated.

Our judicial system has an important role in upholding the Constitution and in protecting the fundamental rights of the people. Some aspects need attention. The underprivileged sections of society must have easier access to judicial remedies. Speedier justice has to be ensured. Government intend to introduce measures for fulfilling these objectives.

Government will accord high priority to the social, economic and cultural development of women. An important step in this direction will be the provision of free education for girls upto the end of higher secondary stage. Government will frame a new national programme for women. In both the formulation and implementation of this programme, voluntary organisations will have an important role.

1985 is being observed as the Year of Youth. Our youth have already shown great promise in promoting national integration undertaking social work and achieving excellence in all fields of human endeavour. The need of the hour is to let the youth come forward to participate enthusiastically in nation-building. Appropriate programmes in this regard will be implemented.

Government have constituted a separate Department of Forests and Wild Life in recognition of the vitally important national task of conserving and developing our forest wealth. A new forest policy will be announced soon. A Wasteland Development Board is being setup to give new impetus to afforestation as a people's movement. Steps are being taken to deal effectively with the problems of air and water pollution.

My Government are establishing a Central Ganga Authority to stop the pollution of the Ganga. The Ganga is no ordinary river. With it are bound long memories of our past, our song and poetry and our search for Truth. A cleaner Ganga is thus a matter of the deepest satisfaction to our people.

Government attach high importance to the preservation of our cultural heritage. Equal importance will be given to promotion of creativity in the arts. Encouragement of science and technology and the application of scientific knowledge for solving the problems of the people will continue to receive high priority.

These are some of the priorities of national effort. Our duty as representatives of the people is to canalise the tremendous upsurge among the masses into cooperative and disciplined endeavour to accelerate development and to prepare the country for the 21st century. I wish you success in this great and exciting task.

Jai Hind.