

## ADDRESS TO PARLIAMENT—12 MARCH 1990

Lok Sabha	—	Ninth Lok Sabha
Session	—	First Session of the Year
President of India	—	Shri R. Venkataraman
Vice-President of India	—	Dr. Shanker Dayal Sharma
Prime Minister of India	—	Shri Vishwanath Pratap Singh
Speaker, Lok Sabha	—	Shri Rabi Ray

HONOURABLE MEMBERS,

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to this first session of Parliament in 1990. I extend to you my best wishes for the successful completion of the budgetary and legislative business ahead.

The elections recently held to the Legislative Assemblies in nine States and one Union territory have, by and large, reaffirmed the verdict of the people in the last Lok Sabha elections in favour of change.

My Government assumed office only a hundred days ago. In this short span it has already taken a number of positive initiatives in several spheres to fulfil the pledges it had made. My Government has responded to the sacred trust reposed in it by our people.

The situation in Jammu and Kashmir, which had deteriorated for the last few years, continues to be serious. Government has noted with particular concern that external forces have tried to encourage terrorism, to internationalise the issue, and to organise intrusions across the border. My Government has acted firmly against these forces. J&K is an integral part of India and my Government will not brook any interference from others in our internal affairs. The State Government is taking all possible measures to check and curb terrorism and secessionism and to restore normalcy. My Government will take positive steps to remove all legitimate grievances and to accelerate development activity in the State.

Government attaches high priority to restoring normalcy in Punjab and generating a feeling of confidence among the people of that State. Steps have been taken to involve all sections of the people and find a solution to the problem in a spirit of reconciliation and consensus. The State administration will be firm and fair and there will be no compromise with

terrorism and secessionism. The Government has fulfilled the promise of repealing the 59th Constitution Amendment which contained special provisions for promulgating emergency applicable only to the State. My Government seeks the cooperation of all to create conditions conducive to the restoration of the democratic process in the State.

We are proud of the secular basis of our nationhood. Government is taking measures to strengthen secularism. The National Integration Council has been reconstituted and will meet soon.

The communal situation has improved visibly since the Government assumed office. My Government has taken a fresh initiative with a view to resolving the Ram Janam Bhoomi—Babri Masjid dispute amicably. The solution of such an emotive issue should be arrived at through dialogue and consensus. A three member Committee has been set up by the Government to find an acceptable solution.

Government has initiated several measures to provide for relief and rehabilitation of those affected by communal violence, including the victims of the 1984 riots in Delhi and the 1989 riots in Bhagalpur. Special Courts have been set up in Delhi and Meerut to try cases connected with communal riots. The Bihar Government has been asked to set up Special Courts to try cases connected with the riots in Bhagalpur. No effort will be spared to guarantee full protection to the minorities and to maintain communal harmony. Government is effectively monitoring the implementation of the 15 Point Programme for the welfare of minorities. A panel has been set up to suggest steps for the implementation of the Gujral Committee recommendations on the promotion of Urdu.

To strengthen the national fabric it is of utmost importance that the Centre and the States work together in a spirit of cooperation, goodwill and harmony. To ensure smooth Centre-State relations Government has decided to set up an Inter-State Council. The first meeting of the Council will be held soon.

Government has decided to set up a National Security Council with a view to evolving long term policies appropriate to the regional and international environment.

My Government would like to assure our people regarding the high state of our defence preparedness and the morale of the armed forces. We are fully prepared to meet any external threat.

The problems of ex-servicemen will receive full consideration. Government is examining the modalities for implementing Government's commitment to the proposal of "one-rank-one-pension" for ex-servicemen.

The dignity of the nation and the individual rest in no small measure, upon strong and vibrant democratic institutions. These in turn are closely linked with certain sound and lasting values in our public life. My Government will fight those trends which have, in recent years, sapped our democratic institutions of their vitality and strength. Government is taking steps to ensure that our election system is rid of the debilitating effect of money and muscle power. A Committee on Electoral Reforms has been constituted comprising representatives of political parties and eminent persons. A Bill has been introduced in the Parliament for the creation of the institution of the "Lok Pal". Even the highest political offices in the country, including that of the Prime Minister, will be placed under the purview of the "Lok Pal". The Government will introduce suitable legislation to set up a high level Judicial Commission for the appointment of High Court and Supreme Court Judges and for the transfer of High Court Judges. I have also asked the Parliament to reconsider the Post Office (Amendment) Bill. The Bill had created widespread concern that it would seriously interfere with the citizens' right to privacy.

A free media imparts strength and vitality to the democratic process. My Government has already initiated steps to grant autonomy to the electronic media. The "Prasar Bharati Bill" was introduced in the last session of Parliament. Government is committed to ensure freedom of the Press. Concrete steps will be taken to guarantee the people's right to information and legislation will be introduced to amend the Official Secrets Act.

The year 1989-90 has been a difficult year for the economy. The growth of production slowed down in both agriculture and industry compared with growth in the previous year. The deceleration in the industrial sector was especially sharp with production growing by only 4.2 per cent in the first six months. The slow down in growth has been accompanied by an intensification of macro-economic imbalances which have built up in the past few years.

The budgetary situation deteriorated significantly in the course of 1989-90. When the new Government took office, the budget deficit had reached Rs. 13,790 crores. Prices came under pressure in 1989 despite the fact that it was the second year of good harvests. The balance of payments, which had already come under strain in 1988-89, continued to show a large financing gap in 1989-90. The external debt position deteriorated further.

Since assuming office, my Government has given the highest priority to improving the management of the economy. The procurement of rice has touched a new high at 9.32 million tonnes. Foodgrain stocks in the central pool have been augmented and now stand at 11.67 million tonnes compared to 8.34 million tonnes at this time last year. Special efforts are being made

to augment supplies of essential commodities through the public distribution system and to improve the functioning of the system. Prices of essential commodities such as rice, sugar and tea which had risen sharply earlier have shown a downward trend in the three months since the new Government assumed office. However the Government is fully aware that the overall price situation continues to be difficult. There will be no complacency on this front and control of inflation will continue to be our first priority in economic management.

The balance of payments problem demands urgent attention. This problem is also basically a reflection of the fiscal crisis facing the country and resolution of the problem requires the restoration of the fiscal balance. There is significant scope for efficient import substitution and reducing the growth in consumption of bulk commodities where our dependence on imports is increasing. However, the only lasting solution to our external payments difficulties is to greatly strengthen the export effort. There are distinctly positive trends in the current year with exports growing very much faster than imports. A concerted national effort has to be mounted to intensify our export drive. Rapid growth of exports, especially exports involving high domestic value addition would receive a high priority in the strategy for economic management. Efficient import substitution combined with rapid growth in exports will ensure that the economy remains on the path of self-reliant growth. A new three-year Import-Export Policy is being introduced in April. The policy aims at simplifying cumbersome procedures which lead to unnecessary delays and breed corruption. The policy will contain special incentives designed to boost exports.

The Planning Commission has been reconstituted and has begun to work on the approach to the Eighth Five Year Plan. The approach will be finalised shortly and submitted to the National Development Council for approval. The thrust of the Eighth Plan will be to ensure rapid growth with a special focus on the critical objectives of employment generation, alleviation of poverty and redressal of the imbalance between rural and urban areas. A key feature of the Eighth Plan will be the introduction of structural and institutional changes to ensure decentralisation of planning and plan implementation.

Our farmers are the backbone of our economy. Their well-being and prosperity are the strength and prosperity of India. Sustained growth in rural incomes is a necessary condition for successful industrialisation. Government will pay special attention to the needs of the agricultural and rural sectors, including its requirements for economic and social infrastructure. Our aim will be to achieve substantial increases in the yield of major crops, especially in un-irrigated rain-fed and dry land areas. Government is firmly committed to assuring remunerative prices to farmers, backed by adequate market support arrangements. To this end, the

Government will introduce changes in the formula for computing costs of production in order to ensure full accounting of all costs. This new system will be reflected in the support prices to be announced for the next *kharif* season. Government would also associate representatives of the farming community in the formulation of agricultural policies. With this in view, a Standing Committee on Agriculture including representatives of the farming community has been set up. Government is committed to a genuine Panchayati Raj system to enable the rural population to participate fully in planning and development. Specific proposals in this regard, as well as proposals for civic bodies will be put before the Inter-State Council.

Water resource development is vital for our agricultural strategy and my Government will give high priority to this sector. Government is also committed to find solutions for inter-State water disputes through dialogue and negotiations with the concerned States.

The prosperity of the agricultural sector is inseparable from the well-being of agricultural and other rural labour. This vast segment is still unorganised and exploited. My Government is committed to working out arrangements for giving them fair wages and a larger share of the fruits of rural development so as to provide them a better quality of life. As an earnest of our commitment to the weaker sections some more Land Reform Laws are being placed in the Ninth Schedule of the Constitution to protect them from any challenge by vested interests. Government also propose to introduce a scheme of debt relief for small farmers, landless agricultural labourers, artisans and weavers on loans upto Rs. 10,000. A detailed scheme in this regard will be announced in this session.

Efforts to accelerate agricultural growth must be accompanied by measures to encourage rapid growth of industry. My Government's industrial policies will be designed to serve the objectives of growth, expansion of productive employment, and balanced regional development. Healthy growth of the industrial sector requires a sustained growth in productivity and technological modernisation. Our industry must be made more competitive internationally to provide the basis for sustained growth in export performance. My Government will take steps to ensure the spread of industry to the rural and backward areas of the country. Development of small scale and agro & rural industries will receive special attention to facilitate harnessing of local resources and skills and the creation of gainful employment. Towards this end, a new Department called the Department of Small Scale Industries and Agro & Rural Industries has been set up.

My Government accords great importance to the public sector. The productivity of this sector and its ability to generate adequate investible resources is vital to our economic growth. Government are committed to ensuring functional autonomy of the public sector and creating conditions

conducive to its efficient functioning within a framework of wider public accountability. My Government will present a White paper on the public sector later this year.

Science and Technology have an important role in our efforts to attain self-reliance and raise the standards of living of our people, particularly of the weaker sections. Science & Technology inputs will be used for generating and sustaining employment and increasing productivity in rural areas. We are proud of our scientists. Their achievements in the frontier areas of Science and Technology, such as atomic energy, space research, advanced materials and biotechnology, have been substantial and scientific effort in these areas will get all encouragement from the Government. Our scientists have played a valuable role in strengthening our development and they deserve our fullest support. The remarkable achievements in the indigenous missile development programme are the result of their dedicated and laudable efforts and are landmarks in our technological development.

The labour force plays a role of crucial importance in the production of assets and yet their interests are not always adequately protected. Workers' participation in management can overcome this problem and also make for better productivity. To ensure this, suitable legislation is under examination.

Government will strive to ensure for all citizens the right to work to enable them to earn a livelihood and to become participants in the task of nation building. Government will introduce a Constitution Amendment Bill to enshrine the right to work as a Fundamental Right in the Constitution.

Protection of environment is essential for sustainable development. While conserving natural resources like forests, the basic needs of the people, especially the weaker sections, will be taken care of. Particular attention will be paid to the interests of the tribals.

The Bhopal gas tragedy is still vivid in our memory. There has been an unconscionable delay in providing relief and succour to the victims. My Government has already announced the decision to provide interim relief to those victims resident in the 36 affected municipal wards in Bhopal. The quantum of interim relief to be provided is Rs. 360 crores. Various social action groups have filed petitions in the Supreme Court on the issue of an adequate compensation for the Bhopal gas victims. My Government has supported their petitions before the Supreme Court and will pursue the case for adequate compensation in the Court. Government will also introduce legislation making it compulsory for factories and installations using hazardous chemicals to have a minimum compensatory insurance cover. This would ensure that innocent victims of accidents occurring in these plants are provided immediate relief.

The Scheduled Castes and Tribes are one fourth of our population. There can be no real progress for us as a nation, unless we enable them to live with dignity. My Government is committed to strong affirmative action to redress the economic and social injustices which the Scheduled Castes and Tribes continue to suffer. A beginning has been made and several concrete measures have already been taken. The Constitution has been amended to extend, for another 10 years, reservation for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in the Lok Sabha and the State Vidhan Sabhas. Legislation for preventing atrocities against them which was passed in 1989 but was not operationalised has been brought into force with effect from 30th January, 1990. A decision has been taken to fulfil the long standing and legitimate aspiration of the Scheduled Caste converts to Buddhism by extending to them the facilities available to the Scheduled Castes. A Bill to give effect to this decision will be introduced during this Session of Parliament. The other Backward Classes constitute another area of special concern to us and a Cabinet Committee has been set up to consider implementation of the Mandal Commission recommendations.

As a measure of our concern for a section of our society facing the most severe form of discrimination, it has been decided to accelerate the programme of finding alternative avenues of employment for scavengers.

The welfare of the handicapped is engaging special attention of my Government and it is proposed to give new depth to programmes for the rehabilitation of the handicapped.

Women are among the most underprivileged section of Indian society. They continue to face discrimination, despite the constitutional guarantee of equality. Our policies and programmes will have, as their basis, the recognition of women's dignity and equality in law and every day life. Government is considering legislation to set up a National Commission on Women.

Youth have an important role in the transformation of society. My Government is sensitive to the concerns and aspirations of our youth. We look to our youth to build a new India based on equality and social justice. Society, on its part, owes a special responsibility to the youth. The best possible opportunities should therefore be open to them. We shall re-orient youth policies to make them especially responsive to the need and aspirations of the rural youth. The Government has raised the upper age limit for the Civil Services Examination from 26 to 28 years, to help, in particular, youth from rural areas.

Education is essential for the full development of the people. However, we are still very far from our goal of universal literacy. My Government has taken steps for a review of education policy to make it relevant to the needs of our people, and to provide equal opportunities to all.

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A sound health care system is an important individual and social requirement. To achieve the goal of Health for All by 2000 A.D. greater emphasis will be laid on preventive and promotive aspects of primary health care. Effective control of population is also essential if we are to consolidate our economic gains and achievements and improve the quality of life of our people. Concrete steps are necessary to reflect the high priority which should be given to this area. There is need for a national consensus on this.

Our foreign policy is rooted in our commitment to non-alignment and our aspirations for peaceful world, free of domination, exploitation and war. We welcome the profound changes that are taking place in the international scene and the transition from conflict and confrontation to cooperation and consensus. We will continue to contribute to cooperative global endeavours to promote disarmament, strengthen peace, eliminate racial discrimination, provide environmental protection and build a more equitable world economic order.

Consistent with the high priority attached by my Government to revitalising relations with our neighbours, we have initiated an intensive dialogue for finding mutually acceptable solutions to outstanding problems, strengthening our friendship and enlarging the areas of our cooperation. These efforts are already showing results.

The two visits to India by the King of Bhutan and the signing of the new Agreement on Trade and Commerce reflects the further consolidation of our traditionally close ties with Bhutan.

Our cordial relations with Bangladesh have been strengthened by the recent visit to that country by the Minister of External Affairs.

Our close friendly relationship with the Maldives was enhanced by the holding of the first meeting of the Indo-Maldives Joint Commission in Male. The President of Maldives will pay a State visit to India later this month.

My Government has taken early initiatives for a comprehensive solution of all outstanding problems with Nepal. Recent talks at the Foreign Ministerial and official level have led to greater understanding of mutual interests and concerns. Our close and age-old relationship with the people of Nepal will be further strengthened.

The bulk of the Indian Peace Keeping Force in Sri Lanka has returned home and we hope to complete the phased de-induction by the end of this month. Our Armed Forces have done a highly commendable job under difficult circumstances. On behalf of the Nation, I would like to pay a tribute to the valour, dedication and discipline of our Armed Forces and their sacrifices. India stands for the unity and integrity of Sri Lanka. We expect the Government of Sri Lanka to fully honour all their obligations

under the Indo-Sri Lankan Agreement and ensure the safety, security and democratic aspirations of its Tamil speaking population. My Government believes that this would be in the interest of peace in Sri Lanka, harmony among all sections of the Sri Lankan people, and stability in the region.

Our relations with Pakistan, have unfortunately, come under strain as a result of its continued efforts to encourage and aid terrorism and secessionist activity in Jammu and Kashmir and Punjab. My Government has made it very clear that we will not tolerate such interference in our internal affairs. We have impressed on the Government of Pakistan the need to abide by the letter and spirit of the Simla Agreement, which has helped to maintain peace and provide an enduring framework for our relations. We hope such saner counsels will prevail in Pakistan as would preserve peace and enable us to normalise relations with that country.

We believe that ties between countries in South Asia must be maintained in tune with global trends towards dialogue, openness and cooperation. SAARC provides a valuable institutional framework for promoting such regional cooperation. We hope to expand the activities of SAARC to encompass cooperation in key economic areas, for the benefit of all the people of our region.

We value our traditional relationship with Afghanistan and are taking steps to strengthen it further. We hope that there will be an early stoppage of bloodshed in Afghanistan, with strict implementation of the Geneva accords and a political solution, arrived at by the Afghans themselves that would preserve Afghanistan's status as a sovereign, independent and non-aligned country.

We have continued to strengthen our ever growing time-honoured friendship and multi-faceted cooperation with the Soviet Union. Our relationship is firmly anchored in the Indo-Soviet Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Cooperation. Our close understanding with the Soviet Union is manifested in a shared vision of a nuclear weapons free and non-violent world.

Our relations with the United States of America continue to grow and diversify. The United States is our major trading partner and an important source of high technology. Our growing bilateral cooperation in various spheres reflects greater maturity in the mutual appreciation of the longer term interests and objectives shared by our two democracies.

The pace of diplomatic exchanges between India and China is being accelerated, contributing to the development of mutually beneficial cooperation on the basis of Panchsheel. The Foreign Minister of China will be visiting India soon to carry forward the dialogue. We will continue our efforts to find a fair, reasonable and mutually acceptable settlement of the boundary question, consistent with our national interests.

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We hope to see an early end to the conflict in Cambodia. A comprehensive solution should be based on full respect for Cambodia's sovereignty and integrity and should ensure the non-return of the genocidal policies of the recent past.

It is a matter of deep satisfaction that the last bastion of colonialism in Africa is at long last crumbling, with Namibia poised for independence. The Prime Minister will represent our people in the Independence Day ceremonies in Namibia next week. In South Africa, too, signs of change are discernible. We share the worldwide rejoicing in the release of Nelson Mandela, the symbol of the struggle against apartheid, and we look forward to his visit to India. A national Committee for felicitating Mr. Mandela has been formed under the chairmanship of the Prime Minister. My Government firmly believes that sustained international pressure must continue to be maintained on the South African regime to bring about the early dismantling of apartheid.

We pledge our continued support to the valiant people of Palestine in their just struggle for a homeland of their own in a peaceful West Asia. We look forward to President Yasser Arafat's visit to India later this month.

Members will be called upon in this session to consider various measures. The Railway Budget and the General Budget will be brought before you. You will also be considering the Finance Bill, 1990-91, the Prasar Bharati (Broadcasting Corporation of India) Bill, 1989, the Lok Pal Bill, 1989, the Wild Life Protection (Amendment) Bill, 1990, and various other legislative measures.

There is a fresh hope in the atmosphere. My Government is working purposefully for building a strong India, an India based on the dignity of the individual, an India where the benefits of development flow to all, particularly the weaker sections, the poorest of the poor. The task is not easy. The challenges are tremendous. But we shall overcome. We are determined to see that our people shall have a brighter tomorrow.

Jai Hind.