

## ADDRESS TO PARLIAMENT—21 FEBRUARY 2011

<b>Lok Sabha</b>	—	<b>Fifteenth Lok Sabha</b>
<b>Session</b>	—	<b>First Session of the year</b>
<b>President of India</b>	—	<b>Smt. Pratibha Devisingh Patil</b>
<b>Vice-President of India</b>	—	<b>Mohammad Hamid Ansari</b>
<b>Prime Minister of India</b>	—	<b>Dr. Manmohan Singh</b>
<b>Speaker, Lok Sabha</b>	—	<b>Smt. Meira Kumar</b>

HON'BLE MEMBERS,

I welcome you to the first session of the new decade. I hope this will be a very productive and useful session.

Our heart goes out to the people of Ladakh, who suffered the consequences of a severe cloud-burst, leading to an unprecedented loss of life and property. My government has taken effective measures for the immediate relief and rehabilitation of the affected people and it stands committed to completing the remaining tasks with the utmost urgency.

Recently, we suffered a national loss in the death of Pandit Bhimsen Joshi. The void left by his death in the cultural life of our country will be difficult to fill.

The Commonwealth Games in October last were a great success. Our sports persons secured an unprecedented medal tally. The citizens of Delhi displayed exemplary discipline and courtesy. We are proud of these achievements.

We have gone through a difficult year for our country. Inflation has been a problem in the past year. Certain parts of the country have suffered from unacceptably high levels of violence, especially areas affected by left-wing extremism and the Kashmir valley. There has been a grievance in some quarters that the benefits intended for the poor through anti-poverty programmes have not reached them in full measure.

My Government's foremost priorities in 2011-2012 will be:

- (i) to combat inflation and, in particular, to protect the common man from the impact of rising food prices;

- (ii) to address frontally the concern regarding the lack of probity and integrity in public life;
- (iii) to sustain the momentum of economic growth, while ensuring that the poor, the weak and the disadvantaged get a fair share in the fruits of growth;
- (iv) to maintain an uncompromising vigil on the internal and external security fronts; and
- (v) to pursue a foreign policy which will ensure that our voice is heard and our interests are protected in global fora.

The Indian economy continues to be on a trajectory of high growth despite an adverse global environment. The policies we followed to handle the global financial meltdown stand vindicated. However, there is no room for complacency. We have to strive to make the domestic environment more conducive to investment, encouraging public as well as private investment, and domestic as well as foreign investment, particularly foreign direct investment. We have to maintain the momentum for reforms on a wide front.

My Government is deeply concerned over the adverse impact of inflation on the aam aadmi and the threat it poses to the growth momentum. It has taken a number of pro-active measures to counteract the ill-effects of inflation. The import regime has been liberalized to ease supply constraints of critical items. Exports of commodities like edible oils and pulses have been banned. Pulses are being supplied at subsidized prices through the public distribution system. Public sector units have been directed to open more retail outlets for selling vegetables to individual consumers. The issue prices for rice and wheat for the public distribution system have not been changed for the last eight years. These steps have shown results. Cereal prices, a dominant cause of concern last year, have been in check. In fact, inflation was declining until November last when unseasonal rains in some states, led to a spurt in vegetable prices. These prices have come down again following the arrival of the fresh crop.

The long term solution lies in increasing productivity and production. My Government has provided huge incentives to our farmers to produce more. The minimum support price for paddy has been raised from ₹ 550 to ₹ 1000 per quintal and that for wheat from ₹ 630 to ₹ 1100 per quintal over a six year period. The support price for sugarcane has been increased by more than 50 per cent over the past two years. We have continued to give incentives through the supply of fertilizers at subsidized prices. The new nutrient based system is likely to enhance the rational use of fertilisers. The Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana, has pumped in investment of around ₹ 35,000 crore in agriculture. The National Food Security Mission has taken the green revolution to Eastern India. Credit flows to agriculture have

reached record levels. Nearly one crore hectares have been brought under assured irrigation since 2005-06. Water conservation measures have been taken up on a war footing under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act.

My Government stands committed to ensuring that farmers get remunerative prices for their produce. They should be able to sell to the consumer without impediments being placed on them. Measures necessary to ensure this fall largely in the domain of states. Concrete steps will be taken to augment investment and provide suitable incentives to the states in this direction.

I had announced earlier my government's commitment to bring forward a Food Security Law that will entitle statutorily every family, below the poverty line, to foodgrains at highly subsidized prices. Important inputs in this regard have been received from the National Advisory Council. The states are being consulted as the success of the programme hinges critically on their commitment to reforms in the public distribution system.

Our citizens deserve good governance; it is their entitlement and our obligation. My government stands committed to improving the quality of governance and enhancing transparency, probity and integrity in public life. A Group of Ministers is considering all measures, including legislative and administrative, to tackle corruption and improve transparency. The Group will consider issues relating to the formulation of a public procurement policy and enunciation of public procurement standards, review and abolition of discretionary powers enjoyed by Ministers, introduction of an open and competitive system of exploiting natural resources, fast tracking of cases against public servants charged with corruption, and amendments to the relevant laws to facilitate quicker action against public servants. It will also consider issues relating to the state funding of elections. The report of the Group of Ministers is expected soon. A bill to give protection to whistleblowers has been introduced in Parliament. My government has also decided to ratify the United Nations Convention Against Corruption.

The subject of electoral reforms has been debated over the years. I am sure that all parties across the political spectrum support the need for bringing about such reforms. I am happy to share with the Hon'ble Members that my government has constituted a committee on electoral reforms to fast track the process. The Committee has held regional conferences with the concerned stakeholders. This will culminate in a national conference in April this year. It is expected that this process of consultation would lead to a consensus on an acceptable agenda of reforms.

My Government attaches high priority to improving the delivery of justice and reducing delays in the disposal of cases. The details of the National Mission for Delivery of Justice and Legal Reforms are expected to

be finalized soon. This should result in re-engineering of procedures, improving of human resources in this sector and leveraging of information technology. The Judicial Standards and Accountability Bill, already introduced in Parliament, is intended to enhance the accountability of the judiciary, thereby improving its image and efficiency.

The issue of black money has attracted a lot of attention in the recent past, especially that allegedly stashed away in foreign banks. Government fully shares the concern about the ill-effects of black money whether generated by evasion of taxes on income earned legitimately or through illegal activities. My government stands committed to tackling the menace frontally. It requires diligent, sustained effort by all law enforcement agencies, including those of state governments.

My Government has taken many steps to strengthen the legal framework, build new institutions, and improve capacity to tackle this problem. A multidisciplinary study has been commissioned to study its ramifications for national security and recommend a suitable framework to tackle it. Government is also working closely with the international community, especially through the G-20, to expedite the process of identification and recovery of such money. India is now a member of the Financial Action Task Force in recognition of its anti-money laundering and anti-tax evasion measures. India has also gained membership of the Eurasian Group and the Task Force on Financial Integrity and Economic Development. My Government has taken steps to facilitate exchange of information for tax purposes with such countries and entities where Indian citizens may have parked their money. The early results have been encouraging. These steps have led to additional collection of taxes of ₹ 34,601 crore and detection of additional income of ₹ 48,784 crore. My government will spare no effort in bringing back to India what belongs to it and to bring the guilty to book.

Infrastructure is critical for development. My government has accorded the highest priority to improving infrastructure. The investment of over ₹ 20 lakh crore in the Eleventh Plan is more than twice the investment in the Tenth Plan. This is proposed to be doubled in the Twelfth Plan.

This huge quantum of investment cannot be funded by government alone. It needs to be supplemented by private participation. My government has put in place the required framework for a transparent public-private partnership. The contribution of the private sector has reached 34 per cent of the total investment in infrastructure last year.

The Indian telecom network has expanded to almost 800 million connections. The wireless network is the second largest in the world. My government is now making concerted efforts to take mobile and broadband services to the rural areas.

My Government proposes to extend the coverage of private FM radio services to all cities with a population of one lakh and above. A total of 806 new FM radio channels in 283 cities are proposed to be set up. It is also proposed to give incentives to future FM radio operations in Jammu and Kashmir, the North Eastern States and island territories.

Electricity is vital for our rapidly growing and increasingly inclusive economy. Although the programme to add power generation capacity shows improvement, energy shortages continue. My Government is committed to enhancing the per capita consumption of electricity, especially in rural areas. Total electrification of all villages is being accorded priority. Supply of quality power at reasonable prices to all, including farmers, will be possible if there is greater efficiency in the power sector. This requires concerted action on reforms in the power sector, particularly in improving the financial and technical capabilities of the electricity distribution companies in the States.

My Government is committed to making the coal sector more efficient, productive, environment friendly and consumer oriented. Steps are underway to augment the growth in coal production from the mines in the public sector as well as captive mines in order to meet the growing demands mainly of the power sector.

The National Solar Mission has been operationalised. The programme for adding 20,000 MW of solar capacity by 2020 has taken off.

My Government considers the mineral wealth of the country as a vital national resource which has to be harnessed towards rapid industrial development and inclusive growth. The Mines & Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act is proposed to be replaced with a new piece of legislation, which will, among other measures, ensure that local communities benefit adequately from the development process.

An efficient, reliable and safe transport system is vital for fostering rapid economic growth. My Government has set up a High Level National Transport Development Policy Committee for evolving a policy framework to provide an integrated and sustainable transport system.

Airport development is proceeding well. A state-of-the-art, integrated terminal has been operationalised in Delhi last year, making a new beginning in setting up world class infrastructure in this sector with public-private participation.

The tonnage under Indian flag crossed the 10 million mark for the first time in October, 2010. The capacity of Indian ports crossed one billion tonnes per annum in January, 2011.

The Indian Railways have prepared a road map for high growth, rapid expansion of their network, augmentation of capacity and modernization work on the Eastern & Western Dedicated Freight Corridors has commenced.

The development of highways is receiving priority attention. Almost 16,000 kms of road construction works is in progress. My Government has approved a scheme for the development of over 1,100 km of national highways and 4,300 km of State roads in left-wing extremism affected areas as a special project. The Arunachal Pradesh package for road & highways, involving development of about 2300 km length of roads, including the trans-Arunachal Highway, is expected to be completed by June, 2015.

There has been a massive growth in foreign tourist arrivals despite the global meltdown. Considering the immense potential of employment generation offered by the tourism sector, my Government proposes to provide training to at least ten thousand unemployed youth in this field.

To enhance the country's energy security, my Government is encouraging the national oil companies to aggressively pursue equity oil and gas opportunities overseas. The ninth round of the New Exploration Licensing Policy has been launched to harness the hydrocarbon potential of the country. Identification and exploitation of shale gas potential are being given priority.

Special Economic Zones have provided the requisite facilities to support production for export, with exports from such zones more than doubling last year to exceed ₹ 2 lakh crore. The Delhi Mumbai Industrial Corridor, which is under implementation, will provide world class infrastructure for manufacturing.

The micro, small and medium enterprises sector continues to retain its dynamism in terms of production, employment generation and contribution to exports. New initiatives will be launched shortly based on the report of the Task Force on Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises.

The khadi sector is a very large employer, with khadi and village units giving employment to over one crore persons. A comprehensive Khadi Reform Programme has been launched.

My Government is steadfast in the pursuit of inclusive growth and empowerment of the weaker sections of our society. More than 10 lakh titles have been distributed so far under the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act. The Scheduled Caste Sub Plan and the Tribal Sub Plan guidelines have been reviewed to ensure effective fulfillment of their objectives. Works under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, designed to improve productivity, can now be taken up on private land belonging to members of the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and other disadvantaged sections. Scholarship rates have been revised which will benefit 45 lakh students belonging to the Scheduled castes. More than 38 lakh students belonging to minority communities have benefitted from various scholarship schemes

designed to assist them. Hon'ble Members would be glad to know that close to half of these beneficiaries are girl students. The number of scholarships under the Rajiv Gandhi National Fellowship for Scheduled Caste students has been increased.

In 2004, my Government unveiled an innovative programme of Bharat Nirman. It was designed to improve the quality of life in our villages and small towns by addressing gaps in rural infrastructure. The second phase began in 2009.

Nearly 90,000 villages have been electrified and free electricity connections have been provided to about 1.40 crore households below the poverty line. There has been impressive progress in bringing additional area under assured irrigation and connecting rural areas with all weather roads. The target of 40 per cent rural teledensity by 2014 is likely to be exceeded. All panchayats will be provided with broad band connectivity in the next three years.

The original target of providing safe drinking water to more than 55,000 uncovered habitations has been nearly achieved; only 103 habitations now remain uncovered. Nearly 70 lakh houses were constructed in the first phase of Bharat Nirman. My Government now has an ambitious target of constructing 120 lakh houses during 2009-14 and 45 lakh houses have been constructed already.

My Government had introduced a constitutional amendment bill to provide reservation for women in Parliament and State legislatures. This has been passed by the Rajya Sabha and I hope sincerely that it will be considered by the Lok Sabha at the earliest.

The Protection of Women against Sexual Harassment at Workplace Bill has also been introduced in Parliament. My Government also proposes to introduce a bill regarding protection of children from sexual offences.

To address the needs of the old and the needy, my Government has launched 'Swavalamban', an old age pension scheme for workers in the unorganized sectors of the economy.

I am happy to inform you that my Government has taken a series of steps to commemorate the 150th birth anniversaries of Rabindra Nath Tagore and Swami Vivekananda in a befitting manner.

A strong and prosperous nation needs healthy and educated citizens. During the last seven years, my Government has endeavoured to ensure that our future generations are healthy, well educated and equipped to compete in the global market place. India is among the few countries with a legally guaranteed Right to Work. The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act has provided an effective social security net for

the poor who are assured employment for 100 days and a wage rate of ₹ 100 per day, adjusted with the cost of living index. Under this programme, employment was provided to around 5.25 crore households in 2009-10. Nearly 10 crore accounts have been opened to ensure transparency, convenience and financial inclusion.

The Right to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act is another step in my Government's approach to right-based governance. The Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan has been aligned to the implementation of this Act. It has been scaled up to universalise elementary education with a universal mid-day meal programme to improve both enrolment and retention.

My Government is committed to universalizing secondary education through the Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan. A girls' hostel is being set up in each of the 3,500 educationally backward blocks in the country to bring secondary education within the reach of girls. The Saakshar Bharat programme is designed to improve adult literacy, especially among the disadvantaged sections of society. By 2012, it will extend to all 365 districts that have poor adult female literacy levels.

Our country has a huge advantage in terms of being a young nation. Our young people have to be invested with skills if we are to reap the demographic dividend. To address the skill deficit in various sectors, my government is taking steps to effect changes in the Apprenticeship Act, to introduce a large number of modular training courses, and to make skills training bankable.

The National Rural Health Mission was introduced to address the need for comprehensive health care in rural areas. So far, more than ₹ 53,000 crore has been provided to the states for augmenting the health infrastructure. During the last five years, my government has also approved the appointment of more than 53,500 health workers in the health sub-centres in 235 districts considered extremely deficient in respect of health services. The coverage of beneficiaries of Janani Suraksha Yojana has increased from around six lakh in 2005-06 to nearly one crore in 2009-10. The benefits are already getting reflected in a decline in infant mortality rates.

My Government has initiated a new national programme for the prevention and control of cancer, diabetes, cardio-vascular diseases and stroke. It is expected that more than 15 crore people over the age of 30 and pregnant women of all age groups would be screened under this programme.

Scientific and technological competence of a high order is essential for sustained economic growth. A significant milestone was achieved in the three-stage indigenous nuclear programme with the commissioning of the

second Power Reactor Processing Plant in Tarapur. An Academy of Scientific and Innovative Research is being established to promote inter-disciplinary research and impart instruction in the frontier areas of science and technology. A Biotechnology Industry Research Assistance Council will be set up to augment efforts on food security, promote industrial research and development and facilitate innovation in biotechnology. A national programme for Crop Genetic Enhancement Network will be launched to develop improved varieties. A Biotechnology Regulatory Authority of India Bill is proposed to be introduced in this session. A National Science & Engineering Research Board has been notified to provide impetus for promoting basic research in the country.

Management of water resources of our country poses a major challenge. Emphasis will be given to increasing public awareness and ensuring participation of stakeholders in water management. Further, an integrated river basin approach, combining both surface and ground water, using advanced technological tools, would be adopted for water management and conservation.

My Government attaches the highest importance to the implementation of all laws relating to the protection of the environment and forests. The rapid pace of economic growth is imposing new challenges. A developing country like ours must find ways to strike an appropriate balance between environmental imperatives and developmental needs. My Government has constituted a Group of Ministers to look into all issues relating to the reconciliation of environmental concerns arising out of different kinds of developmental activities, without in any way diluting our pursuit of ecologically sustainable growth paths.

Conservation of rivers is an ongoing and collective effort of the Central and State Governments. Several measures have been initiated by my Government under the National Ganga River Basin Authority. A consortium of seven IITs is preparing a Basin Management Plan for the river Ganga.

My Government has established a National Green Tribunal to ensure effective and expeditious disposal of cases relating to environmental protection and conservation of forests and other natural resources.

The maintenance of law and order is the primary responsibility of State Governments with the support of the Central government. Terrorism, fundamentalism, ethnic violence and left wing extremism continue to pose major challenges. My Government initiated a major revamp in the security apparatus following the terrorist attack on Mumbai. A Multi-Agency Centre and Subsidiary Multi-Agency Centres have been operationalised; the National Investigation Agency has been constituted. Regional hubs of National Security Guards have been established. Nearly a hundred new battalions of Central para-military forces have been sanctioned and many have been raised in

the last two years. Coastal security has been strengthened. My Government is also committed to provide grants-in-aid of more than ₹ 2,000 crore to the States, over the next five years, to fill the gaps in training and infrastructure. Except for two incidents of terror in Pune and Varanasi, the internal security scenario has largely been under control.

The increase in police forces, with emphasis on recruitment from areas affected by left-wing extremism, has begun to show results. My Government has recently approved an Integrated Action Plan for 60 selected tribal and backward districts, in nine states, in order to address the felt needs of the local population.

The situation in Jammu & Kashmir has improved. A number of proactive measures have been taken by the Central and State Governments. An all party delegation visited the State. The interlocutors have also been engaged fruitfully in their endeavours. Intensive engagement with various groups in the North-East has largely reduced violence in those States.

I take this opportunity to salute the brave men and women of our armed forces. My Government will continue to ensure the welfare of servicemen and ex-servicemen and insist on the highest levels of probity and professionalism in the armed forces.

My Government is taking all necessary steps to transform our armed forces into a modern force that is equipped to meet the security challenges of the twenty first century. Special attention is being paid to the indigenous development of defence technologies, the expansion of defence production capabilities, and the creation of an environment for private industry to contribute to defence production. The indigenous multi-role light combat aircraft, Tejas, is being inducted into the Indian Air Force.

My Government's foreign policy priority remains the promotion and creation of an environment that is conducive to the socio-economic transformation of India. The pursuit of peace, shared prosperity and regional cooperation within the Indian sub-continent and in our extended neighbourhood will continue to guide my Government's efforts. High-level visits by the Heads of States and Governments of Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal and Sri Lanka to India during the last year have led to a qualitatively new level of understanding with our neighbours. We will continue to work for the return of stability and peace in Afghanistan and to help the Afghan people's reconstruction efforts. With Pakistan we seek a peaceful resolution of issues through a meaningful dialogue so long as Pakistan does not allow its soil to be used for terrorist activities against India.

My Government has also broadened India's economic and political relations with the countries of the Gulf, West Asia, Central Asia and East Asia. My visits to China, our neighbour, and to Laos and Cambodia, promoted

our links with an area which is increasingly important to India. The President of Indonesia was the Chief Guest at our Republic Day, and our relations with Malaysia, Vietnam and Japan, which were visited by the Prime Minister, continue to develop steadily.

Millions of our fellow citizens today work in the Gulf and West Asia. Indians overseas make valuable contributions to the countries of their residence and they do us proud. We will continue to work for the welfare of our diaspora, whose contributions to India we appreciate and whose links we will foster.

We have an abiding interest in peace, stability and development of countries in our extended neighbourhood. Egypt has recently seen momentous developments. As a democracy ourselves, we welcome the dawn of democracy elsewhere. My visits to the UAE and Syria significantly consolidated our relations, as did the Prime Minister's historic visit to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

In Central Asia, India is now a party to the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India Pipeline Project which could potentially transform the energy scenario in this sub-region.

My Government intends to hold the second India-Africa Forum Summit in Ethiopia later this year. As the first such initiative in Africa by India, it is a measure of the special place that Africa enjoys in the hearts of the people of India.

Our relations with the major powers also continue to develop satisfactorily. The leaders of all five Permanent Members of the UN Security Council—China, France, Russia, the UK and the United States of America—visited India during 2010. My government will continue to work to realize the full potential of these relationships in the pursuit of India's interests.

The international economic situation continues to remain complicated by the after effects of the global financial crisis. We have worked with our international partners in the G-20, the BRIC, and the IBSA groupings to promote an open and inclusive international trading order, resisting protectionist impulses. The Vice-President represented India at the last Asia-Europe (ASEM) Summit in Belgium. We have participated in global climate change negotiations to fulfil our responsibilities as global citizens, the demands of global equity, and the imperatives of India's rapid economic transformation. As a member of the United Nations Security Council for a two-year term starting in January this year my government will advance the cause of peace, development and security, and uphold the values of multilateralism.

We are blessed with the benefits of democracy. Our founding fathers gave us institutions, conventions and practices that have stood us in good stead. We owe it to ourselves and to the coming generations to strengthen these institutions, conventions and practices so that our future as a strong, free, prosperous and democratic nation is assured. I offer my best wishes to all of you in this endeavour.

Jai Hind.