

**ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA,
SHRI RAM NATH KOVIND
TO THE JOINT SITTING OF TWO HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT**

New Delhi, January 29, 2021

Honourable Members,

1. This joint sitting of Parliament which is being held during the time of the Coronavirus pandemic has great significance. It is the beginning of a new year and a new decade. We will also be entering the 75th year of India's independence this year. All the Members of Parliament present here today embody the conviction held by every Indian that the toughest of challenges will deter neither us nor India.
2. Whenever India has remained united, it has been able to attain even seemingly unattainable goals. This solidarity and Pujya Bapu's inspiration had given us freedom from hundreds of years of colonial rule. Echoing the same spirit, Assam Kesari, Ambikagiri Raichaudhuri the nationalist poet, had said –

**“Om tatsat Bharat Mahat, Ek chetonaat, Ek Dhyant,
Ek Sadhonaat, Ek Avegot, Ek Hoi Jaa, Ek Hoi Jaa”**

That is, India's grandeur is the ultimate truth. In one single consciousness, one thought, one devotion, one inspiration, let us unite; let us unite.

3. This unity and dedication of Indians has enabled the country to overcome multiple adversities. Our country has faced every crisis with fortitude, be it the Coronavirus pandemic, floods, earthquakes or major cyclones in several States, locust attack or the bird flu. The recent past also saw an unprecedented escalation in tension along the border. The nation stood together, battled crises on multiple fronts and surmounted every challenge. During this period, we all have also witnessed the unparalleled courage, endurance, discipline and spirit of service of our countrymen.
4. In this fight against the pandemic, we have also suffered the untimely loss of life of a number of our countrymen. Our beloved former President and my predecessor Shri Pranab Mukherjee too passed away during the pandemic.

The untimely demise of six Members of Parliament was also due to the coronavirus. I pay my heartfelt tribute to all of them.

Honourable Members,

5. It has been said in our Shastras – “**Kritam me dakshine haste jayo me savya aahitah**”

That is, if we do our duty, success is assured. During the coronavirus pandemic, which has affected each individual and every country in the world, India has emerged on the global stage with renewed vigor. It gives me satisfaction that due to timely and calibrated decisions taken by my Government, we were able to save lives of lakhs of our countrymen. Today, there is a rapid decline in the number of new cases of coronavirus and at the same time there is a significant increase in the number of recoveries.

Honourable Members,

6. When we think of the preceding year, we are reminded of the twin challenges that faced us, of saving lives of the citizens and protecting the economy. Besides announcing a record economic package for reviving the economy, my Government took care to ensure that no poor person went hungry.
7. Under the ‘**Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana**’, 80 crore people were provided an additional 5 kg free food grains per month for 8 months. The Government was also mindful of the plight of migrant labourers, workers and those who were away from their homes. Besides providing them with the facility of ‘**One Nation- One Ration Card**’, the Government made free food grains available and organized **Shramik Special** trains for them.
8. My Government also launched the **Garib Kalyan Rojgar Abhiyan** in 6 states in order to provide employment to the returnee migrant labourers in their villages, during the pandemic. As a result of this Abhiyan, 50 crore mandays of employment were generated. The Government also launched **SVANidhi** - a special scheme for street vendors and hawkers. Further, an amount of approximately Rs 31,000 crore was directly transferred to the Jan Dhan accounts of poor women. During this period, more than 14 crore gas cylinders were given free of cost throughout the country to poor women beneficiaries, under the **Ujjwala scheme**.

9. Through all its decisions, my Government has set an unprecedented example of the collective strength of federal structure. The collaboration between the Central and the State Governments has not only strengthened democracy but also enhanced the prestige of the Constitution.

Honourable Members,

10. Acharya Chanakya had said –

**“Trinam laghu trinatoolam tooladapi cha yaachakah
Vayuna kim na neetosow mamayam yachayishyati”**

A person who implores or begs is considered to be less valuable than even straw or cotton.

Even the wind that carries away cotton and straw will not take a person who begs, lest he starts demanding something from wind itself. In this way, everyone tries to avoid a beggar.

This implies that in order to enhance our relevance or importance, we must minimise our dependence on others and become self-reliant.

11. The dream of an empowered and free India, which our freedom fighters had envisioned, was also based on the idea of self-reliance of the country. Under the circumstances that emerged during the coronavirus pandemic, when each country was prioritizing their own requirements, we were reminded of the significance of developing a self-reliant India.

12. During this period, India has demonstrated its scientific capabilities, technical expertise & strength of its start-up ecosystem by developing a network of over 2200 laboratories in a short time span, manufacturing thousands of ventilators, PPE kits and test kits thereby, attaining self-reliance. It is a matter of immense pride that India is conducting the world's largest vaccination programme. Both the vaccines rolled out under this programme are produced indigenously. By making lakhs of corona vaccine doses available to several countries India has fulfilled its obligation towards humanity in these times of difficulty. The accolades being showered on India globally for this work along with the essence of our age-old cultural tradition of '**Sarve Santu Niramayaha**' and endeavor to work for human welfare is imparting strength to our efforts.

Honourable Members,

13. The gains from the work done by my Government in the healthcare sector in the past 6 years were visible during the coronavirus pandemic. During these years, emphasis has been placed not only on modernizing the healthcare systems but also on prevention of diseases. Programmes such as **Rashtriya Poshan Abhiyaan**, **Fit India Movement** and **Khelo India Abhiyan** have helped in creating awareness about health within the country. We have also witnessed the beneficial impact of the efforts made by my Government to promote **Ayurveda and Yoga**.

14. As a result of the efforts of my Government, the poor are now able to avail the benefits of healthcare facilities with ease and their expenditure on treatment of diseases is progressively reducing. Under the **Ayushman Bharat – Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana**, 1.5 crore poor people in the country have received free treatment of up to Rs 5 lakh. As a result, the poor have been able to save over Rs 30,000 crore. Today, benefits of Ayushman Bharat Yojana can be availed at more than 24,000 hospitals across the country. Similarly, under the **Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Yojana**, the poor are getting medicines at extremely affordable rates from 7000 Jan Aushadhi Kendras across the country. Lakhs of patients are purchasing medicines from these Kendras daily and due to their reasonable prices, are able to save Rs 3600 crore annually.

Honourable Members,

15. In order to develop healthcare facilities across the country commensurate expansion in medical education is equally important. In 2014, there were only 387 medical colleges, but today there are 562 medical colleges in the country. In the last 6 years, there has been an increase of over 50,000 seats at the under-graduate and post graduate levels in medical education. Under the Pradhan Mantri Swasthya Suraksha Yojana, the Government has also sanctioned 22 new AIIMS.

16. The Central Government has laid the foundation for historic reforms in the field of medical education by establishing the **National Medical Commission** along with 4 Autonomous Boards. The decades' old Medical Council of India has been replaced with the **National Medical Commission** as a part of these reforms.

Honourable Members,

17. Atmanirbhar **Bharat Abhiyan** is not just confined to manufacturing in India, but is also a campaign aimed at elevating the standard of living of every Indian as well as boosting the self-confidence of the country.
18. Our goal of an **Atmanirbhar Bharat** will be further strengthened by self-reliance in agriculture. With this idea, the Government has, over the last 6 years, attempted to bring positive transformation in the '**Seed to Market**' system so that Indian agriculture is modernized and also sees growth. In pursuance of these efforts, my Government decided to implement the recommendations of the **Swaminathan Committee** report and increased the MSP to at least 1.5 times of the cost of production. Today my Government is not only purchasing record quantities at the MSP, but is also increasing the number of procurement centres.
19. Widespread improvements are being brought in various sources of irrigation. Following the mantra of '**Per Drop More Crop**', the Government is not only completing the pending irrigation projects, but is also delivering modern irrigation techniques to the farmers. In 2013-14, only 42 lakh hectares of land was under micro-irrigation whereas today, more than 56 lakh hectares of land has been brought under micro-irrigation.
20. I am happy to say that through their hard work, our farmers are augmenting the efforts of the Government. Today, the food grain availability in the country is at a record high. In 2008-09, the food grain production in the country was 234 million tonnes, whereas in 2019-20, the production has increased to 296 million tonnes. During the same period, the production of fruits and vegetables has also increased from 215 million tonnes to 320 million tonnes. I congratulate the farmers of the country for these achievements.

Honourable Members,

21. In the agricultural sector, the need of the hour is to focus our attention on the small and marginal farmers who own only 1 or 2 hectares of land. More than 80% of the farmers in the country numbering over 10 crore fall under this category.
22. My Government accords priority to these small and marginal farmers too. In order to provide expenditure support to these farmers, almost Rs 1,13,000

crore have been directly transferred to their bank accounts under **Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi. Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana** has also benefitted small farmers of this country. Under this scheme in the last 5 years, about Rs 90,000 crore has been paid as compensation to the farmers against a premium of Rs 17,000 crore.

23. The mission for setting up 10,000 Farmer Producer Organisations by bringing together small farmers of the country is also an impactful step. This has ensured access of small farmers to better technology, additional credit, post-harvesting processing and marketing facilities and insurance coverage during natural calamities, on the same footing as the rich farmers. This has also provided an alternative to farmers for securing remunerative prices for their produce and generating greater savings.

Honourable Members,

24. After extensive consultation the Parliament approved 3 important farm reform bills 7 months ago, namely, The Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Bill, The Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Bill, and the Essential Commodities (Amendment) Bill. The benefits of these three important farm reforms, have started reaching more than 10 crore small farmers instantly. Appreciating the advantages that these reforms would bring to the small farmers, several political parties too had, from time to time, expressed their support. The discussions over these farm reforms in every part of the country for over 2 decades and the demand for these reforms at different fora were also reflected during the deliberations in the House.

25. Presently, the Apex Court has stayed the implementation of these laws. My Government respects the decision of the Apex Court and shall abide by it.

My Government holds in high esteem the values of democracy and sanctity of the Constitution. It is continuously making efforts to dispel the misunderstanding created in the context of these laws. My Government has always respected freedom of expression and holding of peaceful agitations in a democratic set up. However, the recent acts of dishonouring the National Flag and showing disrespect to the auspicious occasion of the

Republic Day are unfortunate. While the Constitution gives us the right to freedom of expression it is also expected that we abide by the laws and rules with equal sincerity.

26. My Government wants to make it clear that the rights and facilities available under the system prevailing before the enactment of the three new laws are not affected in any way. Rather, through these agricultural reforms, the Government has provided new facilities to the farmers and has empowered them.

Honourable Members,

27. In order to enhance the profitability of agriculture, my Government is also placing emphasis on creating modern agricultural infrastructure. **The Agriculture Infrastructure Fund** for Rs 1,00,000 crore has also been started for this purpose.

28. The **Kisan Rail**, started throughout the country, is helping chart a new course by increasing the access of Indian farmers to new markets. This rail is like a mobile cold storage. So far, over 100 **Kisan Rails** have been started which have enabled the farmers to transport over 38,000 tonnes of food grains and fruits & vegetables from one region to the other.

Honourable Members,

29. In order to increase the income of farmers, my Government has also focused on development of livestock as a source of income. As a result, the livestock of the country has been increasing at an annual rate of 8.2 % over the last 5 years. The Government has also set up the **Animal Husbandry Infrastructure Development Fund** for Rs 15,000 crore for creating basic infrastructure and encouraging investment in dairy sector.

30. My Government has also extended the facility of **Kisan Credit Cards** to animal husbandry and fishery sectors. Efforts have been undertaken to increase the income of fishermen through the **Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana**. In this sector, an investment of about Rs 20,000 crore has been planned over the next 5 years.

31. In order to increase the income of the farmers, the Government has also launched a campaign to turn the '**Annadata**' into '**Urjadata**'. 20 lakh solar pumps are being provided to farmers under the **Pradhan Mantri Kusum**

Yojana. Government is also encouraging production of ethanol from sugarcane, maize and paddy. Due to the affirmative policies of the Government, over the past 6 years, the annual ethanol production has increased from 38 crore litres to 190 crore litres. The production is expected to reach 320 crore litres this year. Ethanol is emerging as a major source for augmenting the income of farmers.

Honourable Members,

32. Pujya Bapu had envisioned the development of self-reliant '**Adarsh Gram**'. Carrying this idea forward, my Government has been working relentlessly for multi-faceted development of villages. Raising the standard of living of the villagers is a priority for my Government. This is best exemplified by the 2 crore houses built since 2014 for the poor families living in villages. The implementation of **Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana** has also been expedited to ensure a pucca roof for every poor person by 2022.

33. Under the **SVAMITVA scheme** launched by my Government, villagers are now acquiring legal rights over their property. With ownership rights, the villagers can now easily avail bank loans and housing loans against the collateral of their properties and economic activities are expected to gain momentum in the rural areas. Small entrepreneurs, people associated with cottage industries and small farmers would be especially benefitted under the scheme.

Honourable Members,

34. Baba Saheb Ambedkar was not only the principal architect of the Indian Constitution but also guided the development of the country's Water Policy. On 8th November 1945, during a conference in Cuttack, he had said – "**Water is Wealth. Water being the wealth of the people and its distribution being uncertain, the correct approach is not to complain against nature but to conserve water**".

35. Drawing inspiration from Baba Saheb, my Government is working on the ambitious scheme of '**Jal Jeevan Mission**'. Besides delivering water to every household (**Har Ghar Jal**), work on water conservation is also progressing at a rapid pace. I am happy to say that under this scheme, 3 crore families have been connected with piped water supply so far. Under this scheme, water connection is being provided on priority to brothers and

sisters belonging to the Scheduled Castes & Scheduled Tribes as well as other deprived sections of the society.

Honourable Members,

36. Keeping in mind the requirements of the 21st century and with a view to improving the connectivity of our villages, my Government has made commendable progress in expanding the network of rural roads. Under the **Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana**, construction of 6.42 lakh km of road network has been completed in rural areas of the country. In the third phase of this scheme, 1.25 lakh km roads connecting the settlements, schools, markets and hospitals in rural areas will also be upgraded. Along with roads, internet connectivity is equally important in the rural areas. After ensuring electrification of every village, my Government is implementing a mission to connect over 6 lakh villages of the country through optical fibre.

Honourable Members,

37. Our small scale industries, cottage industries and MSMEs spread across the villages and small towns are the backbone of our economy. These small scale industries have immense potential of making India self-reliant. This sector accounts for about 50% of India's total exports. Several steps have been taken to enhance the role of MSMEs in the mission aimed at developing an Atmanirbhar Bharat.

38. Development of small and cottage industries has received the requisite impetus through measures like modification in the definition of MSMEs, increase in the investment limit or priority in government procurement. Initiatives such as **Emergency Credit Guarantee Scheme** for Rs 3,00,000 crore, special scheme of Rs 20,000 crore for MSMEs in distress and **Fund of Funds** have benefitted lakhs of small scale industries. Besides ushering in greater transparency, the GeM portal has facilitated increased participation of the MSMEs even in far flung and remote areas in Government procurement.

39. It is a constant endeavour of my Government to ensure that benefits of entrepreneurship are availed by every section in the country. Under schemes like **Hunar Haat** and **USTTAD**, not only the skills of lakhs of crafts persons are being developed but employment opportunities are also being generated. Under these schemes, women crafts persons comprise more

than half of the beneficiaries. These crafts persons are being connected to the global market through **e-haat**.

40. Women entrepreneurs have a vital role to play in building a self-reliant India. My Government has taken several steps to provide new opportunities for self-employment to women. Under the **MUDRA** scheme, more than 25 crore loans have been sanctioned so far, of which nearly 70% have been given to women entrepreneurs.

41. Under **Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana - Rashtriya Grameen Ajeevika Mission**, more than 7 crore women entrepreneurs have become a part of the network of nearly 66 lakh Self Help Groups in the country. These women groups have been provided bank loans worth Rs 3,40,000 crore in the last 6 years.

42. Keeping in mind the health concerns of working women in rural areas of the country, the Government is implementing the 'Suvidha' scheme under which sanitary napkins are made available at a nominal cost of Re 1. My Government is relentlessly working towards protecting the health of infants and pregnant women through various initiatives like **Rashtriya Poshan Abhiyaan**, free check-ups and financial assistance to pregnant women. As a result of this, the Maternal Mortality Rate has declined from 130 per lakh in 2014 to 113. The Under 5 Child Mortality Rate has also reduced to 36 for the first time, which is less than the world average rate of 39.

43. As my Government considers it important to ensure equal participation by women, it is providing new opportunities for our sisters and daughters in various fields. My Government has taken several decisions in this direction, such as appointing women in the Fighter stream of the Indian Air Force and the Military Police for the first time, as well as allowing women to work in underground and open cast mines during the night shift. Keeping in mind the safety of the women, work on several initiatives such as setting up **One Stop Centres**, **National Database of criminals**, **Emergency Response Support System** and **Fast Track Courts** across the country is progressing at a rapid pace.

Honourable Members,

44. Keeping in mind the global requirements and challenges of the 21st century, the Government has announced the **National Education Policy**. For the first time students have been given the freedom to opt for the subjects of their choice under the National Education Policy. Students have also been provided the option of changing their subjects or streams in the middle of a course.

45. Under the **Pradhan Mantri e-Vidya**, my Government has developed the **Diksha** online portal as **One Nation, One Digital Platform** for school education. Ever sensitive towards safeguarding the interests of the students, my Government has also successfully conducted the JEE and NEET examinations in order to prevent the loss of an academic year.

Honourable Members,

46. My Government believes that the journey of the most deprived sections towards social and economic development begins with access to quality education. More than 3 crore 20 lakh such students are benefitting from various scholarship schemes of the Government. These include students belonging to the scheduled castes, backward classes, forest-dwellers and tribal community and minority communities. It is the endeavour of the Government to ensure that maximum number of eligible and needy students are able to avail the benefit of the scholarships. Along with this, the Central Government's share in the funding of post matric scholarship scheme for scheduled castes students is also being enhanced. Similarly, the network of Ekalavya Model Residential Schools is being expanded to cover every tribal dominated block to facilitate the education of tribal students. So far, more than 550 such schools have been sanctioned.

47. Along with improvements in education, the emphasis of my Government is also on simplifying and streamlining the recruitment process for jobs. The youth have benefited greatly from discontinuation of interviews for recruitment to Group C and Group D posts. By setting up the **National Recruitment Agency**, the Government has freed the youth from the inconvenience of appearing for multiple examinations.

Honourable Members,

48. Following the mantra of **Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas** my Government is prioritizing the development of all sectors and all sections of the society '. To alleviate the hardships faced by Divyangjans, thousands of

buildings, public transport buses and railways have been made accessible. About 700 websites have also been made accessible for Divyanjans. Similarly, to provide better facilities and equal opportunities to transgenders, the **Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act** has been implemented. A Development and Welfare Board has also been set up for the Denotified, Nomadic and Semi-nomadic communities.

49. Development oriented schemes are being implemented on priority by my Government in 112 Aspirational Districts which have fallen behind in the race for development. The tribal brothers and sisters have benefitted greatly from this initiative. Works related to marketing of forest products and setting up of small businesses dependent on forest produce, which are the mainstay of livelihood for the tribal community, are also in progress. As a result of these efforts, an additional amount of Rs 600 crore has accrued to the tribal families. Government has increased the MSP on 46 types of forest produce by up to 90 per cent.

Honourable Members,

50. The advancement of modern technology in India and easy access of every Indian to modern technology are important indicators of progress towards the goal of an Atmanirbhar Bharat.

51. While maintaining the requirement of '**Do Gaj ki Doori**', the institutions and citizens of our country did not allow the pace of growth to slacken, by leveraging the power of **Digital India**. In December 2020, digital transactions of more than Rs 4,00,000 crore have been done through UPI. Today, more than 200 banks are linked to the UPI system. Similarly, Digilocker is being used as a paperless platform for more than 400 crore digital documents. Through the **Umang App** too, crores of citizens are availing more than 2000 services. More than three and a half lakh **Common Service Centres** are linking people in rural areas to government services. In the same vein, **e-stamp service** has been launched after amending the Indian Stamp Act.

52. The trinity of **Jan Dhan Accounts, Aadhaar and Mobile** has helped safeguard the rights of people. Because of the JAM Trinity, Rs 1,80,000 crore have been saved from falling into wrong hands.

53. My Government has also initiated digitisation of medical services through the '**Rashtriya Digital Health Mission**'. The citizens will be able to avail facilities like digital appointments, digital reports as well as digital health records through this mission in the coming days.

54. Our very own Navigation Satellite System '**Navik**' is also enhancing the prestige of the country. Thousands of fishermen are now benefitting from it. New standards have been set in the form of **National Atomic Timescale** and **Bhartiya Nirdeshak Dravya Pranali** which were dedicated to the nation recently. These indigenous solutions will help in developing Indian products as per international standards.

55. This technology push is also empowering the democratic institutions of the country. In this direction, through the **e-Vidhan App** digitization of Legislative Assemblies, Legislative Councils and both houses of Parliament is being undertaken. Implementation of **NeVA – National e-Vidhan Application** in State Legislative Assemblies will usher in a new era in facilitating legislative and democratic processes.

Honourable Members,

56. Our Parliament is an important medium for ensuring increased engagement of citizens in the democratic process and in fulfilling the aspirations of a New India. During the tenure of previous Governments and in the Houses of Parliament, it has been repeatedly mentioned, that the existing building is proving to be insufficient to meet our present day requirements. Efforts had been made by previous governments also for a new Parliament building. It is a happy coincidence that the construction of a new Parliament House has commenced as we are approaching the 75th year of our independence. With the construction of the new Parliament building, every member will get better facilities to enable them to effectively discharge their responsibilities.

Honourable Members,

57. The pace, at which citizens of this country have assimilated technology and change, is a testimony to the eagerness with which every Indian is waiting to see the country reach new heights. Keeping in mind the aspirations of the people, my Government has been taking speedy decisions and is implementing long awaited reforms in every sector of the economy.

58. Besides facilitating **faceless tax assessment and appeal**, several provisions of the Companies Act have been de-criminalised by my Government, in order to encourage entrepreneurship. A GIS based database of industrial zones has been created to enable delivery of essential services to industries. Information pertaining to more than 5 lakh hectares of industrial land is available through this database.
59. I am happy that espousing the sentiment of **Shramev Jayate**, both Houses of Parliament have taken a decision to bring about a transformation in the lives of the labour force. 29 Central labour laws have been amalgamated into **4 Labour Codes**. States have also displayed initiative in bringing about these labour reforms. These reforms will result in expansion in the scope of labour welfare, timely payment of wages to labourers and generation of new employment opportunities. The new labour codes also ensure enhanced and a more equitable participation of the female work force.
60. Along with labour, easy availability of capital is also crucial for industries. For this, the banking system in the country is being strengthened. Merger of small banks to create large and strong banks is also a step in this direction.
61. For the first time in the country, a **Production Linked Incentive Scheme** worth about Rs 1.5 lakh crore is being implemented in 10 manufacturing sectors. Its impact is already visible in manufacturing of electronic goods as well as other products. As a result of this initiative, many large national and international companies have started their operations in India.
62. My Government is encouraging public participation in consumption of domestically manufactured goods. Today, **'Vocal For Local'** has become a people's movement in the country. Efforts are being made to inculcate an emotional attachment for goods manufactured in India while at the same time ensuring that they are of high quality.
63. Continuous steps are being taken to improve **'Ease of Doing Business'** in India. In this regard, healthy competition amongst States is being encouraged. It is matter of immense pleasure that States too are appreciating the importance of improving the ranking and are participating in this wholeheartedly.

64. The country has also started emerging from the economic setback suffered in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic when the focus was primarily on saving the life of each Indian citizen. This is evident from several indicators. Even in these difficult times, India has emerged as an attractive destination for foreign investors. Between April and August, 2020, a record foreign direct investment of 36 billion dollars has been made in India.

Honourable Members,

65. My Government believes that building modern infrastructure will serve as a strong foundation for a new and '**Atmanirbhar Bharat**'. Rapid execution of major infrastructure projects and their completion, even during the coronavirus pandemic, demonstrates our resolve. Be it the **submarine optical fibre cable from Chennai to Port Blair**, the **Atal Tunnel** or the **Char Dham Road Project**, our country has been forging ahead with developmental work.

66. A few days back, sections of the **Eastern and Western Dedicated Freight Corridors** have been dedicated to the nation. Along with promoting industrialisation in Eastern India, this freight corridor will also reduce unnecessary delays during transit.

67. For modernizing the country's infrastructure, my Government is also working on the '**National Infrastructure Pipeline**' worth over Rs 110 lakh crore. Along with this, work on 6 new expressways and 18 new access controlled corridors under the '**Bharatmala Pariyojana**' is in progress.

68. Be it the **Ro-PAX Ferry Service** between Hazira and Ghogha in Gujarat or the seaplane service between Kevadia and Sabarmati River Front, these are lending a new dimension to water transport in India. Embodying the pride of having the world's tallest statue of Sardar Patel, Kevadia is now connected with direct trains from many cities of the country.

Honourable Members,

69. To transform the country into a gas based economy, work on gas connectivity is being expedited. A few days back, **Kochi-Mangaluru Gas Pipeline** has been dedicated to the nation. The construction of **Dobhi-Durgapur Gas pipeline** is boosting the surge of '**Urja Ganga**'. This pipeline will go up to West Bengal and will make gas available to various industries, especially the fertilizer plants of Eastern India. Similarly, work on the

Tuticorin-Ramnathpuram Gas Pipeline, that provides gas connectivity to fertilizer plants and other industrial units in Tamil Nadu, is progressing at a fast pace.

Honourable Members,

70. My Government considers urban development as an opportunity and that is why, massive investment is being made in urban infrastructure. More than 1 crore houses had been sanctioned for the poor in cities, of which about 40 lakh houses have already been constructed. A few days back, work on construction of houses based on modern technology has also been started in six cities of the country. A scheme has also been initiated for providing better and affordable rental housing facilities for the laborers working in cities.

71. Urban infrastructure linked to connectivity is also a priority for the Government. Today, metro rail service has been rolled out in 27 cities. Only a few days back, driverless metro train was also operationalized on one of the routes of Delhi Metro. Public transport system in cities is being improved by building Regional Rapid Transit System. Expansion of common mobility card will facilitate travel in various cities across the country.

Honourable Members,

72. My Government is fully committed to the overall and balanced development of Eastern India. A policy for rapid development of North East while preserving its unique geographical, cultural and linguistic characteristics and its social identity is being implemented. For Assam and North Eastern states, **River Brahmaputra** is the '**Jibondhara**'. Making this lifeline the basis for economic activity, work on operationalizing several National Waterways is in progress. This will benefit all sections of people in the North East, including farmers, youth and entrepreneurs. By developing the Integrated National Waterways under the "**Artha Brahmaputra**" programme, efforts are underway to transform Brahmaputra and Barak rivers as streams of development.

73. The policy of my Government for bringing enduring peace to the North East, based on sensitivity and collaboration, has started showing clear results now. Today extremism in North East is on the wane and there is a sharp decline in the number of violent incidents. The youth who went astray

on the path of violence are now returning to the mainstream of development and nation building.

74. The rehabilitation of Bru refugees is being completed in a peaceful and harmonious manner. Similarly, a historic **Bodo peace accord** has been signed which has been implemented successfully. After the accord, this time the elections to the Bodo Territorial Council have also been held successfully.

Honourable Members,

75. My Government is committed to counter the forces challenging the sovereignty and unity of the country, at every level. While on the one hand, development is being promoted in violence affected areas, on the other hand firm action is being taken against the forces inciting violence. As a result of this, the number of naxal-violence related incidents have declined and the naxal-affected area is shrinking.

76. The development oriented policy of my Government has also received wholehearted support from the people of Jammu and Kashmir. Only a few weeks back, elections to District Councils in Jammu and Kashmir were held successfully for the first time after Independence. Large scale participation of voters has shown that Jammu and Kashmir is forging ahead towards a new democratic future at a rapid pace. Grant of new entitlements have empowered the people of the region. After the implementation of '**Ayushman Bharat Health Scheme**', every family of Jammu and Kashmir is assured of free treatment worth Rs 5 lakh. A bench of the Central Administrative Tribunal has also been established in Jammu. After becoming a Union Territory, elections to the Ladakh Autonomous Hill Council have been held successfully a few months back. Now the people of Ladakh are themselves taking decisions related to the development of their region expeditiously.

Honourable Members,

77. During the Coronavirus pandemic, when the country was grappling with crisis, attempts were made to challenge the country's capability at the border. Efforts were made to disrupt the peace at LAC in utter disregard of bilateral relations and agreements. However, our security forces not only responded to these machinations with promptitude, force and courage, but also foiled all attempts to change the status quo at the border. The restraint,

valor and courage displayed by our jawans, deserve utmost praise. In June 2020, twenty of our jawans made the supreme sacrifice and laid down their lives defending the country at Galwan Valley. Every citizen is deeply indebted to these martyrs.

78. My Government is vigilant and fully committed to safeguard the interests of the country. Additional forces have also been deployed at the LAC to protect the sovereignty of India.

Honourable Members,

79. The great Malayalam poet **Vallathol**, who composed immortal patriotic lyrics during the Independence struggle, has said:

“Bharatam Enna Peru Kettal Abhimana Puridam Aaganam Antrangam.”

That is, whenever you hear the name of Bharat, your heart should swell with pride.

80. Keeping in mind the larger role that India is set to play in the future, my Government is intent on strengthening our military preparedness. A range of modern armaments are being procured to enhance the capabilities of India's armed forces. There is also a thrust on achieving self-reliance in the defence sector. Only a few days back, the Government has placed an order with HAL for procurement of 83 indigenous fighter aircraft '**Tejas**' worth Rs 48,000 crore. Imports of more than 100 items linked to defence have been prohibited in order to promote '**Make in India**'. Similarly, several advanced weapons including supersonic torpedoes, quick reaction missiles, tanks and indigenous rifles are being manufactured in India. India is now also rapidly increasing its share in the exports of defence equipments.

Honourable Members,

81. The formation of '**Indian National Space Promotion and Authorisation Centre - IN-SPACe**' will accelerate major reforms in the space sector. We are proud that today ISRO space scientists are working on important missions such as '**Chandrayan-3**', '**Gaganyaan**', and '**Small Satellite Launch Vehicle**'. In the field of nuclear energy also, the country is moving rapidly towards achieving self-reliance. A few months back, country's first indigenous pressurized heavy water reactor has been successfully tested at Kakrapar.

Honourable Members,

82. Along with development, environment protection is also one of the topmost priorities of my Government. With this resolve, efforts are being made to achieve the goal of reduction in the Emissions Intensity of GDP by 33 to 35 per cent, by the year 2030 as compared to the year 2005. India is among the frontline nations in implementing the Paris Agreement.

83. The work on setting up the world's largest **Hybrid Renewable Energy Park** in the desert of Kutch has commenced recently. In the last six years, India's renewable energy capacity has grown two-and-a-half times, whereas Solar Energy capacity has increased 13 times. Today, almost one-fourth of the total energy production in the country is coming from renewable energy sources.

Honourable Members,

84. The world is witness to the sincerity with which India has been discharging its global responsibilities even during the Coronavirus pandemic. Living up to the spirit of '**Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam**', India has, in addition to fulfilling its domestic requirements, supplied essential medicines to more than 150 countries. India is committed to ensuring the availability of vaccine at the global level. It is a matter of pride for the country that '**Vande Bharat Mission**', which is the biggest mission of its kind organized anywhere in the world, is being hailed universally. In addition to evacuating about 50 lakh Indians from various parts of the world, India has also enabled safe passage for more than 1 lakh foreign nationals to their respective countries.

85. Despite the impediments caused by Covid-19, India has strengthened its contacts and relations with other countries. During this period, India has further bolstered international cooperation by holding a large number of apex summits, multilateral events and official meetings. For the eighth time, this year India has joined the Security Council as a non-permanent member by garnering historic international support. India has also assumed the presidency of BRICS for 2021.

Honourable Members,

86. Today, as India eagerly forges ahead in the world, we have to be prepared to also fulfill commitments that are commensurate with its new identity. The year 2021 is significant for us for this reason also. A few days back, the country observed the birth of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose on 23 January as

Parakram Diwas. This year we are celebrating the 125th birth anniversary of Netaji. To celebrate this anniversary in a befitting manner, my Government has constituted a High Level Committee. We will also celebrate our venerable '**Guru Tegh Bahadur's 400th Prakash Parv**' with great reverence. Along with these commemorations, the '**Amrut Mahotsav**' marking the 75th year of India's Independence will also commence from this year.

Honourable Members,

87. We have to achieve new goals with the same strength of collective unity we displayed last year. In the past few years, India has accomplished many tasks which were once considered extremely difficult to achieve.

- After abrogation of provisions of **Article 370** the people of Jammu and Kashmir, have been empowered with new entitlements.
- **Citizenship Amendment Act** has been passed by the Parliament.
- Country has started benefitting from the creation of a post of **Chief of Defence Staff**.
- Women's participation in Armed Forces is increasing.
- Construction of a grand **Ram Mandir** has commenced after the Supreme Court judgement.
- India has registered a record improvement in the **Ease of Doing Business** ranking. Now, special emphasis is being laid on reducing **Compliance Burden**.
- India has moved up from 65 to 34 in the **World Tourism Index ranking**.
- **Direct Benefit Transfer**, which was being disregarded earlier, has facilitated funds transfer of more than Rs 13,00,000 crores to beneficiaries during the last 6 years.
- Once we had only two factories manufacturing mobiles, whereas today, **India is the second largest manufacturer of mobiles**.
- Today, lakhs of middle class citizens are benefiting from Real Estate Regulatory Authority established under the Real Estate Regulation and Development Act.
- During this period, not only were new laws passed, but more than 1500 archaic and irrelevant laws were also repealed.

88. There are so many such decisions which have been taken in almost every sphere. My Government has demonstrated that when the goals set are high and the intent is clear, transformation can be brought about. The number of persons whose lives have been touched by my Government in these years, is unprecedented:

- more than 2.5 crore free electricity connections were given so that every poor person's house is electrified.

- more than 36 crore LED bulbs were distributed at affordable rates to reduce the electricity bill of poor and middle class families.

- more than 21 crore poor were linked to '**Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana**' for a premium just Re 1 a month, to ensure that in the eventuality of an accident, poor families do not have to run from pillar to post,

- about 9.5 crore people were insured under '**Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana**' for a premium of just 90 paise a day so that in case of death of the bread earner, the family may receive some support.

- in order to ensure that infants from poor families do not get affected by serious illnesses, the Government not only increased the scope of the vaccination programme by including more diseases, but also took the vaccination campaign to even remote tribal areas which had hitherto not been covered.

- more than 3.5 crore children were vaccinated under '**Mission Indradhanush**'.

- to safeguard the entitlement for ration of the poor, 100 per cent digitisation of ration cards was completed and 90 per cent ration cards have been linked to Aadhaar.

- more than 8 crore gas connections were given free of cost under '**Ujjwala Yojana**' so that the health of sisters and daughters from poor families is not adversely affected by smoke from the kitchen.

- more than 10 crore toilets were built under '**Swachh Bharat Mission**' so that the dignity of sisters and daughters from poor families is maintained and they are not inconvenienced.

- '**Pradhan Mantri Shram Yogi Maan-dhan Yojana**' was started so that poor persons including brothers and sisters engaged as domestic workers, drivers, cobblers, persons ironing clothes, farm hands etc may also get pension.

- more than 41 crore **Jan Dhan** accounts were opened so that the poor may benefit from the banking system. More than half of these accounts belong to our sisters and daughters from poor families.

Honourable Members,

89. These are not just figures. Each of these number represents a life story. Several members of this Parliament have spent a large part of their lives in similar difficult circumstances. The extent to which we can alleviate the suffering, pain and anxiety of our poor brethren and provide them basic amenities, empower them, increase their self-esteem, will help in imparting meaning to our presence in this Parliament.

90. I take pride in the fact that my Government, has been working in this direction continuously for the past 6 years with full commitment and honest intention, taking decisions and implementing them.

Honourable Members,

91. Jyotirindranath Tagore, the elder brother of Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore, the illustrious son of West Bengal, the land of valor, spirituality and talent, had penned a powerful patriotic song. He said :

“Chol Re Chol Shobe Bharato Shantan,

Matribhumi Kore Aohan,

Birodarpe, Paurush Garbe,

Shadh Re Shadh Shobe, Deshero Kalyan”.

That is,

Motherland is beckoning all the children of Bharat, to keep moving forward together; to move ahead with self-esteem and confidence of courage and aspire for the welfare of the nation.

Come,

Let all citizens move forward together.

Let us fulfil our duty and contribute to nation building,

Come, let us make **‘Bharat Atmanirbhar’**.

I convey my best wishes to all of you.

Jai Hind.

