RAJYA SABHA

Monday, the 26th February, 1996/
7th Phalguna, 1917 (Saka)

(The House met at twenty minutes past twelve
of the clock.)

[Mr. Chairman in the Chair.]

(The National Anthem was played)

MEMBER SWORN
Shri K.L. Poswal (Haryana)

PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS LAID ON THE TABLE

SECRETARY-GENERAL: Sir, I beg to lay on the Table a copy (in English and
Hindi) of the President's Address to both the
Houses of Parliament assembled together on
the 26th February, 1996.

[Placed in Library, See No. LT-8989/96]

(Text of the Address delivered by the
President (Dr. Shanker Dayal Sharma) in
Hindi)

माननीय सदस्यों,

मैं संसद के इस पत्र में आपका स्वागत करता हूँ।
10वीं लोक सभा ने अपने कार्यों को काफी हर तक पुरा
कर लिया है तथा आपके कुशल नेतृत्व में देश के
प्रत्येक क्षेत्र में महत्त्वपूर्ण परिवर्तन हुए हैं। इस अवसर
पर मैं, जाप सभी को राष्ट्र के प्रति समर्पित भाव से की
गई संसाधनों के लिए बधाई देता हूँ।

राष्ट्र ने महात्मा गांधी की 125वीं जयंती मनाई।
इस अवसर पर देश के विभिन्न हिस्सों और विदेशों में
अनेक महत्त्वपूर्ण कार्ययोग्य आयोजित किए गए।

अहिस्ता

एवं अन्य गांधीवादी सिद्धांतों के माध्यम से
सामाजिक, राजनीतिक एवं आर्थिक परिवर्तन के लिए
गांधी शांति पुरस्कार की स्थापना एक महत्त्वपूर्ण
उपलब्धि रही। प्रथम गांधी शांति पुरस्कार
डॉ. जुलियस के-म्यरे के प्रदर्शन किया गया। गांधी
जनती समारोह 31 जनवरी, 1996 को नई दिल्ली के
बालिका मंदिर परिसर में खिलौना "बाबू कुटीर" में
गार्डियन मामला समारोह के साथ संपन्न हुआ।
गांधी जी का प्राण वहां ठहरा करते थे।

देश में कानन और संस्कृति की स्थिति निरंजन में
रही। विभिन्न समुदायों तथा वर्गों के बीच साहसपूर्ण
संघर्ष सुनिश्चित करने के लिए सरकार आगामी महीनों
में और अधिक सत्यकार करेगी।

अंतर्राष्ट्रीय में विदेशी ताकतों पर कबूतूर पा लिया
गया है। अन्तर्राष्ट्रीय प्रसंसकों को काफी हद तक
निरंतरता किया गया है। इस संदर्भ में दुकान बनों का
कार्य काफी सराहनीय रहा है। परन्तु परशुराम का
पुरस्कार जिसे में महत्वपूर्ण गिरोह जाने की घटना से
वह आवश्यक हो गया है कि सत्यकारी निरंतरता
जाए। इस घटना का ज्ञान काफी कहीं से की जा
रही है, और देश में एंव देश के बाहर इससे जुड़ी तथ्यों
का पता लगाया जा रहा है। देश के हिंसात्मक गांधी
की प्रमाणी चौकीदारी सुनिश्चित करने के लिए उपाय किए
जा रहे हैं।

जम्मू व कश्मीर के उपविभागों तथा भारत के देशी
सेनाओं के विरुद्ध सुरक्षा-वाली श्रद्धा विवशी
संक्रान्ति का कार्ययोग्य कार्यरत हो गया है।
इस राजनीतिक

गतिविधियों को बहाल करने के संकट हो गया है।
संसद ने 1995-96 में संयुक्त बन्द सहित पारित किया,
और फिरस्त कई वर्षों के बाद पहली बार यह आशा की
जा रही है कि योजनागत परिवर्तन को पूरी तरह से विकस
योजनाओं पर हो सकेगा। इसके अलावा, जम्मू-
कश्मीर की संसाधनों के अंतर को पूरा करने के लिए

Laid on the Table
इसका उपयोग नहीं किया जा सका। दृष्टि सरकार
को इस राज्य में राजनीति शासन के अन्तर्गत बढ़ा 17
जुलाई, 1996 का कर्मी झड़ी, जिस सरकार
राज्य में राजनीतिक पुलिस हुई सरकार की वहाली के
लिए प्रतिबद्ध है।

पुर्वत्तॊत क्षेत्र के आधिकारिक प्रस्ताव को दूर करने के
लिए अनेक प्राववस किया गया है। पुर्वत्तॊत परिषद इस
क्षेत्र के विकास संस्था कार्यकलापों का कार्यनिष्ठन के
लिए एक कार्यकारी संस्था के रूप में उन्म्मिरकर समाने
आई है। अवस्था में कार्यकारी संस्था और उनसे कार्य
होठियों के स्वायत्त जनसंस्था को और अधिक
शक्तियां देने के लिए सरकारी की चांदी अनुसूची में
संरचना किया गया है।

आधिकारिक प्रणाली में लम्बाई सुधार हो रहा है।
1991-92 के बाद के वर्षों में सकल घरेलू उत्पाद के
अधिकांक्षक कार्यक्षेत्र हो हुई है। वर्ष 1994-95 में
यह बढ़कर 6.3 प्रतिशत हो गया। वर्ष 1994-95 में
राजनीतिक केंद्रों पर सकल घरेलू उत्पाद हुआ, और
यह सकल घरेलू उत्पाद का 24.4 प्रतिशत हो रहा।
पिछले वर्ष की इस अवधि की तुलना में, चालू वर्ष के
पहले 6 महीनों में आधिकारिक उत्पादन में 12 प्रतिशत
की वृद्धि हुई, जो उल्लेखनीय सुधार है।

इसके साथ-साथ, चालू वित्त वर्ष के पहले 8 महीनों
में निवृत्त में 24.17 प्रतिशत की वृद्धि हुई है। अधिकतम
से, विषय रुप से आधिकारिक क्षेत्र में बायुविद्या विकास के
कार्यांकों और अधिक आयात भी करना पड़ा। विदेशी मुद्रा पैसे की स्थिति काफी
अच्छी है, और अब यह लगभग 16 विलियम है।

मुद्रा-वित्ती की वाणिज्य का राजा, 1991 में
लगभग 17 प्रतिशत तक पूर्ण गया था। परंतु अब इसे
निवृत्त कर दिया गया है, और यह चालू वर्ष में
घरेलू वित्त वर्ष के आयात का आई है, जो पिछले
सात वर्षों में सबसे कम है। कृषि क्षेत्र को मिले बिया
प्रस्तावना के परिणामस्वरूप राजनीति के उत्पादन में
वृद्धि हुई है, और उनका परियोजना कवर है। अतंत
उत्पादन की कमजोर बलुआ की उत्पादन धारा रही
गयी है। समयवार्थी वित्त विकास प्रणाली को सुधार किया
गया है, और पुनर्यमित्स सार्वजनिक वित्त
प्रणाली की शुरुआत करके देश के सबसे अधिक
इलाकों में रहने वाले लोगों को अतिरिक्त रिहायत दी
गयी।

लघु उद्योग क्षेत्र का समानांतर विविधता के क्षेत्रों में
हुए उत्पादन का लगभग 40 प्रतिशत है, और यह देश
के कुल निर्माण का 57 प्रतिशत है। इस क्षेत्र में, वर्ष
1994-95 में 10 प्रतिशत की वृद्धि दर्ज की गयी, और,
राष्ट्रपति कर्मचारियों के अध्यक्ष कर्मचारियों के अन्य बाहुल्यताओं की पहल की खबर दी जाने वाली सहायता को भी खुला खुला जोड़ने के लिए विकसित निमित्त है। राष्ट्रपति के अन्य बाहुल्यताओं की पहल के लिए उनके सामान्य तथा विशेष मताधिकार एवं विधि विविधता के लिए विकसित निमित्त है।

राष्ट्रपति के अन्य बाहुल्यताओं की पहल के लिए उनके सामान्य तथा विशेष मताधिकार एवं विधि विविधता के लिए विकसित निमित्त है। राष्ट्रपति के अन्य बाहुल्यताओं की पहल के लिए उनके सामान्य तथा विशेष मताधिकार एवं विधि विविधता के लिए विकसित निमित्त है।

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सन् 2000 तक शिक्षा के लिए सकल घरेलू उपयोग के 6 प्रतिशत आबादी का सात बार वास्तव में शिक्षा के लिए आंदोलन राष्ट्रीय स्तर पर निर्माता विद्यालयों का निर्माण को देखने हुए शिक्षा क्षेत्र के लिए अंतरराष्ट्रीय राष्ट्र अन्तरा ओपियंट वृद्धि की जा रही है। सबके लिए प्राथमिक शिक्षा के लाभ को दूर करने के लिए आंबेडकर योजना के आंदोलन में अंतरंग तक 110 जिलों की प्राथमिक शिक्षा कार्यक्रम के दायरे में लाया जाएगा। इस शासन के अंतरंग तक 14 वर्ष तक की आयु के रामी बच्चों को इस कार्यक्रम में शामिल करने के लिए राष्ट्रीय प्राथमिक शिक्षा मिशन सुन्दर किया गया है। राष्ट्रीय सार्वजनिक अभियान का विस्तार 365 जिलों में, और राष्ट्रीय उपराष्ट्रीय अभियानों का स्वागत 150जिलों में किया गया है। प्राथमिक विद्यालयों में पहली से पाचवी तक के बच्चों को प्रोफेसर अवार्ड प्रदान करने के लिए एक मुख्य राष्ट्रीय कार्यक्रम 15 अगस्त, 1995 से हुआ किया गया है। इस कार्यक्रम से 14 वर्ष में लगभग 11 करोड़ बच्चे लाभार्थ होंगे।

पिछले पांच वर्षों से देश में भौतिक संख्या परिवर्तन में उल्लेखनीय बदाम हुआ है। हवालों में तालिकाओं की संख्या तथा बेचने गये खद्दर विषयों की संख्या में बहुत कमी आई है। सरकार ने 1995 में दूर की गई कन्सर्वेशन प्लेटफार्म को सकलसघंटी लागू करने के लिए प्रभावशाली शीर्ष के योजना के तहत एक करोड़ २० लाख भौतिक कामगारों और कर्मचारियों को अन्तरराष्ट्रीय सुरक्षा प्रदान की गई है।

हमने अपने माध्यमिक कार्यक्रम को अंतरराष्ट्रीय स्तर के अनुसार बनाने के लिए माध्यमिक और सुलह अभियान 1996 प्रस्तावित किया है। इस अभियान के तथा विवरणों के समायोजन की वैकल्पिक व्यवहार लागू करने के लिए किए गए अन्य उपायों से यह आशा की जाती है कि माध्यम इन व्यवहारों का लागू करने के लिए सीधे ही दलित एवं एसिया क्षेत्र में अभिनव राष्ट्र के रूप में उपनिवेश होंगे।

पिछले वर्ष हमारे वैज्ञानिकों को उल्लेखनीय रही, जो मनोरंजन के लिए हमारे भ्रम में भिड़वासें देकर काम करती हैं।

इंस्टीटुट-टीचर और आई.एसबी.।- टीचर उपाध्यायों को पिछले वर्षों में सकलतार्क प्रमाण छोड़े जाने से अति आंदोलन अंतरराष्ट्रीय प्रणालियों के अभिनव, नियूर्जन और संसाधन की हमारी भाषाओं का एक बार फिर प्रदर्शन हुआ है। ये आई.एसबी हमारी दूसरे, दूसरे, मौसम एवं

संसदान कार्यक्रम के विकास के लिए महत्वपूर्ण होगा। वर्ष 1996-97 में इंस्टीटुट-टीचर और 1997-98 में इंस्टीटुट-टीचर और एसबी.।- १२वीं छात्राओं को पिछले वर्षों में सकलतार्क प्रमाण छोड़े जाने से अति आंदोलन अंतरराष्ट्रीय प्रणालियों के अभिनव, नियूर्जन और संसाधन की हमारी भाषाओं का एक बार फिर प्रदर्शन हुआ है। ये आईएसबी हमारी दूसरे, दूसरे, मौसम एवं

राजस्थान संसदान कार्यक्रम के विकास के लिए महत्वपूर्ण होगा। वर्ष 1996-97 में इंस्टीटुट-टीचर और 1997-98 में इंस्टीटुट-टीचर और एसबी.।- १२वीं छात्राओं को पिछले वर्षों में सकलतार्क प्रमाण छोड़े जाने से अति आंदोलन अंतरराष्ट्रीय प्रणालियों के अभिनव, नियूर्जन और संसाधन की हमारी भाषाओं का एक बार फिर प्रदर्शन हुआ है। ये आईएसबी हमारी दूसरे, दूसरे, मौसम एवं
लाइड ऑन द टेबल
Honourable Members,

I welcome you to this Session of Parliament.

The 10th Lok Sabha has accomplished substantially its tasks and the country has been guided through momentous changes in every sphere. I take this opportunity to congratulate all of you for your dedicated service to the nation.

The Nation celebrated the 125th Birth Anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi which was marked by a large number of significant activities in different parts of the country and abroad. An important landmark was the institution of the Gandhi Peace Prize for Social, Political and Economic Transformation through Non-violence and other Gandhian methods. The first Gandhi Peace Prize was conferred upon Dr. Julius K. Nyerere. The Anniversary concluded with a solemn function on 31st January, 1996 at the Bapu Kutir in the Valmiki Mandir Complex in New Delhi where Gandhiji used to stay.

The law and order situation in the country has been under control. Government would continue to exercise extreme vigilance in the coming months to ensure that relations between different communities and groups continue to be harmonious.

Terrorism and insurgency have been curbed. Separatist tendencies have been contained to a very large extent. In this context the performance of the security forces has been creditable. However, the incident of arms drop in Purulia in West Bengal has highlighted the need for constant vigilance. In this connection, investigations into the incident, and its national and international ramifications, are being pursued vigorously. Steps are being taken to ensure effective policing of the air corridors of the country.

In Jammu and Kashmir, due to the concerted drive by security forces against militants and foreign mercenaries, coupled with the acceleration of development activities, there is a perceptible change in the overall situation. The revival of political activities has been made possible. Parliament passed a balanced budget in 1995-96 and for the first time in many years the Plan outlay is expected to be spent fully on development schemes without any diversion for meeting the Non-Plan resources gap. Though Government had to seek further extension of President's Rule upto 17th July, 1996, it remains committed to the restoration of representative Government in the State at the earliest.

In the North-East several initiatives have been taken to tackle the economic backwardness of the region. The North-East Council has emerged as an effective institution for implementing developmental activities. The Sixth Schedule to the Constitution was amended for giving more powers to the Autonomous District Councils of Karbi Anglong and North Cachar Hills in Assam.

The economic scenario has been continuously improving. The Gross Domestic Product has shown a substantially faster rate of growth in the years subsequent to 1991-92. In 1994-95, this had increased to 6.3%. Gross Domestic Savings at Current prices improved in 1994-95 and was 24.4% of GDP. Industrial production increased by 12% in the first 6 months of the current year over the corresponding period last year, showing a strong revival.

Along with this, exports have gene up further by 24.17% in the first 8 months of the current financial earh. Imports have also grown as a consequence of the overall growth of the economy, and the industrial sector in particular. Foreign exchange reserves are at a comfortable level of about $16 billion.

The annual rate of inflation which had
almost reached 17% in August, 1991 has been controlled and in the current year, the inflation rate has been brought down to around 5%, which is the lowest in the last 7 years. As a result of the strong support to the agricultural sector, foodgrain production and stocks have reached very comfortable levels. The availability of various items of mass consumption has been maintained. The Public Distribution System has been strengthened and by introducing the Revamped Public Distribution System, additional concessions have been given for those living in the poorest areas of the country.

The small scale industries sector accounts for about 40% of the output in manufacturing and 34% of the country’s total exports. It has recorded a growth of 10% during 1994-95 and accounted for employment of 146 lakh persons by the end of 1994-95. Export of goods by this sector arc estimated to have increased from Rs. 13,883 crore in 1991-92 to Rs. 26,400 crore in 1994-95. In the khadi and village industries sector, sales have reached a level of over Rs. 4069 crore in 1994-95. This sector accounted for employment to 53.46 lakh persons in 1994-95. A Rs. 1000 crore consortium credit has been given to KVIC this year for the first time. Out of this, KVIC had sanctioned projects costing about Rs. 235 crore by the end of January 1996 to generate additional employment for about one lakh persons.

Our agricultural strategy has been to increase production through the best use of soil and water in an integrated fashion. During the Eighth Plan, Rs. 1100 crore have been allocated for the restructured National Watershed Development Project for Rainfed Areas. The coverage of Drought Prone Areas Programme has also been increased to 946 blocks of 149 districts in 13 States. Coverage of the Desert Development Programme has been further extended to 227 blocks of 36 districts in 7 States. These programmes are being implemented with the active participation of the watershed community.

Foodgrain production in 1994-95 achieved a new record of 192 million tonnes. The production of sugar also reached a record level of nearly 145.85 lakh tonnes in 1994-95. Government has built up a buffer stock of 5 lakh tonnes of sugar this year, as a precaution against possible fluctuations in availability and prices.

Disbursement of agricultural credit through institutional agencies is expected to reach a level of Rs. 26,450 crore in 1995-96 as against Rs. 21,113 crore in 1994-95. The consumption of chemical fertilizers during 1994-95 was 135.64 lakh tonnes. It is expected to further increase to 156.64 lakh tonnes in 1995-96.

Government has been acutely sensitive to the needs of the poor. The programmes of direct alleviation of poverty have been expanded, as reflected in substantial increases in allocations for rural development, employment generation, housing, rural water supply, etc.

Under the Indira Awas Yojana, about 20 lakh houses were constructed between 1985-96 and 1994-95. However, in 1995-96 this programme has been further stepped up by the undertaking a massive programme of construction of 10 lakh houses with a budget provision of Rs. 1000 crore and is progressing in full swing. Besides, steps have been taken to augment housing facilities for other sections as also government servants.

The Prime Minister's Rozgar Yojana which aims at providing self-employment opportunities to educated unemployed youth, had benefitted 1,96,154 persons during 1994-95. For 1995-96, loans under the scheme are planned to reach 2.6 lakh persons.

As the Honourable Members know, the Government has launched the National Social Assistance Programme to provide for Old Age Pensions, Maternity Benefit and lumpsum payment on the
death of the primary bread earner in poor families. Complementing this package is a pioneering scheme of Group Life Insurance which includes subsidized premiums for the poor.

An Integrated Urban Poverty Eradication Programme was launched in November 1995 to tackle the problem of urban poor in an integrated manner in all 345 class-II towns with a population ranging between 50,000 to 1 lakh. A provision of Rs. 100 crore has been made in the current financial year for the Programme.

Government has strengthened the role and powers of the Panchayats and Nagarpalikas in all Centrally Sponsored Schemes operating at the district level and below. This initiative has also ensured the emergence of more than one million women as leaders and decision makers at the grassroots level. Similarly, the State are being asked to empower these bodies with adequate financial and administrative responsibilities.

Substantial enhancement has been made in the allocations for Schemes of Special Central Assistance for Special Component Plan, Post-Matric Scholarships, National Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Finance and Development Corporation and Aid to Voluntary Organizations. The Government has also revised the rates of maintenance and other allowances under the Post-Matric Scholarship Scheme for Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes students.

A National Commission for Safai Karamcharis has been set up to monitor the implementation of the National Scheme for Liberation and Rehabilitation of Safai Karamcharis still engaged in night soil removal. Since the inception of the Scheme, about 94,000 such persons have been trained for other vocations and 2.5 lakhs have been rehabilitated.

The National Backward Classes Finance and Development Corporation has so far disbursed Rs. 131.64 crore for self-employment ventures. To enable the OBC candidates to compete on equal terms with general candidates in various recruitment tests and examinations, the Government has provided financial assistance to 122 coaching centres so far.

The National Minorities Development and Finance Corporation has established linkages with State channelising agencies. Loans are being disbursed for self-employment. The Wakf Act, 1995, for effective and democratic administration of Wakf Boards has been brought into force with effect from 1st January, 1996. The Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act, 1995 has been enacted to provide equal opportunities for persons with disabilities. It has also been decided to set up a National Finance and Development Corporation for the Disabled with an authorised share capital of Rs. 400 crore. A Bill to set up a National Trust to provide total care to persons with Mental Retardation and Cerebral Palsy has been introduced in the Lok Sabha.

The ongoing immunisation of children against six vaccine-preventable disease has already yielded encouraging results. In keeping with the global goal of eradication of polio by 2000 AD, a supplemental dose of oral polio vaccine was administered to more than 7.5 crore children in the age group 0-3 years throughout the country on 9th December, 1995 and the exercise was repeated on 20th January, 1996. The Pulse Polio Immunisation will be continued in future years also.

The allocation for the education sector has been steadily increased as part of the Government’s commitment to achieve the target of allocation of 6% of GDP by the year 2000 AD. To realise the goal of Universal Elementary Education, 110 Districts would be brought within the ambit of the District Primary Education Programme by the end of the Eighth Plan. A National Elementary Education Mission has been launched to cover all
children up to the age of 14 years by the turn of the century. As part of the National Literacy Mission, Total Literacy Campaigns have been further extended to 368 districts and the Post Literacy Campaigns to 159 districts in the country. A major National Programme of Nutritional Support to children in Primary Schools covering about 11 cror children from classes I to V over a three year period was launched on 15 August, 1995.

There has been a remarkable improvement in the industrial relations scenario in the country over the last 5 years. There is a significant decrease in the number of strikes and lock outs and number of mandays lost. Government is committed to successfully implement the Employees' Pension Scheme introduced in November, 1995, which provides for the first time life long social security to about 19 million industrial workers and their families.

To bring our arbitration law in tune with the international thinking on the subject, an Ordinance called "The Arbitration and Conciliation Ordinance, 1996" has been promulgated. With this and the other steps taken to establish Alternative Dispute Resolution Mechanisms, it is hoped that India will soon emerge as a pioneer in this field in the South-Asian Region.

The achievements of our scientists in the past year have been noteworthy and give us confidence for the future.

Successful launches of INSAT-2C and IRS-1C satellites last December once again demonstrated our capability to design, build and operate state-of-the-art space systems, which will be vital for the development of our telecommunication, television, meteorological and resources survey programmes. We plan to launch INSAT-2D during 1996-97, and INSAT-2E and IRS-1D during 1997-98. We have also made good progress in developing the Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle GSLV, for launching our INSAT class of satellites.

During the year, the country's tenth nuclear power reactor at Kakrapar commenced operation and was stabilised satisfactorily. The research reactors at Trombay have supplied more than 60,000 kits for diagnosis and treatment to more than 300 medical institutions all over the country.

During 1995-96, the situation in some parts of India's immediate neighbourhood remained uncertain in security terms. Pakistan's continuing attempts to acquire sophisticated weaponry and uranium enrichment technology have been a matter of serious concern for us. Pakistan's attempts heighten tensions in our region and are likely to trigger an arms race. We have every confidence in the capability of our armed forces to defend the nation. Government is determined to ensure their capability in this regard. I am sure honourable members would, in this context, join me in commending the armed forces for their professionalism and dedication.

As a result of the concentrated efforts of our scientists engaged in defence research, the Light Combat Aircraft was unveiled in November 1995 and test flights would commence by the end of this year. The development of the Main Battle Tank Arjun has been completed with a view to its induction. The DRDO has developed a high performance supercomputer using multi-processor technology, which has met a long-felt need and which enhances our self-reliance in this field.

In the foreign affairs sphere, our relations with our neighbours were further strengthened. Our traditionally close ties with Bhutan were reinforced during The year. The visit to India of the former Prime Minister of Nepal, Mr. Manmohan Adhikari, in April 1995
and of the present Prime Minister Mr. Shcr Bahadur Deuba earlier this month, contributed to developing closer mutual understanding. The inauguration by the Prime Minister of the Indira Gandhi Memorial Hospital in the Maldives in April 1995 is testimony to our commitment to amity and cooperation with that country. Our relations with Sri Lanka were marked by cordiality and trust. Our trade with Bangladesh increased as did contacts between the peoples of the two countries. The momentum in our relations with China was maintained with a continuing dialogue at the highest levels. Our efforts resulted in promoting good relations with all our neighbours in South Asia, with the sole exception of Pakistan. We urge the Government of Pakistan to eschew its path of confrontation with India and respond constructively to our repeated offer of a bilateral dialogue to resolve all outstanding issues in accordance with the Shimla Agreement.

A landmark in SAARC's progress was achieved last year with the operationalisation of the South Asia Preferential Trading Arrangement (SAPTA) from December 7, 1995. The signing of a trilateral Memorandum of Understandings on transit by India, Iran and Turkmenistan, which seeks to establish a viable surface route between India and Central Asia for commercial and other links, was an important event in the development of our links with Central Asia. ASEAN has agreed to full dialogue partnership status for India. This reflects the growing, mutually beneficial relationship between India and ASEAN.

Our relations with the Russian Federation continued to be close. Further areas for cooperation in economic, cultural and other fields were identified. The India-United States relationship registered steady growth, in particular in the economic and commercial areas. Political and economic cooperation with countries in the African continent was promoted through high-level visits to and from Mali, Mauritius, Namibia, Zimbabwe, Egypt, Burkina Faso and Ghana.

India took the lead in articulating the political, economic, social and other concerns of the developing countries in international forums like the World Summit for Social Development in Denmark in March, 1995; the UN General Assembly's 50th anniversary Spicial Commemorative Meeting in October, 1995; and the 11th Non-aligned Summit in Colombia in the same month. Consistent with its commitment to the objective of complete nuclear disarmament within a specified timeframe, India is participating actively in the negotiations for a Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty. At the same time, we view the indefinite extension of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty as an obstacle to universal nuclear disarmament as it seeks to legitimise the nuclear arsenals of nuclear-weapon states.

As this Session will be a brief one, only essential legislation will be taken up during this Session. Some Ordinances promulgated since the last Session will be placed before Parliament. A Statement of the estimated receipts and expenditure of the Government of India for the financial year 1996-97 will be laid before you for the purpose of passing Vote on Account authorising expenditure for a part of that year. Vote on Account in respect of the States under the President's Rule would also need to be passed.

The policies of the Government have put the country on the path of growth enabling the people to realise their potential. The strength of the country lies in the strength of its economy and the unity of its people. During the last four and a half years, your dedication, wisdom and vision have left an imprint that will guide the nation into a brighter tomorrow.

I commend you to your tasks in this Session and wish you success.

JAI HIND