

## Highlights of the President's speech to Parliament (June 9, 2014)

The President of India, Mr. Pranab Mukherjee, addressed the first joint sitting of the newly constituted 16<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha on June 9, 2014.<sup>1</sup> He outlined major policy priorities of the new central government over the next five years. Key highlights of his speech include:

**Macro economy:** The government aims to ensure a high growth rate, control inflation, improve investment, accelerate job creation, and restore the confidence of the domestic and international community in the Indian economy. Reforms will be undertaken to improve the ease of doing business. Investments, including Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) will be encouraged in sectors that help create jobs.

**Taxation:** The tax regime will be rationalised and simplified. An attempt will be made to introduce the Goods and Services Tax, while addressing the concerns of state governments.

**Inflation:** Containing food inflation will be a priority. There will be an emphasis on improving the supply side of agricultural and agro-based products. Hoarding and black marketing will also be addressed.

**Employment:** Labour intensive manufacturing will be promoted. Employment exchanges will be transformed into career centres to connect youth with job opportunities.

**Manufacturing sector:** Investment and industrial regions will be established, especially along dedicated freight corridors and industrial corridors across the country.

**Small scale industries:** The small scale industry and handicrafts sectors will be provided with technological, marketing, and investment support. Exports will be encouraged in this sector. Working conditions of weavers will be improved. A task force to revive the MSME sector will be established.

**Infrastructure and Transport:** An infrastructure development plan will be created, to be implemented over the next 10 years. A fast track and investment friendly Public-Private Partnership mechanism will be implemented. Railways will be modernised and a Diamond Quadrilateral Project of high speed rails will be launched. Railways will be expanded in hilly states and north eastern states. A network of freight corridors with specialised agri-rail networks will be created for perishable agricultural products. The execution of the National Highways Programme will be initiated. Low cost airports will be developed to improve connectivity to small towns. Existing ports will be modernised and new ports will be developed.

**Energy:** A National Energy Policy will be created to focus on energy related infrastructure and technology. The government will attempt to improve electricity

generation through a mix of conventional and non-conventional sources. Reforms will be made in the coal sector to attract private investment. International civil nuclear agreements will be operationalised, and nuclear power for civilian purposes will be developed. The National Solar Mission will be expanded and households and industries will be connected with gas grids.

**Environment:** Environment and forest clearance systems will be made more predictable, transparent, and time-bound. A system to ensure compliance with clearance conditions will be developed, especially those relating to rehabilitation and resettlement and regeneration of forests. Cleaner fuels will be promoted to bring down pollution levels in cities. A National Mission on Himalayas will be launched. The government will take steps to ensure a clean Ganga.

**Natural resources:** Transparent policies will be formulated for the allocation of natural resources such as coal, minerals and spectrum.

**Agriculture and Water Resources:** Public and private investment in agriculture, especially infrastructure, will be increased. The Public Distribution System will be reformed, incorporating best practices of states. Steps will be taken to make farming profitable, through improvements in agro-technology. Incentives will be given to establish food processing industries. Issues related to pricing and procurement of agricultural produce, crop insurance, and post harvest management will be addressed by the government. A National Land Use Policy will be created to identify methods to develop non-cultivable land. Pending irrigation projects will be completed. The Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana will be implemented.

**Rural development:** Investment will focus on creating community assets, and building basic infrastructure including roads, housing, power, and drinking water. The rural urban divide will be addressed by providing urban amenities in rural areas, while preserving the ethos of the village. Panchayati Raj Institutions will be empowered to improve the quality of life in villages.

**Urbanisation:** By 2022, every family will have a *pucca* house with a water connection, toilet facilities, and 24 hour electricity supply. 100 cities will be created, focused on specialised domains and with world class amenities. In addition, model towns with integrated infrastructure will be created.

**Development of states:** The centre will engage with state governments through the National Development Council and the Inter-State Council. State-specific development models will be created keeping in mind the needs of states, especially in the coastal, hilly, and desert areas.

The government is committed to the development of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana. Intra-region connectivity and border infrastructure will be developed in the north-east and Jammu and Kashmir. The issue of illegal immigrants will be addressed and fencing work along the north-east border will be completed.

**Internal security:** A policy of zero tolerance towards terrorism, extremism, riots, and crime will be followed. States will be provided assistance to modernise police infrastructure, and to tackle new forms of terrorism such as narco terrorism. States will be consulted to create a national plan to reduce incidents of communal violence, and left wing extremism.

**Defence:** Reforms will be carried out in defence procurement to increase efficiency and encourage domestic industries, including those in the private sector, to have a larger share in the production of defence equipment. Technology transfer will be strengthened, including through liberalised FDI in defence production. A National Maritime Authority will be set up to address coastal security concerns. The One Rank, One Pension Scheme will be implemented.

**Judicial system:** The government will address the high pendency of cases in the judicial system. It will: (a) modernise courts, (b) reform the criminal justice system to make the dispensation of justice more effective, (c) fill up vacancies in the judiciary, (e) double the number of courts and judges in the subordinate judiciary, and (f) develop alternate dispute resolution mechanisms.

**Governance and Administration:** The government is committed to providing an efficient administration, with transparent systems and time-bound service delivery.

**Efficiency:** Obsolete laws and administrative structures will be eliminated, as far as possible. The National e-Governance Plan will be expanded to cover government offices at all levels.

**Service delivery:** Government systems will be reformed to make them citizen friendly and corruption free.

**Corruption and black money:** The government has constituted a Special Investigating Team to recover black money stashed abroad. Rules will be formulated for the Lok Pal Act to curb corruption.

**Education:** A National Education Policy will be formulated to address challenges related to quality, research and innovation in educational institutions. IITs and IIMs will be set up in every state. A National Multi-Skill Mission will be launched and vocational qualifications will be given academic equivalence.

**Health and Sanitation:** A Swachh Bharat Mission will be launched to ensure hygiene, waste management, and sanitation across India by 2019. A New Health Policy will be formulated and a National Health Assurance Mission will be launched to promote Yoga and AYUSH (Ayurveda, Yoga and Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha, and Homeopathy). Institutes such as AIIMS will be established in every state.

**Welfare of labour:** Pension and health insurance safety nets will be strengthened for labour, across categories. Labour will be provided access to financial services.

#### **The welfare of special categories:**

**Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Classes:** A Van Bandhu Kalyan Yojana will be launched to address issues of importance to Scheduled Tribes. Connecting tribal areas with all weather roads, and ensuring electricity in these areas, will be a priority.

**Minorities:** Measures will be taken to spread technical education among minority communities. A National Madarsa Modernization Programme will be launched.

**Women:** The government will provide 33% reservation for women in Parliament and state legislative assemblies. A 'Beti Bachao – Beti Padhao' campaign will be launched to promote literacy among girls. The criminal justice system will be strengthened to ensure zero tolerance for violence against women.

**Specially-abled people:** Steps will be taken to provide institutional care to specially-abled people.

**Science and Technology:** Domestic and foreign private sector investment will be encouraged to ensure high end research and innovation. Research centres will be built in the fields of nanotechnology, material sciences, thorium technology, brain research, etc. The government will build Institutes of Technology for Rural Development and a Central University of Himalayan Studies.

**Foreign Policy:** The government is committed to revitalising SAARC as an instrument for regional cooperation. At the same time, the government points out the need to remain sensitive to security concerns, and to put an end to the export to terrorism to neighbours. The government will continue to engage with China, Japan, Russia, the United States, and Europe.

**Culture and Tourism:** A national mission called e-Bhasha will be launched to develop digital vernacular content, and disseminate classic literature. 50 tourist circuits will be created around specific themes. A national mission for improving amenities at pilgrimage centres of all faiths will be launched.

<sup>1</sup> "Address by the President of India, Shri Pranab Mukherjee to Parliament", President of India, June 9, 2014, <http://presidentofindia.nic.in/pdfs/sp090614.pdf>.

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