

Highlights of the President's Address 2019

The President of India, Mr. Ram Nath Kovind, addressed a joint sitting of both Houses of Parliament on June 20, 2019. He outlined the major policy achievements and objectives of the government in his address. Key highlights of the address include:

Elections

- The government will consider 'One Nation, Simultaneous Elections' in the future to reduce the frequency of elections.

Economy

- By 2024, the government seeks to make India a five trillion dollar economy.
- India's ranking in the Ease of Doing Business Index has improved from 142 in 2014 to 77 this year. The government seeks to be among the top 50 countries in the world. To achieve this, company laws will be amended.
- To accelerate economic development, income tax exemptions have been provided to persons earning up to five lakh rupees.

Finance and Banking

- 1.5 lakh post offices are being prepared to provide banking services through India Post Payment Banks.
- The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016 has helped banks and other financial institutions settle loans of more than Rs 3.5 lakh crore.
- Under the Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) scheme, funds from more than 400 schemes are being directly credited into the accounts of beneficiaries. Since 2014, Rs 7.3 lakh crore have been transferred through DBT. Further, DBT has prevented the transfer of Rs 1.4 lakh crore to ineligible beneficiaries and enabled the removal of eight crore ineligible beneficiaries.
- Prior to 2014, about 67 crore litres of ethanol was being blended into petroleum. In 2019, the government has set a target of 270 crore litres for ethanol blending. This will reduce the import of petroleum products and save foreign exchange.

Corruption and Black Money

- During the last two years, 4.25 lakh directors of companies have been disqualified and the registration of 3.50 lakh suspicious companies has been revoked.
- The Fugitive and Economic Offenders Act, 2018 has facilitated the receipt of information

on fugitive economic offenders from 146 countries. Automatic exchange of information with 80 of these countries has been established.

- The Real Estate (Regulation and Development) Act, 2016 was passed to curb black money transactions in the real estate sector.

Agriculture and Fishing

- To increase income support to farmers, the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi has been extended to all farmers in the country. Under the scheme, Rs 12,000 crore has been disbursed to farmers in three months. The expected expenditure on the scheme is Rs 90,000 crore per annum.
- To double farmers' income by 2022, certain decisions have been taken in the last five years. These include increasing Minimum Support Prices, and approving 100% foreign direct investment in food processing.
- To improve the benefit of cooperatives in farming, the government seeks to set up 10,000 new Farmer Producer Organisations.
- A department has been constituted for the integrated development of fisheries. Further, a fund has been created to develop infrastructure in the fishing industry.
- To improve agricultural productivity, Rs 25 lakh crore will be invested.

Education

- The government has provided for 10% reservation in education and employment for youth belonging to the economically weaker sections of society.
- To promote the use of technology in education, the Atal Innovation Mission is seeking to establish Atal Tinkering Labs in approximately 9,000 schools across the country. Atal Incubation Centres will be set up in 102 universities and other institutions.
- The amount of scholarship provided for higher education has been increased by 25%. Additionally, the government is striving to increase the number of seats in higher education institutions by 1.5 times by 2024. This initiative will add two crore seats.
- To improve research capabilities in India, a National Research Foundation has been proposed. It will bridge the gap between departments of the central government, science laboratories, higher educational institutions, and industrial institutions.

- To improve education in tribal areas, ‘Learning to Earning’ facilities and Eklavya Model Residential Schools will be established in forest areas.

Skill Development and Job Creation

- Under the Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana, 19 crore loans have been disbursed for self-employment. The scheme will be expanded to cover 30 crore people.
- Provisions will be made to enable entrepreneurs to avail loans up to Rs 50 lakh without any guarantee. Further, to ensure that entrepreneurs in the MSME sector have easy access to credit, the credit guarantee coverage will be enhanced to one lakh crore rupees.
- The government seeks to establish 50,000 start-ups in India by 2024.
- To promote the retail industry, a pension scheme has also been approved for small shopkeepers and retail traders. The scheme will benefit about three crore beneficiaries.
- To promote retail business, a National Traders Welfare Board will be constituted and a National Retail Trade Policy will be formulated. Further, an accident insurance up to Rs 10 lakh will also be provided to all traders registered under GST.

Health

- The Ayushman Bharat Scheme has been implemented to provide health insurance to 50 crore poor persons. So far, 26 lakh patients have availed treatments under this scheme.
- To provide medicines at affordable rates, 5,300 Jan Aushadhi Kendras have been opened.

Urban and Rural Development

- The government will establish education, and healthcare facilities, and infrastructure in 112 aspirational districts in the country. These districts contain 1.15 lakh of the most backward villages in India.
- The construction and upgradation of approximately 35,000 kms of National Highways will be undertaken by 2022 under the Bharatmala Project. Additionally, the Sagarmala Project will create a network of roads in coastal areas and areas adjoining ports.

- Under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana scheme, nearly two crore new houses will be built in the next three years.

Women and Child Development

- Women are being given priority in the registration of houses built in rural areas under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana.
- Self-employment opportunities are being made available to rural women through the Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Rashtriya Aajivika Mission. Under this mission, loans worth approximately two lakh crore rupees have been disbursed so far to three crore women in rural areas.

Environment and Water Conservation

- The Ministry of Jalshakti has been created to work towards water conservation.
- To address the challenges posed by air pollution, the National Clean Air Programme has been started in 102 cities.
- Forest and tree cover has increased by more than 1%. Further, Protected areas in the country have also increased from 692 to 868.

Armed Forces and National Security

- The amount of scholarship under the National Defence Fund has been increased for the children of soldiers. It will also include children of police personnel.
- India will soon receive the delivery of the first Rafael fighter aircraft and Apache helicopters. Government is also promoting the manufacture of modern armaments under Make in India. Defence corridors will also be created in Uttar Pradesh and Tamil Nadu.
- To prevent illegal immigration, the government has decided to implement the National Register of Citizens. Amendments to the Citizenship Act, 1955 are proposed to protect refugees who are victims of persecution due to their faith.

Space Exploration

- The government seeks to launch Chandrayaan-2, which will be India’s first aircraft to reach the moon. By 2022, it also aims to send the first Indian to space under ‘Gaganyaan’.

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