

## Highlights of the President's Address 2018

The President of India, Mr. Ram Nath Kovind, addressed a joint sitting of both Houses of Parliament on January 29, 2018. He outlined the major policy priorities of the government in his address. Key highlights of the address include:

### Economy and Finance

- During the first quarter of 2016-17, the economy witnessed a temporary slowdown in GDP growth. The second quarter of 2017-18, has seen a reversal of this trend.
- The rate of inflation, current account deficit and fiscal deficit have shown a decline. Foreign exchange reserves in 2017-18 were more than USD 410 billion. FDI increased from USD 36 billion to USD 60 billion in the last three years.
- *Taxation:* The Goods and Services Tax was introduced. Further, the National Anti-Profitteering Authority was constituted so that the benefits of lower prices of goods and services are passed on to the consumers.
- *Financial inclusion:* About 31 crore Jan Dhan accounts have been opened. Percentage of savings accounts held by women has gone up from 28% to 40%.
- Under *Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana*, loans of over four lakh crore rupees have been provided through 10 crore sanctioned loans.
- *Aadhaar:* It has helped in saving Rs 57,000 crore by providing benefits of 400 schemes.
- *Insurance:* Under *Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana* and *Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana*, more than 18 crore poor have been covered and Rs two crore has been paid as claims. Under *Atal Pension Yojana*, 80 lakh senior citizens have been benefitted.
- Re-capitalisation of public sector banks has been decided by infusing more than Rs 2 lakh crore of capital to them.

### Defence and Security

- Under One Rank One Pension, more than Rs 10,000 crore has been released to over 20 lakh retired armed forces personnel.
- The government sanctioned a scheme of more than Rs 18,000 crore for the modernisation of police forces.

### Governance and Legal Reforms

- In the last three years, 1,428 obsolete laws have been repealed.
- Frequent elections not only impose a huge burden on human resources but also impede development. Therefore, simultaneous conduct

of elections to Lok Sabha and State Assemblies should be considered.

### Skill Development and Job Creation

- Under *Atal Innovation Mission*, over 2,400 Atal Tinkering Labs have been approved.
- Under the *National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme*, 5 lakh youth have been benefitted.
- Two schemes: *SANKALP* and *STRIVE* for skill development of youth have been approved.

### Education

- The National Testing Agency has been approved to act as an autonomous and self-sufficient organisation to conduct all examinations of higher educational institutes.
- Aim to set up 20 Institutes of Eminence. Under this Mission, elected public sector institutions will be provided financial assistance of Rs 10,000 crore.
- The Indian Institutes of Management (IIM) Bill, 2017 was passed by Parliament. It declares the IIMs as institutions of national importance.

### Health

- A new National Health Policy has been formulated for providing better and affordable healthcare facilities.
- Through *Pradhan Mantri Jan Aushadhi Kendras*, 800 medicines have been made available at affordable rates. More than 3,000 Kendras have been established.
- To enhance the availability of doctors, 7,000 post graduate seats and over 13,000 MBBS seats have been approved.
- To ensure quality and transparency in medical education, the National Medical Commission Bill was introduced in Lok Sabha.
- The *Intensified Mission Indradhanush* was recently launched. The annual rate of increase in immunisation coverage has increased from 1% to 6.7%.

### Social Justice and Empowerment

- The Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Bill, 2017, was introduced and passed by Lok Sabha.
- A Bill to provide constitutional status to the National Commission for Backward Classes was introduced in Parliament.
- Provisions have been made for 4% reservation in government jobs and 5% reservation in higher education for disabled people.
- The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 was enacted.

- In the last three years, over 6,000 camps were organised impacting nine lakh disabled people with necessary aids and assistive devices.

### Women and Child Development

- *Beti Bachao Beti Padhao* has been extended from 161 districts to 640 districts.

### Labour

- The government is continuously working for reforms in labour laws. Minimum wages have been increased by more than 40%. In addition, the number of registers for compliance of labour laws has been reduced from 56 to five.
- The Maternity Benefit (Amendment) Act, 2017 enhances maternity leave from 12 to 26 weeks.

### Industry and Manufacturing

- India's rank improved to 100 out of 190 countries in 2017, from its rank of 142 in the annual Ease of Doing Business report released by the World Bank.
- To give preference to Make in India in public procurement, a new policy has been formulated. This policy promotes domestic manufacturing and services.

### Transport and Connectivity

- Under *Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana*, a target to provide road connectivity to every village by 2019 has been set. More than 82% villages have been connected by roads, as compared to 56% villages in 2014.
- Under the *Sagarmala* programme, works on Special Economic Zones in Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust, Smart Port Industries Cities, and Deen Dayal Port Trust have been taken up.
- Under the *BharatNet* Project, optical fibre cables now cover over one lakh panchayats.
- A new Metro Rail Policy with focus on last mile connectivity was formulated. Presently, work on Metro is in progress in 11 cities.
- *Bharatmala* has been approved and a provision of Rs. 5.3 lakh crore has been made. Under the project, about 53,000 km of National Highways have been identified.
- Under *UDAN*, work has been initiated to connect 56 airports and 31 helipads in 15 months. So far, flights have commenced from 16 such airports.

### Energy

- India has become a net exporter of power. The government has ensured power availability to states at cheap rates by completing work on the One Nation, One Grid.
- Nearly 18,000 villages have been electrified.
- Under *Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana*, over 3.3 crore gas connections have been provided.

- Under *UJALA*, more than 28 crore LED bulbs have been distributed and the private sector has sold 50 crore LED bulbs. This has resulted in an annual saving of Rs 40,000 crore.

### Urban and Rural Development

- More than 93 lakh houses have been constructed in rural and urban areas. Under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana-Urban, interest subvention of 6% has been provided. In addition, two new schemes have been launched for the middle class.

### Agriculture and Water Resources

- To prevent damage to agricultural produce and to ensure its safe storage, *Pradhan Mantri Kisan Sampada Yojana* has been launched.
- Under *Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana*, farmers are being provided affordable and simple crop insurance services. During 2017, 5.7 crore farmers were provided protection.
- A scheme has been introduced in the dairy sector, under which a 'Dairy Processing Infrastructure Development Fund' with a corpus of Rs 11,000 crore has been set up.
- The government is committed to doubling farmers income by 2022. So far, agricultural commodities of about Rs 36,000 crore have been traded on the e-NAM portal.
- The Indian Forest (Amendment) Bill, 2017 was passed by Parliament. The Bill amends the definition of tree to remove the word bamboos.

### Science and Technology

- ISRO successfully launched 104 satellites at one go. In June 2017, the first development flight of India's GSLV MK-III was successfully launched.
- In May 2017, ISRO launched the South Asian Satellite. Further, on January 12, 2018, ISRO successfully launched the PSLV-C40. This marked a century of satellites being launched.

### Development of North East

- The North East Special Infrastructure Development Scheme was sanctioned with 100% central assistance. Under the scheme, projects relating to drinking water supply, energy, and education will be completed.

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