

Highlights of the President's Address 2017

The President of India, Mr. Pranab Mukherjee, addressed a joint sitting of both Houses of Parliament on January 31, 2017. He outlined the major policy priorities of the government in his address. Key highlights of the address include:

Economy and Finance

- The rate of inflation, balance of payments, current account deficit and fiscal deficit have consistently reduced since 2014. FDI inflows in 2015-16 were USD 55.6 billion, the highest for any financial year. FDI policy was liberalised in June 2016.
- *Taxation:* Both Houses of Parliament passed the Constitution Amendment Act to levy a goods and services tax. 17 states governed by various political parties have ratified the Act.
- *Black Money:* To combat black money, corruption, counterfeit currency and terror financing, old Rs 500 and Rs 1,000 currency notes were demonetised. The Black Money (Undisclosed Foreign Income and Assets) and Imposition of Tax Act, 2015, Benami Transactions (Prohibition) Amendment Act, 2016, and the Taxation Amendment Act, 2016 providing for *Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana* were passed.
- *Financial inclusion:* Over 26 crore Jan Dhan accounts have been opened and over 20 crore RUPAY debit cards have been issued to enable cashless payments.
- The Indian Postal Payments Bank has started. The postal network with over 1.5 lakh post offices will also function as postal banks. Under *Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana*, loans of over two lakh crore rupees have been provided through 5.6 crore sanctioned loans.
- The Direct Benefit Transfer programme of subsidies through the *Jan Dhan-Aadhaar-Mobile* trinity has prevented leakages and helped save Rs 36,000 crore.

Industry and Manufacturing

- India is ranked third in the list of top prospective host economies for 2016-18 in the World Investment Report 2016.

Defence and Security

- Under One Rank One Pension, more than Rs 6,200 crore has been released to over 19.6 lakh veterans of armed forces. The total financial implications would be around Rs 11,000 crore.
- On September 29, 2016, surgical strikes at several launch pads along the Line of Control were conducted by defence forces to prevent infiltration by terrorists.

- Over 2,600 Left Wing Extremists have surrendered over the last three years. The security situation in the North Eastern states has also shown significant improvement.

Governance and Legal Reforms

- Over 1,100 obsolete laws have been repealed and 400 more are being repealed.
- Simultaneous conduct of elections to Lok Sabha and State Assemblies to be considered.

Skill Development and Job Creation

- The *Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana* has been launched with a budget outlay of Rs 12,000 crore to train one crore youth over the next four years. Over 20 lakh youth have benefited under the scheme.
- *National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme* has been launched with a budget outlay of Rs 10,000 crore. 978 employment exchanges spread across the country have been integrated as part of the National Career Service Portal.
- The *Pradhan Mantri YUVA Yojana* has been launched for promoting entrepreneurship education and training for seven lakh students.
- To boost employment generation in apparel sector, Rs 6,000 crore will be allocated. This is expected to generate 1.1 crore jobs.
- To create employment opportunities in the North Eastern region, projects have been announced. These include the BPO promotion scheme under Digital India and the Brahmaputra Cracker and Polymer Limited and Numaligarh Refinery Limited's wax unit.

Women and Child Development

- Under the *Deen Dayal Antyodaya Yojana*, which aims to empower women, over Rs 16,000 crore has been made available to Self Help Groups in 2016-17. The scheme aims to reach out to nearly five crore women.
- Under the *Sukanya Samridhi Yojana*, which aims to ensure a secure future for a girl child, over one crore bank accounts have been opened and over Rs 11,000 crore has been deposited.
- The *Pradhan Mantri Surakshit Matritva Abhiyan* will provide comprehensive ante-natal care to all pregnant women.

Health

- Mission *Indradhanush* aims to vaccinate all children against preventable diseases. So far, it has benefited 55 lakh children.

- *Pradhan Mantri Bharatiya Jan Aushadi Pariyojana* has been launched to ensure that the poor have access to quality medicines at affordable prices.

Tourism and Culture

- A new e-VISA policy has been approved covering 161 countries. With over 88 lakh foreign tourist arrivals in 2016, the sector has shown a growth rate of over 10%.
- *Ek Bharat Shrestha Bharat* programme: The programme pairs two different states with diverse cultures for over a year.

Transport and Connectivity

- Under the *Sagarmala* programme, a total of 199 projects with an outlay of over three lakh crore rupees have been identified for implementation in the next three years. Of these, projects of more than one lakh crore rupees are already under implementation.
- The National Civil Aviation Policy will give a major boost to regional air connectivity.
- For modernization of railways, the highest-ever capital outlay of Rs 1.21 lakh crore has been provided. All Meter-Gauge tracks will be converted to Broad-Gauge in North Eastern areas by the end of the year. Railways will be expanded in the region at a cost of around Rs 10,000 crore.
- All rural habitations will be connected with all-weather roads. So far, 73,000 kilometres of road has been laid in rural areas.
- Under the *BharatNet* Project, optical fibre cables now cover over 75,700 panchayats.

Labour

- Revision of Maternity Benefit Act, 1961 will enhance maternity leave from 12 to 26 weeks.
- Minimum wages have been increased by 42% in agricultural and non-agricultural sectors.
- Rollout of the 7th Pay Commission benefited 50 lakh employees and 35 lakh pensioners.

Energy

- Out of the target of 175 GW of renewable energy, 47 GW has been achieved.
- Under the LPG Give It Up campaign, over 1.2 crore consumers have voluntarily given up their LPG subsidy. Free gas connections are being provided to five crore poor households under *Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana*. In the current financial year, 1.5 crore connections have been provided.
- Under *Deen Dayal Upadhyay Gram Jyoti Yojana*, out of the over 18,000 villages without electricity, over 11,000 have been electrified.

- Under *Pradhan Mantri Urja Ganga*, the Jagdishpur-Haldia- Bokaro-Dhamra natural gas pipeline will cater to energy requirements of five states.

Urban and Rural Development

- *Swachh Bharat Abhiyan*: More than 3 crore toilets have been constructed. 1.4 lakh villages, over 450 cities, 77 districts and 3 states have declared themselves Open Defecation Free.
- The allocation to Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme in 2016-17 has been over Rs 47,000 crore.
- Annual action plan for 500 cities with an outlay of Rs 50,000 crore has been approved.

Agriculture and Water Resources

- *Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana* expanded risk-coverage, doubled the sum insured, and facilitated low premium for farmers. During Kharif 2016, around 3.66 crore farmers were insured for a sum of Rs 1.4 lakh crore.
- The corpus of NABARD fund has been doubled to Rs 41,000 crore to ensure easy credit access to farmers.
- Under *Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana*, more than 12.7 lakh hectares have been brought under micro irrigation in the last two years.
- To ensure fair price for farmers and to protect consumers, a buffer stock of 20 lakh tonnes of pulses has been envisaged. Out of this, eight lakh tonnes of pulses have been procured.

Social Justice and Empowerment

- Allocation under the Tribal Sub-Plan has increased. For promoting entrepreneurship, the National SC/ST Hub has been launched, with an allocation of Rs 490 crore.
- Reservation for *divyang jan* in government jobs has been increased from 3% to 4%.

Science and Technology

- India has launched eight operational missions covering meteorological, navigation, and earth observation and communication satellites. ISRO completed the seven-satellite constellation of Indian Regional Navigational Satellite Systems, NavIC.

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