

Highlights of the President's Address 2016

The President of India, Mr. Pranab Mukherjee, addressed a joint sitting of both Houses of Parliament on February 23, 2016. He outlined the major policy priorities of the government in his address. Key highlights of the address include:

Macroeconomy

Increase in GDP growth has made India the world's fastest growing economy among large economies. Inflation, fiscal deficit and current account deficit have decreased. The country recorded the highest ever foreign exchange reserves in 2015.

Taxation: A number of measures have been taken to put in place a simplified, progressive and non-adversarial tax regime. This is being done by incorporating internationally prevalent best practices in tax administration. Facilities such as e-filing of returns, electronic processing of documents, etc. are now available for usage.

Black money: The Black Money (Undisclosed Foreign Income and Assets) and Imposition of Tax Act, 2015 establishes a framework to deal with black money.

Financial sector: The government launched the Gold Monetization Scheme and Sovereign Gold Bond Scheme in November 2015 to ensure productive utilisation of idle assets. The *Indradhanush* programme has been launched to revitalise public sector banks and ensure credit flow in the economy, with a minimum capital of Rs 70,000 crore. Additionally, 23 banking licenses have been issued. The IT Modernisation Project involving computerisation and networking of 1,55,000 post offices will be completed by 2017.

Poverty Eradication

Financial inclusion: Under *Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana*, out of 21 crore accounts opened, 15 crore accounts are operational with an aggregate deposit of over Rs 32,000 crore. The proposed Postal Payment Bank of India will further boost financial inclusion. To universalise social security, three new insurance and pension schemes have been launched, namely: (i) *Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana*, (ii) *Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana*, and (iii) *Atal Pension Yojana*.

Subsidies and food security: Direct Benefit Transfer has been extended to 42 schemes. PAHAL, has close to Rs 15 crore beneficiaries. The *Give-It-Up* campaign along with the *Give Back* programme has provided subsidised fresh connections to 50 lakh BPL families. Under the campaign, 62 lakh LPG consumers have voluntarily surrendered their LPG subsidy. The

food security coverage has more than doubled since June 2014 to cover over 68 crore persons.

Agriculture and Water

Agriculture: *Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana* has been launched for crop insurance with lowest-ever premium rates for farmers. Under *Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana*, 8,000 clusters have been developed to promote organic farming. Soil Health Cards will be distributed to all 14 crore farm-holdings by March 2017.

The National Agriculture Market is working towards setting up a common e-market platform to connect 585 wholesale markets across the country.

New Urea Policy, 2015 has been notified to improve efficiency, and plug subsidy leakages by providing 100% neem-coated urea to farmers.

Policy interventions in the last year have brought down sugarcane arrears from over Rs 21,000 crore to Rs 720 crore. To fully harness the agricultural potential of eastern states, the government is taking several steps to usher in a second green revolution.

Food processing: The Food Processing Fund has been operationalised last year to provide affordable credit to designated food parks. Five new mega food parks and 33 projects under the Cold Chain Scheme have been made operational.

Water: *Jal Kranti Abhiyan* has been launched to spread awareness on water conservation and management. Under '*Namami Gange Programme*', projects are being implemented in 118 cities.

Rural and Urban Development

Housing: Under *Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana*, 4,25,000 houses have been sanctioned with a project cost of Rs 24,600 crore. The target is to construct two crore houses by 2022, to benefit slum dwellers, urban poor and people from economically weaker sections of society.

Rural development: *Shyama Prasad Mukherji Rurban Mission* has been launched for 300 rural clusters. The Mission will aid skill development and local entrepreneurship, in addition to providing infrastructure amenities.

Under *Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana*, 1,78,000 rural habitations are to be connected with all weather roads. National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS) has been revamped to ensure efficient disbursement of wages, increased transparency and creation of productive assets. Two lakh *anganwadi* buildings are being constructed under NREGS. Mission *Antyodaya* an

intensive participatory planning exercise has reached 2,569 most backward blocks.

The 14th Finance Commission has made a grant of Rs 2,00,000 crore to gram panchayats for a five year period.

Urbanisation: 20 cities have been selected in the first stage of the Smart Cities Mission, after a competition among 98 cities.

Industry and manufacturing

Initiatives by the government have helped India improve by 12 places in the latest ease of doing business rankings. The *Make in India* initiative has achieved a 39% increase in FDI inflow. Banks have cumulatively disbursed over Rs 1,00,000 crore to more than 2.6 crore micro, small and medium enterprise borrowers (MSME) under *Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana*. *Udyog Aadhar Portal* has been set up to facilitate online registration of MSMEs.

Start-Up India campaign has been launched to expand and support the innovative ecosystem in the country. Job creation is being targeted through a set of initiatives including Make in India, Start-Up India, Mudra, Skill India, etc. Under the Start-Up Village Entrepreneurship Programme, 1.82 lakh village enterprises will be created, generating employment for 3.78 lakh people. Skilling India has gained momentum and during the last year, 76 lakh people have been trained.

Education & Health

Education: Two IITs, six IIMs, one Indian Institute of Science, Education and Research and one NIT have started functioning. National Institutional Ranking Framework has been launched for higher educational institutions. In the spirit of Swachh Bharat, over 4,17,000 toilets for girls and boys have been constructed in primary schools.

Health: Maternal and Neonatal Tetanus has been successfully eliminated before the global targeted timeline of December 2015. KAYAKALP, an inter-institution ranking system has been introduced to bring improvement in cleanliness in our health institutions. Strong focus has been placed on strengthening AYUSH.

Environment & Tourism

Environment: Real time monitoring of (i) 1,487 industries in 17 highly polluting categories and (ii) ganga water quality has started. Target for emission standards for motor vehicles has been drastically brought forward to achieve Bharat Stage –VI norm by 2021.

Tourism: 13 circuits and 13 pilgrimage sites have been identified for development under '*Swadesh Darshan Scheme*' and '*PRASAD*' Scheme respectively.

Energy & Extractive Sectors

Energy shortages have been reduced from 4% to 2.3%. Installed solar capacity in the country has doubled in the last 20 months and crossed 5,000 MW. Ujwal DISCOM Assurance Scheme (UDAY) for financial turnaround of power distribution companies has been launched. The government is committed to providing electricity to all census villages by May 2018.

Renewable energy: Increasing renewable energy capacity to 175 GW by 2022 has been envisaged.

Coal and mines: Transparent auction of 70 coal blocks has been conducted. Coal India Limited's coal production has recorded a 9.8% growth. The Mines and Minerals Development and regulation Act, 1957 has been amended and auction of mines commenced.

Transport

Roads: Construction of 7,200 km of highways has been completed and 12,900 km of highway projects have been awarded. An umbrella scheme, '*Bharatmala*' has been formulated for development of national highways. The estimated cost is Rs 2,67,000 crore. A Green Highways Policy 2015 has been launched, and a pilot policy for conversion of diesel buses into electronic buses has been taken up.

Aviation: A Civil Aviation Policy is being formulated to improve connectivity to small cities.

Defence

Defence procurement procedure has been streamlined with a focus on indigenously designed, developed and manufactured weapon systems. Induction of women as Short Service Commission and as fighter pilots in the Indian Air Force. The government has fulfilled its commitment to implement One Rank One Pension.

Governance

Close to 1,800 obsolete legislations are at various stages of repeal. An initiative of providing 500 e-governance services through Public-Private Partnership in 12 states has been taken up. Amendments to the Prevention of Corruption Act are also on the anvil.

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