

**ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA,
SHRI RAM NATH KOVIND
TO THE JOINT SITTING OF TWO HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT**

New Delhi, 31.01.2019

Honourable Members,

It gives me immense pleasure to address the Joint Sitting of the Two Houses of Parliament.

1. In the annals of our democracy, 2019 is an important milestone. We the people of India, are celebrating the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, the Father of the Nation this year. 13th April this year will also mark 100 years of the tragic massacre at Jallianwala Bagh. On behalf of the entire nation, I bow to pay tribute to all those martyrs who sacrificed their lives for a bright future for us.
2. This year, our country will also celebrate the 70th anniversary of the Constitution Day. It is in this historic Central Hall, that the illustrious architects of our Constitution had sculpted the Constitution of India. This year, we are also celebrating the 550th birth anniversary of Guru Nanak Devji, who taught us to lead our lives with the spirit of service and goodwill.
3. I am glad that our country is following the dreams of Gandhiji to build an inclusive society based on ethics and principles. Our nation is moving ahead guided by the ideals of social and economic justice as enshrined in the Constitution by Baba Saheb Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar. The efforts of my Government clearly reflect a belief in an egalitarian society as espoused by Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia, the torch bearer of public conscience against the politics of exploitation.

Honourable Members,

4. Prior to the 2014 General Election, the country was passing through a phase of uncertainty. After the elections, my Government assumed charge and vowed to build a new India. A new India with no place for imperfect, corrupt and inertia ridden systems. From day one, the

mission of my Government based on transparency was to improve the lives of our citizens, to eradicate their difficulties owing to poor governance, and to make sure that the benefit of public services reach the lowest strata of the society.

5. The targets of my Government were determined by countless and helpless faces such as - that poor mother who cooked in a smoke filled kitchen; that helpless sister who was compelled to postpone her own treatment due to financial worries despite serious illness; that daughter who had to wait the whole day until the cover of darkness for going to the toilet; that child who was compelled to wait for day light to study because there was no electricity; that farmer who was caught in the anxiety of repaying his loan while watching his crops damaged by hail storm; that youth who was unable to earn his livelihood because no bank would lend to him. These very thoughts have shaped the schemes of my Government. These ideals of Deen Dayal Upadhyaya's Antyodaya have been the touchstone of my Government's work.

6. In the last four and a half years, My Government has infused new hope and confidence among the people of the country, enhanced the country's image and has effectively brought in social and economic change. As a result, my Government has been able to win immeasurable affection and trust of the people. The main goal of my Government is to improve the life of every Indian.

Honourable Members,

7. For an inclusive and modern development of our country, it needs to be ensured that not a single family is deprived of fundamental needs. My Government which is sensitive to the needs of the common people and understands their pain, has prioritised provision of basic amenities, addressed health concerns of the people and implemented the Government schemes at an unprecedented pace after restructuring them.

Espousing universal compassion towards all, Lord Basavanna said:

‘दयवे धर्मद मूल वय्या’

(Dayave dharmad mool vayyaa)

That is “Kindness is the basis of all faiths”. Every human being must possess affection and kindness in his heart for all living beings.

8. Lack of toilets had forced crores of Indians, especially our daughters and daughters-in-law to lead an undignified and unhealthy life. Under the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, more than 9 crore toilets have been constructed. It is the outcome of this mass movement that coverage of rural sanitation that was less than 40 percent in 2014, has increased to 98 percent. According to an assessment, because of the toilets built, numerous poor persons have been spared of various kind of diseases and more than 3 lakh lives have been saved. In the year of the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, we must remember that we have resolved in his memory to achieve Swachh Bharat by 2nd October.

Honourable Members,

9. Many of our mothers, sisters and daughters used to suffer from various illnesses because of smoke filled kitchens, which also affected health of the entire family; and much of their effort and time were spent in collecting firewood. My Government has provided more than 6 crore cooking gas connections to such sisters and daughters under the Ujjwala Yojana. Even after decades of efforts, there were only 12 crore gas connections in the country in 2014. In a short period of last four and a half years, 13 crore families have been provided gas connections.
10. We are fully aware that the burden of expenditure on medical treatment further impoverishes the poor families. My Government which empathizes with this pain has launched the “Ayushman Bharat Yojana” last year. Under the world’s biggest health care scheme, ‘Pradhan Mantri Jan Aarogya Abhiyan’, 50 crore poor are eligible for availing treatment up to Rs 5 lakh per year per family in case of a serious illness. In a short period of four months, more than 10 lakh poor have already availed free treatment from hospitals under this scheme.
11. The endeavour of my Government has also been on reducing the burden of out of pocket expenses on medical care for the poor and

the middle class. Under 'Pradhan Mantri Bharatiya Jan Aushadhi Pariyojana', 4,900 Jan Aushadhi Centres have already been opened in more than 600 districts. More than 700 different medicines are being dispensed at low cost in these Centres. Similarly, reduction in the cost of cardiac stents has resulted in an annual saving of about Rs. 4,600 crore to the poor and middle class. Reduction in cost of knee replacement has led to an annual saving of about Rs. 1,500 crore. My Government has provided the facility of dialysis free of cost to those suffering from kidney diseases. This has resulted in a saving of more than Rs 2,000 per session for these people.

12. In addition, for a premium of just one rupee a month under 'Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana' and 90 paise a day under 'Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana', as many as 21 crore poor brothers and sisters have been provided with insurance coverage. An assistance of Rs 2 lakh in the event of an untoward incident is made available to them under both the schemes. By disbursing more than Rs. 3,100 crore under these schemes till now, my Government has supported the people in their times of difficulty.
13. My Government is also striving hard to alleviate the challenge of malnutrition among poor women and children. My Government has launched the National Nutrition Mission for persons suffering from malnutrition and to eliminate the factors responsible for malnutrition. 'Mission Indradhanush' has been launched by the Government to provide immunization facilities to children and pregnant women living in remote and tribal areas. As a result, the country has moved rapidly towards the target of "Universal Immunization".
14. Be it cities or villages, the Government is working at a fast pace to strengthen the healthcare related infrastructure. New medical colleges are being set up by the Government, district hospitals are being upgraded and Wellness Centres are being established in all major Panchayats of the country. From Madurai in Tamil Nadu to Pulwama in Jammu-Kashmir; and from Rajkot in Gujarat to Kamrup in Assam, new 'AIIMS' are being established. Government is setting up new Ayurveda Science Institutes and encouraging yoga for physical and mental well being. To address the shortage of doctors

in rural areas, 31 thousand new seats have been added in medical education in the last four years.

Honourable Members,

15. When my Government set a target that by 2022 when the nation celebrates 75th anniversary of its independence, no family would remain homeless, many wondered how this would be possible. While completing the houses under the earlier scheme, the Government has also fast-tracked the construction of houses across cities and villages under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana, in an unprecedented manner.
16. In the last four-and-a-half years, 1 crore and 30 lakh homes have been constructed under the rural housing schemes of the Government, whereas in the five years preceding 2014, only 25 lakh houses had been constructed. This five-fold increase in the speed of construction of houses and handing over the house keys to the poor is rapidly transforming the destiny of the poor and the rural landscape.
17. Similarly, buying or building a house in the cities has become easier for the common person. The dream of building one's own home had become difficult for a normal family to achieve due to black money and rising costs. By enacting RERA law, my Government has ensured that construction of houses is completed and they are handed over to the buyers as scheduled so that the hard earned money of buyers does not get stuck. After enactment of this law, about 35 thousand 'Real Estate Projects' have been registered where lakhs of houses are being constructed and handed over to families.
18. Under 'Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana', the Government is also giving interest subsidy of 6 and a half per cent to the persons belonging to low income group. According to an estimate, an individual taking a home loan of Rs 20 lakh for 20 years, would get a benefit of about Rs 6 lakh.

19. By providing electricity connection to every household, my Government is illuminating the life of each person. In 2014, there were more than 18 thousand villages which had no electricity connection. Today every village has been electrified. Under 'Pradhan Mantri Saubhagya Yojana', 2 crore and 47 lakh homes have been provided electricity connection. Now India is rapidly moving on the path where every home is electrified and no poor household will be forced to live in darkness.
20. My Government is working hard towards realization of the dreams and aspirations of all the sections. By decreasing the burden of income tax and keeping rate of inflation under control, Government has created new opportunities for expanding the savings of the middle class. The effort of the Government is to increase the income of the hard working middle class and provide avenues for investment to further augment their incomes.

Honourable Members,

21. When the nation was fortunate to have a visionary and compassionate Prime Minister in Atal Bihari Vajpayee, who also understood the pain of the poor; several new Departments and Ministries were created and new programmes were launched. A separate Ministry for the North East, a Ministry for welfare of the Tribals, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan and connecting the nation through Golden Quadrilateral were singular contributions of Atalji. He undertook a grand initiative to eliminate the widespread disparities prevailing in the country. The programmes and Ministries conceived by Atalji played a vital role in eliminating the social imbalances during the initial years of 21st Century. But unfortunately these initiatives did not get the desired momentum and continuity in subsequent years.
22. We are all aware that if our Divyang brothers and sisters are provided assistance to ameliorate their physical difficulties, they can achieve new heights on their own. With this in mind, the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment established by Atalji had started the tradition of organizing camps to assist the Divyangjans. But the

situation was so dismal that up to 2014 only 56 such camps could be organized.

23. After formation of my Government in 2014, following the vision of Atalji, efforts were made with full sensitivity to solve the problems of Divyangjans. In the past four-and-a-half years my Government has been organising 140 camps on an average every month where Divyangjans are receiving assistive equipments. During this period, assistive equipments worth Rs 700 crore have been distributed to about 12 lakh Divyangjans in a fully transparent manner.
24. We are all familiar with the ordeals faced by Divyangjans at railway stations and bus stands while commuting. My Government under the 'Sugamya Bharat Abhiyan' has made about 1,000 Government buildings and more than 650 railway stations fully accessible to Divyangjans.
25. Children using sign language in one State had to face considerable difficulty due to different types of sign languages while visiting other States. In many instances multiple sign languages were being used within a State. Taking note of their difficulty, my Government started working on a uniform sign language for Divyangjan applicable throughout the country. A dictionary for the Divyangjan with 3,000 words has already been published by the Delhi-based Indian Sign Language Research and Training Centre and the work on another dictionary with 3,000 new words is in progress. In addition, the Central Government has made about 100 websites compliant to the needs of Divyangjan. Through the enactment of 'The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016', my Government has provided them with equal opportunity in education, social security and employment.

Honourable Members,

26. Tragic accidents at unmanned railway crossings have for years been a subject of discussion in our country. This subject has also been raised many times in the Parliament. In 2014, unmanned crossings in the country numbered 8,300. My Government undertook

a mission to eliminate unmanned railway crossings, which have now almost been done away with.

27. Our citizens have to frequently deal with natural calamity of one kind or the other. Every year, there are floods in some districts and drought in some others. My Government is fully focussed on the management of natural disasters, and the financial assistance has been more than doubled so that relief work can be performed with full capacity. Be it the cyclonic storms in southern States or the floods in eastern India, my Government has exhibited promptness and sensitivity in relief and rehabilitation works.

Honourable Members,

28. Mindful of the prevalence of injustice and deprivation in the society, my Government has been working towards reforming the legal system so as to ensure social and economic justice. The Citizenship Amendment Bill will help in the securing of Indian citizenship by those victims who were persecuted and were compelled to seek refuge in India. These people cannot be blamed since they were victims of circumstances.

29. My Government has made a provision for capital punishment in case of heinous crimes like rape of minors. In many States, capital punishment has been awarded after expeditiously completing the hearing which has sent out a strong message to persons with such perverted thinking.

30. With a view to liberate our Muslim daughters from a life of fear and anxiety and to provide them with equal right to lead their lives at par with other daughters, my Government is striving hard to get the Triple Talaq Bill passed by the Parliament.

31. Similarly, grant of Constitutional status to the 'Other Backward Classes Commission' demonstrates my Government's commitment towards social justice.

32. A historic decision has been taken in the last Winter Session of Parliament to pass the 103rd Amendment to the Constitution to

extend the benefit of reservation to the poor belonging to the general category. This is an effort to provide justice and equal opportunity to those poor young men and women who felt left out because of poverty. To ensure that this new dispensation has no impact on the existing reservation, the number of seats in educational institutions are being increased proportionately.

Honourable Members,

33. Youth are the greatest strength of our nation. India has the largest number of young people in the world, and the policy decisions of my Government have been inspired by the aspirations and dreams of the young Indians of 21st century.

34. Keeping in mind the desire of the youth to be self-reliant, the Kaushal Vikas Abhiyan was launched. Under this Abhiyan, in the last four years, on an average one crore youth have been trained every year in different skills. In the coming days, more than 15,000 ITIs, more than 10,000 Kaushal Vikas Kendras and more than 600 Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Kendras, will play a critical role in developing the skill-set of the country's youth.

35. Under the 'Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana', which facilitates credit for professional and business requirements, loans worth more than Rs. 7 lakh crore have been disbursed to the youth without any guarantee. More than 15 crore people have benefitted and over 4 crore 26 lakh first time borrowers have started their business under this scheme.

36. Under 'Start Up India' and 'Stand Up India', my Government has provided financial assistance to make the youth self-reliant. As a result, in the world of start ups, India now figures as a frontline country.

37. The Government has linked creation of jobs with tax incentives under 'Pradhan Mantri Rojgar Protsahan Yojana'. Under this scheme, when a young person gets a new job, the EPS and EPF contribution of 12 per cent payable by the employer is being paid by

the Government for the first three years. More than 1 crore youth have already benefitted from this scheme.

Honourable Members,

38. Every parent aspires for a good education for their sons and daughters so that they can succeed in life. Government is establishing new educational institutions to provide increased opportunities for professional education of the highest standard. 7 IITs, 7 IIMs, 14 IIITs, 1 NIT and 4 NIDs are being established. It has been decided to enhance the amount of scholarship and fellowship by more than 25 percent to encourage research activities in the country. In addition, efforts are being made to further strengthen the foundation of the education system by opening 103 Kendriya Vidyalayas, Eklavya Model Awasiya Vidyalayas in all talukas having a majority tribal population and 62 new Navodaya Vidyalayas.
39. To improve the standard of education, Government is following a multi-dimensional approach. To secure the future of the country, it is imperative that children still studying in schools get full opportunity to transform their flight of imagination into concrete reality. The Government is setting up more than 5,000 'Atal Tinkering Labs' for taking ideas to innovation.
40. With changing times and evolving technology, methods and processes of employment and business are also changing. My Government is constantly working to ensure the preparedness of youth of our country for such changes.
41. My Government is making efforts to identify talented sportspersons from different corners of this country under the youth centric 'Khelo India' programme. Transparency in selection process has boosted the morale of our sportspersons. The result is reflected in the number of medals won by us at national and international levels.

Honourable Members,

42. Our daughters are making remarkable contribution in every field today and have brought laurels to the country. It is for the first time since independence that the policies and programmes of the

Government have created numerous new opportunities for enterprise for women and led to their empowerment and economic mainstreaming.

43. Under the 'Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana', the maximum benefit has been availed by women. Out of the 15 crore Mudra loans provided so far throughout the country, 73 percent have been disbursed to women entrepreneurs. Under the 'Deen Dayal Antyodaya Yojana', about 6 crore women have become members of Self Help Groups. My Government has provided loans worth more than Rs 75 thousand crore to such Self Help Groups. This amount is two and a half times more than the loans given in the four years preceding 2014.
44. In order to ensure the participation of women entrepreneurs in small and medium enterprises, it has been made mandatory for the major Government companies to purchase at least 3 percent of their material from the enterprises owned by women entrepreneurs.
45. My Government is also making efforts to address the problem of gender-based discrimination faced by women in different spheres. Last year, a decision was taken whereby women officers recruited under the Short Service Commission in the armed forces would be considered for permanent commission through a transparent selection process just like their male counterparts. Women, who had been deprived of employment opportunities in the underground mining sector even after so many years of independence, will now be given equal opportunity to work in this sector.
46. To enable working women to devote more time towards the upbringing of their new born children during their crucial formative years, the Government has enhanced maternity leave from 12 weeks to 26 weeks.

Honourable Members,

47. Despite the scorching sun, heavy downpour, snow fall, or any other challenge; the hard working farmers of our country have toiled day and night to produce record food grain harvest. There has also been an increase in dairy and fish production, as also in other areas. Many

of you have witnessed village life and the struggles of the farmers from very close quarters. Our farmer brothers and sisters are not only the foundation of our economy, but they also keep our traditions alive.

48. On behalf of this august House, I compliment our annadata farmers. My Government is striving day and night to attain the goal of doubling farmers income. Understanding the needs of farmers, the Government is seeking to find permanent solutions to their problems. It is the priority of the Government to provide better facilities and assistance to farmers for the entire spectrum of agriculture activities from purchase of equipments and seeds to transportation of produce and its sale.
49. Work is being carried out with a new approach for reducing the cost of farming, providing the farmers with fair price for their crops, providing access to new markets and helping them with additional sources of income. My Government has taken the historic decision of fixing the Minimum Support Price - MSP of 22 crops at one and a half times higher than the production cost of the crop.
50. In addition, it is being ensured that good quality seeds are made available to the farmers. The number of Krishi Vigyan Kendras is being increased across the country to assist the farmers with scientific methods of farming. More than 17 crore Soil Health Cards have been distributed to inform the farmers about the health of the soil. 100 percent Neem coating of urea has been done to facilitate its availability and to prevent its misuse.
51. My Government is completing 99 incomplete old irrigation projects so that farmers do not face any hurdle in irrigation. 71 of these projects will be completed by the next few months. Micro-irrigation is also being promoted by the Government to ensure full utilization of every drop of water.
52. Crop insurance is being provided to farmers at low premium under the 'Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana' to safeguard them from potential crisis due to crop damage. A campaign has been launched

to link online, more than 1,500 Agricultural Mandis to facilitate market access to farmers. Cold storage capacities are being increased at a fast pace to minimise crop damage from the field to the market and to ensure proper storage. The 'Waste to Wealth' campaign is being implemented to ensure that farmers generate additional income out of the crop residue from their field.

53. Under the Blue Revolution scheme, my Government is providing training to fishermen in deep sea fishing and financial assistance for buying modern fishing trawlers.

54. These comprehensive interventions will trigger a permanent transformation in our 70-year old agriculture system, empower our Annadata farmers, pull them out of their problems; and do justice to their potential.

Honourable Members,

55. By lending momentum to schemes linked with the Digital India programme, my Government is trying to provide full advantage of e-governance to people living in rural areas. In 2014, only 59 village panchayats in the country had digital connectivity. Today, 1 lakh 16 thousand village panchayats are connected with optical fibre and about 40 thousand village panchayats have been provided with wi-fi hotspots.

56. Establishment of Common Service Centres has been accelerated to ensure that various benefits and services are easily available to brothers and sisters in rural areas. In these Centres, facilities like banking, insurance, pension and scholarship etc are being made available online to the village folk. In 2014 there were only 84 thousand Common Service Centres. Today, their number has increased to more than 3 lakhs. Of these, 2 lakh and 12 thousand centres have been set up in village panchayats.

57. In this era of information technology, easy availability of data at low cost is a big facility as well as means for development for our people. The cost of one GB data which was about Rs. 250 in 2014 has now

reduced to only Rs. 10 to 12. Similarly, the mobile talk time charges have now been reduced to less than half.

58. Earlier, it was almost impossible for ordinary entrepreneurs to supply their products to Government Departments. The Government has now developed an online platform called GeM i.e. Government e-Marketplace for public procurement. This platform has helped in bringing transparency in public procurement and at the same time has provided an opportunity to entrepreneurs in big and small cities as well as villages to sell their products without any difficulty to the Government.

59. Recently, in order to simplify the processes, the Government has started a scheme wherein loans of amounts up to Rs.1 crore are approved within 59 minutes.

Honourable Members,

60. The great Saint Thiruvalluvar has said:

“इयट्रलुम् ईट्टलुम् कातलुम् कात,

वगुत्तलुम् वल्लद अरसु”

(Iyattralum eettalum kaattalum kaatta,

Vaguttalum vallad arasu)

That is, a well governed State is one where there is adequate growth in assets and services, where assets are well distributed and protected, and all citizens get their fair share.

61. We are all aware of the dismal state of banking facilities for the poor, that existed even 45 years after nationalisation of banks. The Jan Dhan Yojana of my Government is an excellent example of how to lay the foundation of major economic transformation. This scheme is not merely for opening new bank accounts; its objectives are far wider. This scheme is not only ushering in economic inclusion of the poor, it is also increasing their self-confidence.

62. 34 crore bank accounts have been opened in the country because of ‘Jan Dhan Yojana’ and almost every family is now connected to the banking system. According to an international agency, of all the

bank accounts opened in the world from 2014 to 2017, 55 percent were opened in India alone. Beyond these numbers, it is important to appreciate the positive impact of this initiative on the nation's economy.

63. Our mothers and sisters always used to save some money for difficult times. But often these savings were spent on daily needs. Today, Rs 88 thousand crore deposited in Jan Dhan accounts is a testimony to the changing saving habits. It is only because of the Jan Dhan scheme that wages from MGNREGA, benefits from different insurance schemes, scholarships, pensions and most other Government benefits are being credited directly into the bank accounts of the poor through DBT. Jan Dhan accounts have succeeded in eliminating the middlemen between the Government and the poor.
64. Jan Dhan Yojana is playing an important role in facilitating cost effective digital transactions in the country through more than 60 crore Rupay debit cards and BHIM App. Similarly Government is bringing banking services closer to the people through the 'India Post Payments Bank' set up in the post offices. As a result, the whole world has taken note of this step towards financial inclusion in India.

Honourable Members,

65. Whereas many social welfare programmes were in existence for the past several decades, they had failed to produce the desired impact. The alertness, action-oriented approach and good intention displayed by my Government towards the aspirations and difficulties of citizens have made it possible to bring about large scale visible changes.
66. While giving a clear majority to my Government in 2014, the people of the country had also given a clear mandate to take strict action against corruption and black money. My Government has come down heavily on corruption in the past four-and-a-half years. Being sensitive to public sentiment, my Government has waged a war on corruption and black money from day one, and approved

constitution of a Special Investigation Team- SIT on black money in the very first meeting of the Cabinet. Thereafter, Government enacted a new and strict law on black money. My Government also carried out a campaign against illegally acquired assets in foreign countries. New agreements were signed with several countries known as tax havens, and several others were signed with many other countries to rectify deficiencies in existing agreements.

67. While preventing the flow of black money abroad, my Government also launched a major campaign against black money within the country. New laws were enacted for sectors thriving on black money, and those were brought under the ambit of taxation. Amid these actions, Government also provided an opportunity to voluntarily disclose unaccounted income and wealth.
68. Demonetisation was a defining moment in the Government's war on corruption and black money. This decision struck at the very root of the parallel economy thriving on black money; and the money outside the formal system was brought within the ambit of nation's economy.
69. This action of the Government broke the back of the forces destabilising the country; and the systems sustaining the flow of black money. The registration of 3 lakh 38 thousand dubious shell companies responsible for flow of black money have been annulled by the Government. The directors of these companies have also been prohibited from holding such offices again.
70. Assets worth more than Rs 50 thousand crore are being confiscated under the Benami Property Act, Prevention of Money Laundering Act and the law against fugitive economic offenders. As a result of the policies of my Government, black money in real estate sector has declined substantially, the prices of houses have come down and the dream of a normal middle class family for possessing their own house is being realised.

Honourable Members,

71. I am pleased that on account of these policies of my Government, people's trust in the Government has increased, and there has been a sharp increase in the number of persons paying income tax. Whereas prior to 2014, 3.8 crore people had filed their return, this number has increased and more than 6.8 crore people have come forward to file their returns. Today, the tax payer is confident that each paisa contributed by him or her is being spent honestly on nation building.
72. My Government believes that corruption and black money constitute a grave injustice towards the honest taxpayer of the country. Corruption always infringes on the rights of some poor or middle class person. The Government is relying on application of modern technology to address this situation.
73. As a result of the expansion in Direct Benefit Transfer in the last four and a half years, more than Rs 6 lakh 5 thousand crore have been directly transferred to the bank accounts of beneficiaries. Because of this, about Rs. 1 lakh 10 thousand crore have been saved from falling into wrong hands. Government has removed about 8 crore fictitious names which were being used by middlemen to misappropriate the rightful benefits of genuine beneficiaries.

Honourable Members,

74. In order to build a strong nation, it is imperative that we develop our economy in such a manner that will help our fellow citizens to progress with transparency and honesty.
75. Prior to 2014, auction of coal mines used to be a subject of discussion due to lack of transparency. My Government developed a transparent system for auction of coal mines and has protected this national resource. Banks and creditors have directly or indirectly dealt with Rs 3 lakh crore after the new Bankruptcy and Insolvency Code has come into effect. The tendency to avail large loans and misappropriate them with an intent to default has been curbed.
76. While Sardar Patel with his extraordinary abilities had accomplished the challenging objective of geographic and political integration of

the nation, the task of economic integration remained incomplete. Our traders and entrepreneurs always faced difficulties in sale and purchase of their goods and in complying with different tax regimes prevalent in different States. Now with the implementation of a comprehensive tax reform like the GST, the concept of 'One Nation-One Tax-One Market' has been realised. GST is proving instrumental in establishing an honest and transparent system of trade and commerce which is also benefitting the country's youth. This system, while reducing the difficulties faced by traders, has enhanced their ease of doing business across the country. I congratulate my compatriots for wholeheartedly embracing the new system in a short span of time in the interest of a better future for the country, in spite of the initial bottlenecks. My Government is continuously improving the GST regime keeping in view the suggestions being received from the business community.

77. The primary focus of my Government has been to enable our youth to earn their livelihood with dignity, while also creating employment opportunities for others. In order to facilitate self-employment, my Government has introduced wide ranging reforms, which are being appreciated globally. As a result of these reforms, India's position has improved by 65 places in the Ease of Doing Business ranking, from 142 in 2014 to 77 now. This is an extraordinary achievement.

Honourable Members,

78. During the last four and a half years, the economy of the country has been growing at a rate of 7.3 percent on an average. India is playing a significant role in international trade. While India's contribution to the world GDP was 2.6 percent in 2014, it has increased to 3.3 percent in 2017 as per the latest reports. India has emerged as the 6th largest economy in the world. This is an opportune moment for the country to play a decisive role in the 4th industrial revolution and my Government is committed to ensure that our citizens take full benefit of this opportunity.
79. As a result of the 'Make in India' initiative effective outcomes in the field of industrial development and employment generation are clearly visible. Now India is the 2nd largest manufacturer of mobile

phones in the world. Recently, the milestone of converting diesel locomotives into 10 thousand horsepower electric engines has also been established by India. As a part of Make in India initiative, Asia's largest MedTech Zone is being established in Andhra Pradesh. Defence Corridors are being established in Uttar Pradesh and Tamil Nadu, which will not only strengthen our security through establishment of production facilities for defence equipment, but also provide employment to the youth. Soon, the passengers will also be able to avail the ultra-modern facilities of our fastest train till date – 'Vande Bharat Express'.

80. I also want to congratulate the scientists and engineers of our country who are tirelessly working for recognition of India's prowess in this era of modern technology. The scientists and engineers from ISRO in particular are proving their pre-eminent position in the world by setting new records in launching satellites. I, on behalf of the nation, convey our best wishes to our scientists and engineers for 'Mission Gaganyaan'.

Honourable Members,

81. The focus of my Government on timely completion of tasks, with accountability, has resulted in increasing the confidence of the people in Government functioning and has also enhanced the pace of development. My Government has established a reputation for time bound completion of projects.
82. Many projects where delays in completion had become synonymous with injustice to common people of this country such as India's longest Bogibeel railroad bridge in Assam, Western Peripheral Expressway near Delhi, Kollam Bypass in Kerala have been fast tracked and completed. By completing these projects, my Government has done justice to the resources of the nation and aspirations of the people.

Honourable Members,

83. Developing modern infrastructure for economic development as per the needs of 21st century, is the aspiration of every Indian,

especially the middle class. Sensitive to their aspirations, my Government is completing new projects at a fast pace.

84. The airport terminal constructed at Prayagraj in a record period of 11 months is an evident example. Last year, the country's first container vessel sailed along the national waterway from Kolkata and reached Varanasi. Eastern Peripheral Expressway, started in November 2015, has also been dedicated to the nation last year.
85. My Government believes that eastern part of India comprising east Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal, Odisha and the States of North-East, has the potential to become a new 'Growth Engine'. Therefore, my Government is relentlessly striving to strengthen the infrastructure related to railways, highways, waterways and airways in Eastern India.
86. Under the Udan Yojana, 19 new airports are being built in Eastern India and of these 5 are coming up in the North East. The construction of Pakyong airport in Sikkim and Veer Surendra Sai Airport at Jharsuguda in Odisha has been completed.
87. The work of reconstruction of fertilizers plants at Gorakhpur in Uttar Pradesh, Barauni in Bihar and Sindri in Jharkhand, which were closed for several years, is progressing rapidly. The 'Urja Ganga Pariyojana' started with an approximate outlay of Rs.13 thousand crores will help expand the industries based on gas pipeline in several cities of Eastern India.
88. My Government is setting up new AIIMS and new Indian Agriculture Research Institutes in Eastern India. The Government has also established a Central University at East Champaran-Motihari, the 'Karma-bhumi' of Mahatma Gandhi.
89. Similarly, the work on the 'Gas Cracker Project' which is important for Assam and Paradip Oil Refinery in Odisha has also been expedited. The Dholā Sadiya Bridge named after Bhupen Hazarika, linking Assam and Arunachal Pradesh has already been dedicated to the nation. Out of the 18 thousand villages electrified by the

Government, about 13 thousand villages are in Eastern India and out of these 5 thousand villages are in the remote areas of the North-East.

90. My Government is working towards bringing about a transformation through transport and tourism in order to make the lives of the people of North-East easier. Almost all the railway lines of the North-East have been converted to broadgauge. Efforts are underway to provide rail connectivity to the capital cities of all the 8 States. For this, the work on 15 new rail lines is under progress at a cost of approximately Rs.50 thousand crores.

Honourable Members,

91. Be it the country's fastest train, the highest bridge, the longest sea-link, the longest tunnel, construction of highways at double the speed or gauge conversion of railway tracks, modern facelift of railway stations or metro projects in cities, air connectivity among small towns or construction of a new waterway, my Government is rapidly developing modern infrastructure in all these areas. Keeping environment conservation in mind, my Government is moving forward on the electric mobility front.
92. In order to make the latest technology-based systems available in our cities so that they can become growth engines of the economy, modern facilities are being developed in 100 cities under the Smart City Mission.
93. The nation is moving at a fast pace in the civil aviation sector also. This sector has seen a double digit growth during the last four years. More than 12 crore and 30 lakh people travelled by air during 2017-18 and this number is increasing constantly. This transformation, offers a glimpse of an India on the move. Under the 'Udan scheme', 12 lakh seats have been made available to people at lower tariffs. This has provided the common person with an opportunity of air travel.
94. In addition, in the last four and a half years Government has established more than 300 new Passport Sewa Kendras in the

country. Prior to 2014, there were 77 Passport Sewa Kendras, which have now increased to more than 400. People are no longer required to repeatedly visit big cities for getting their passports.

Honourable Members,

95. In the all-round development of the country, a pivotal role is played by our labourer brothers and sisters, small and medium entrepreneurs, engineers, auditors, doctors, teachers, scientists and every professional. All these responsible citizens have lived up to this saying of Sant Ravidas that work is the best form of worship.

श्रम कउ ईसर जानि कै, जऊ पूजहि दिन रैन।

‘रैदास’ तिन्हहिं संसार मह, सदा मिलहि सुख चैन।।

(Shram kau Isar jaani kai, jau poojahi din rain,
‘Raidas’ tinahin sansaar mah, sadaa milahi sukh chain)

That is, those who deem work as God, and worship it day and night, are blessed with all the worldly joys and contentment.

96. Our hardworking professionals whether linked directly or indirectly with the Government, are watchful of the process of nation building. When their hopes and aspirations are combined with the willpower of Government employees, the result is unprecedented, as witnessed by the nation today. My Government is also supporting the employees in their hour of need. By implementing the recommendations of the 7th Pay Commission, my Government has strived to improve their living standards.
97. My Government has worked continuously to strengthen the spirit of Cooperative Federalism enshrined in the Constitution. It has been the endeavour of the Government to enable the State Governments to undertake development work in their respective States in a more effective manner. In line with this objective, my Government took the decision to provide the States with 10 percent additional share in taxes as per the recommendations of the Finance Commission.

Honourable Members,

98. At this time, the whole world is talking about Kumbh, underway at Prayagraj. For this colossal event, world-class infrastructure and other facilities on a permanent basis have been developed at a fast pace. The confluence of Ganga-Yamuna-Saraswati is setting an impressive example of cleanliness and modern management.
99. Ganga is not just a river for us but, is like a mother to us, a living symbol of our culture and faith. To keep Ganga clean is our sacred duty. Under the 'Namami Gange Mission', projects worth Rs 25,500 crore have been approved so far. My Government is engaged with the task of cleaning up of the river Ganga by diverting dozens of major drains, stopping flow of industrial effluents and by setting up several Sewage Treatment Plants in the cities.

Honourable Members,

100. Every citizen and the Government are duty bound to honour the contribution of National heroes. Carrying forward the tradition of honouring the builders of modern India, my Government has dedicated to the nation the 'National Salt Satyagraha Memorial' at Dandi on the death anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi. Kranti Mandir, a museum in Delhi dedicated to Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose has been opened to public this month. The Government has also instituted Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose Disaster Management Award in his honour. The Government has developed 5 sacred places associated with Baba Saheb Ambedkar as "Panchteerth". The nation has paid tribute to the Iron Man of India Sardar Patel, by building the 'Statue of Unity', which is the tallest statue in the world. My Government is setting up museums in various States in the memory of the country's tribal freedom fighters.
101. My Government has conferred the Bharat Ratna on Mahamana Madan Mohan Malaviya and Atal Bihari Vajpayee in 2015. This year it has been decided to confer Bharat Ratna on Nanaji Deshmukh, Bhupen Hazarika and Pranab Mukherjee.
102. By conferring national awards on the basis of merit and without any discrimination to those citizens, who have worked selflessly for the

welfare of the people, my Government has demonstrated country's commitment towards the ideals of sacrifice and service.

103. In our tradition, the Saints and Gurus occupy the highest position. This month, to commemorate the Prakash Parv of Guru Govind Singhji, the Government has released a special coin. It is a matter of immense pleasure for all of us that my Government has taken the historic decision to construct the Kartarpur corridor.

Honourable Members

104. In the International context, while India is a staunch supporter of friendly ties with all countries, there is also a need to constantly strengthen our capabilities to tackle any challenges. Through the surgical strike on cross border terror posts, India has shown its new policy and strategy. Last year India joined the handful of countries that possess the Nuclear Triad capability.
105. Our defence forces and their morale symbolise the prowess of the India of the 21st century. Not only has my Government fulfilled the demand for One Rank One Pension that had been pending for 4 decades, but it has also disbursed arrears amounting to more than Rs 10,700 crore to 20 lakh ex-servicemen.
106. My Government believes that neglecting the country's defence needs even for a moment is detrimental to the present as well as future of the country. The new agreements relating to defence sector signed last year, purchase of new defence equipment and indigenous production within the country under the Make in India initiative have all helped in boosting the morale of the defence forces and increasing the country's military self-reliance. After a gap of many decades, the Indian Air Force is preparing to welcome, in the coming months, its new generation ultra-modern fighter aircraft Rafale and strengthen its strike capability.
107. On this occasion, I would also like to congratulate the country's security forces that are constantly striving to strengthen the country's internal security. Their concerted efforts have played a crucial role in reducing terrorism and violence. In the last few years,

a record number of youngsters in the Maoist areas have come forward to join the mainstream. The Police Memorial, which was dedicated to the nation last year seeks to honour their sacrifice and also preserves the memories of their sacrifice for the future generations.

Honourable Members,

108. My Government is committed to the equitable development of Jammu, Ladakh and Kashmir. As a result of the efforts of my Government, an environment favourable to development has been created in the State. Recently, in Jammu and Kashmir, elections to Urban Local Bodies after an interval of 13 years and in Panchayats after 7 years have been conducted peacefully with more than 70 per cent voters participating enthusiastically. Committed to the development of Jammu and Kashmir, my Government announced a package of Rs.80 thousand crores. Under the package, projects related to infrastructure, health and education sectors worth more than Rs.66 thousand crores have been approved so far.
109. It is a measure of my Government's diplomatic success that today India's voice is heard with respect at international fora. Pravasi Bharatiya Diwas organized recently in Varanasi has reinforced this fact. At the initiative of India, 21st June was declared as International Yoga Day by the United Nations and is now being celebrated with great enthusiasm across the world. Yoga is rapidly gaining in popularity at the global level. India is proud to have gifted the outstanding discipline of Yoga to the world community.
110. My Government has not only enhanced the credibility and prestige of the passports held by the Indian diaspora but has also stood by them in their hour of need. During the last four years, more than 2 Lakh 26 thousand Indians stranded abroad have been rescued and brought back to the country.
111. The United Nations Award for India's efforts in the field of environment conservation has made every Indian proud. It is a matter of pride for all of us that India is providing leadership to the

global solar revolution and last year the first summit of the International Solar Alliance was successfully organized in Delhi.

112. In 2022, India will host the G-20 Summit. Hosting the summit in the year marking the 75th anniversary celebration of our independence will further enhance India's global influence.

Honourable Members,

113. This year our nation will provide a decisive impetus to our march towards a powerful, self-reliant and prosperous 21st century new India. The biggest festival of democracy will be celebrated this year in the form of General Election. Through this august House, I convey my best wishes to the young voters who will cast their votes for first time in this century. As citizens of India, they will exercise their right to vote, and determine the direction of the nation's policies and decisions.

114. My Government's efforts are ushering in change for the betterment of the country and this process will continue. With the blessings and support of 130 crore Indians, my Government has commenced its journey towards building a New India.

- A New India, where every person has access to basic amenities.
- A New India, where every person is healthy, secure and educated
- A New India, where every person gets an opportunity to nurture his or her talent, and has equal opportunities of advancement.
- A New India, where every child progresses in life without any deprivation, and every daughter feels safe.
- A New India, where every person gets justice with dignity.
- A New India, which commands the respect of the entire world.

Honourable Members,

115. Let us all come together to pave the way for a New India and take India to glorious new heights in the 21st Century.

Jai Hind!