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Focus will be on agricultural development, says PM

Prieme Minister Manmohan Singh marked the 60th anniversary of Independence with a pledge to focus in the coming years on the crisis-hit agriculture sector but insisted that industrialisation was critical to progress and employment.

Delivering his fourth speech from the ramparts of Red Fort in New Delhi, the prime minister touched upon an array of subjects but his focus was on education and agriculture.

In his crisp 35-minute address, the prime minister voiced his government's determination to crush terrorism. He also urged people to keep the country clean and green and to use the Right to Information Act to check corruption.

Manmohan Singh devoted much of his time on agriculture, promising a Rs.250 billion package to boost farm output. "In the coming years, our main emphasis will be on agricultural development," he said.

"We will soon launch a special programme to invest Rs.25,000 crore in agriculture, to enhance the livelihood of our farmers and increase food production."

The prime minister also said that the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act that guarantees at least 100 working days in the countryside would now be extended to the entire country. But the economist-turned-politician made it clear that there were limits to how much income agriculture alone can generate, given the large population dependent on farming and the small size of farms in the country.



Prime Minister Manmohan Singh addressing the nation from the ramparts of the Red Fort.

"India cannot become a nation with islands of high growth and vast areas untouched by development, where the benefits of growth accrue only to a few," he said.

"Therefore, it is essential that we create new employment opportunities outside of agriculture. There is no developed country today anywhere in the world that is not an industrial economy. Industrialisation is critical for progress.

"If employment generation is the best weapon against poverty, then industrialisation is the most effective means to create new job opportunities... We will pursue policies that will help in our rapid industrialisation."

Seeking a "revolution in the field of modern education", Manmohan Singh announced

the plans for setting up colleges in 370 districts, 6,000 new high quality schools in every block of the country and 30 new central universities.

The government, he added, would also promote five new Indian Institutes of Science Education and Research, eight new Indian Institutes of Technology, seven new Indian Institutes of Management and 20 new Indian Institutes of Information Technology.

"It is my fervent desire that India becomes a fully educated, modern, progressive nation... We will make India a nation of educated people, of skilled people, of creative people."

Asserting that India had "emerged as a bridge between the many extremes of the world", he said New Delhi desired "good relations" with all the countries and "the best of relations" with its immediate neighbours.

"I assure all our neighbours that we... want peace and the best of relations with all of them. I sincerely believe that in the prosperity and well being of our neighbours lies the key to our own security and progress."

"We have had success on some fronts and setbacks on some others," he said. "But there is no doubt that we have been steadfast in our resolve." He said the Indian economy was growing "at historically unprecedented rates", and sought more creative processes of urbanisation to overcome the many problems urban areas face, and called for cleanliness drives in all neighbourhoods.

For the text of PM's speech click on www.pmindia.nic.in

Highlights

Key Messages

- India is on the move — poverty eradication is now a feasible goal.
- Time for a revolution in modern education. Widening access to education a key goal.
- Farmers welfare is core of all concerns. Need to bridge rural-urban divide.
- Industrialisation is the most effective means to create new employment opportunities.
- India's approach to global problems based on the idea of Vasudaiva Kutumbakam — the the whole world is one family.
- India's composite culture and pluralism

make India a "bridge between global divides".

Key Initiatives

- Massive increase in public spending on education, health care, agriculture and rural development.
- To promote social security in unorganised sector — old age pension scheme for senior citizens above age of 65 and below poverty line.
- Revolution in modern education — 6000 new good quality government-funded schools. Universalisation of secondary education on the anvil. Centre to help States set

up colleges in 370 districts, to raise gross enrolment ratio. 30 new central universities.

- Mission on vocational education and skill development — 1600 new industrial training institutes and polytechnics; 10,000 new vocational schools; 50,000 new skill development centers.
- National Rural Employment Guarantee Act to be implemented in the entire country.
- Special programme to invest at least Rs.25,000 crore in agricultural sector.
- National policy for rehabilitation and resettlement on the anvil.
- New thrust to industrialisation and planned urbanisation.