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PM unveils vision of a 'new India' in I-Day address



Prime Minister Manmohan Singh addressing the nation from the Red Fort in New Delhi on August 15, India's Independence Day.

Prime Minister Manmohan Singh unveiled his vision for "a new India" on the country's 60th Independence Day while warning that peace with Pakistan could be hit unless Islamabad took "concrete measures" to end cross-border terrorism.

In a nearly 50-minute speech from the ramparts of the Mughal-built Red Fort on August 15, Manmohan Singh spoke of a resurgent India in an era of globalisation without glossing over issues such as poverty, hunger and homelessness.

Reading a prepared speech in Hindustani, the Prime Minister underlined that an atmosphere of peace was vital for the success of the India-Pakistan peace process that began over two years ago.

"It is obvious that unless Pakistan takes concrete steps to implement the solemn assurances it has given to prevent cross-border terrorism against India from any territory within its control, public opinion in India, which has supported the peace process, will be undermined," he said.

"All countries in our region must recognise that terrorism anywhere is a threat to peace and prosperity everywhere. It must be confronted with our united efforts. There is a large constituency for peace and shared prosperity among our people and we must work together to build on that," he told an audience of 8,000 gathered to hear him at the Red Fort. The speech

was also telecast live by national as well as several private TV channels.

Manmohan Singh said India was ready to give its neighbours "a stake in our own prosperity and share the fruits of our growth with them". But, he added, "the dream of a South Asian community, where borders have ceased to matter and there is an unhindered flow of goods and peoples, culture and ideas, can hardly be realised if terrorist violence and the politics of hate and confrontation continue to cast a dark shadow."

The Prime Minister described Mumbai's horrific train bombings last month that killed some 200 people as "the most inhuman terrorist attack in the recent past" and praised the people of the city for refusing to cow down.

"I had said in Mumbai then that it cannot be business as usual for any of us," Manmohan Singh recalled. "Terrorists want to undermine our growing economic strength; destroy our unity; and provoke communal incidents. We cannot allow this to happen."

In the same breath, he pledged to "modernise, strengthen and properly equip our security forces and intelligence agencies" and to "neutralise and smash" terrorism.

He declared: "Let those who want to hurt us by inflicting a thousand cuts remember — no one can break our will or unity. No one can make India kneel."

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Highlights of Prime Minister's Address

- National Rural Employment Guarantee Act and Bharat Nirman are weapons in the war on poverty.
- Constituency for peace and shared prosperity exists in South Asia.
- Global environment for India has improved, world wants India to progress.
- Credit to farmers doubled in two years; Loans at reduced rate of 7 percent.
- India is a nation of youth, who want to

build a new India.

- 120 million children covered under nutritious mid-day meal programme.
- Nineteen new medical institutes set up; 3 new Indian Institutes of Science.
- Reservations for the socially backward.
- Decade dedicated to better infrastructure, governance.
- New special economic zones to boost industrial production and employment.

- Progress on railways and urban metros, new airports and power plants.
- Safety, security, empowerment of women a priority.
- Fight against terror is no more business as usual.
- Need for modernisation of security and intelligence machinery.
- Pakistan must take concrete steps against terror for peace process to move forward.