

**Consulate General of India
Sao Paulo**

**English rendering of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi's address to the Nation from
the ramparts of the Red Fort on the 74th Independence Day- 15 August, 2020**

My dear countrymen,

Congratulations and many best wishes to all the countrymen on this auspicious occasion of independence.

Today, we are able to live in an independent India because of the sacrifices of millions of sons and daughters of Mother India. This is an occasion to pay tribute to the freedom fighters, martyrs and brave souls and their spirit and dedication to free Mother India.

The valiant soldiers of our armed forces, our paramilitary forces, our police personnel and our security forces- everyone is engaged in protecting Mother India. They are engaged in safeguarding the common man. Today is the day to remember their sacrifices and penance sincerely and wholeheartedly.

There is another name: Aurobindo Ghose. Today is the birth anniversary of Aurobindo Ghose, who tread the path from being a revolutionary to spirituality. Let us seek his blessings so that we can fulfil his as well as our vision.

We are passing through an extraordinary situation. Today, children- the bright future of India- are not in front of me. Why? It is because Corona has stopped everyone. In this period of corona, I salute millions of corona warriors- doctors, nurses, sanitation workers, ambulance drivers and so on-who all should I count.

I salute all the corona warriors, who for a long time have adhered to the mantra of 'सर्वज्ञः सर्वदा सर्वत्र' i.e. service is the best religion and have served the children of Mother India with complete dedication.

In the period of corona, many of our brothers and sisters have been affected by this pandemic; many families have been affected; many have also lost their lives. I express my condolences to all such families, and I believe the indomitable will power and determination of 130 crore countrymen will make us win over Corona and we shall definitely win.

I know that recently we have been passing through a number of crises. Floods, especially in the north-east, eastern India, south India and some parts of western India; landslides in many areas; people have had to face many problems. Many people have lost their lives. I also express my condolences to those families.

And the nation stands in solidarity with the state governments in these days of crisis. No stone is being left unturned by either the state or central government to provide relief measures to the needy.

My dear Countrymen, Independence Day is a festival to celebrate freedom. It is an occasion to enthuse new energy by remembering our freedom fighters. This day is a harbinger of new inspirations. It reignites new fervour, exuberance and enthusiasm. And in times like now, it becomes even more imperative for us to be determined. It is an auspicious day because when we meet again next year to celebrate, we shall be entering into the 75 years of our free existence. This is a momentous occasion. Today, all of us 130 crores Indians have to make significant pledges for the coming two years. And when we complete the 75 years of our freedom, we will be able celebrate the redemption of those pledges .

My dear countrymen, our forefathers fought for this freedom with extreme commitment, utmost integrity, sincere penance, renunciation and sacrifice; we should never forget the way they laid their lives for Mother India. We should never forget that during this long and dark ages of slavery, not even a moment was lost when they were not moved by the desire for freedom. There isn't a countryman who did not put his best foot forward aspiring to break free the nation from the shackles of slavery, by waging a war and making any sacrifice possible to bring this day. Many sacrificed their youth in jails. Many left behind their life's dreams and embraced the gallows. I salute these revered martyrs who offered themselves as an oblation. Indeed amazing! On the one side, the country witnessed a phase of mass movements and on the other side the resounding voice of armed revolt.

Under the leadership of Pujya Bapu, the great national awakening accompanied by mass movements, gave new impetus to the struggle for freedom. And so today we are blessed to be able to celebrate our Independence Day with such fervour.

During this freedom struggle, several efforts were made to douse the fire of revolt and throttle the soul and spirit of our motherland. Many attempts were made to ruin the Indian culture, tradition, customs and heritage. Running across centuries, that was the period of SAAM DAAM DAND BHED (either by hook or crook) – and all this was at its peak. Many came here

with the innate belief that they have come to reign the world for eternity (yaavat chandra diwakaro-till sun and moon exist). But the strong determination to be freed beat such ambitions to dust. They believed that India was a divided lot due to the existence of multiple identities, nobilities, languages and dialects, cuisines, costumes and culture. They labored under the misunderstanding that a country of so many diversities can never stand up as one against any force. But they could not recognize the soul and pulse of the country, that life force, that chord which binds us together. And when this force came out with full vigour in the fight for freedom, India succeeded in throwing away the shackles of slavery .

We are aware of the fact that that was the regime when propagators of expansionism spread across geographies and attained supremacy and power, but the freedom movement of India inspired many across the globe to stand against these forces. India became a pillar and ignited the fire of freedom struggle all over the world.

And those, who were involved in the blind race of expansionism, threw the World into two World wars, destroyed humanity, ruined lives and wrecked the globe to achieve their designs.

But even during such a period, even in the midst of the destructive war, India did not abandon its urge for freedom; neither was it found lacking, nor did it lower its guard.

Whenever there was a need, the country has been making sacrifices, enduring sufferings and leading people's movements. India's battle created an atmosphere for freedom in the world. And the change that the power of India brought in the world, it became a challenge for expansionism. History can never deny it.

My dear countrymen,

In the entire World, in its war for independence, India kept marching with its head high with its strength of unity, collectivity, the resolve for its bright future, its commitment and inspiration.

My dear countrymen,

In the midst of the Corona pandemic, 130 crore Indians pledged themselves to become self-reliant. Today self-reliance is etched in the mind of every Indian. We are also witnessing the realization of that dream of Self-Reliant India ("AatmaNirbharBharat"). "Self-reliant India" is not just a word, it has become a mantra for 130 crore countrymen.

When I talk of self-reliance, all of us who are now above the age group of 25-30 years surely recall how we were goaded by our parents and elders to become self-reliant as we attained

an age of 20 – 21. Every family expects its children of 20-21 years to be self-reliant. As we are just one step away from the 75th Anniversary of Independence, it is essential for a country like India to stand on its own, and to become self-reliant. What is necessary for a family is also essential for a country. I have full faith that India will realize this dream. And the reason for this is the strength of my country's citizens in which I have full faith, I am proud of their talent, I have confidence in our youth and the country's unparalleled women power. I have faith in the thinking, in the approach of India. And history is witness that whenever India resolves to do something, it does it.

Therefore, when we talk about self-reliance, it arouses not only curiosity all over the World but also expectations from India. Therefore, it is imperative that we make ourselves capable for realization of that expectation. It is very essential to prepare ourselves.

A large country like India is full of energy of youth power. The first condition for a self-reliant India is self-confidence which is the foundation of self-reliance.

And this has the power to give a new vision and a new energy to development.

India has always followed the adage – 'Whole world is one family'. Veda says 'ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय' and Vinoba ji used to say "ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय" i.e. hail the world. Therefore, the world is one family for us. So, alongside financial development, mankind and humanity should also get importance. And we follow this dictum.

Today the world is interconnected and inter-dependent. So, it is the need of the hour that a vast country like India should increase its contribution to the world economy. It is also India's duty towards world welfare. If India wants to increase its contribution then she herself will have to be empowered; she will have to be self-reliant or 'AatmaNirbhar'. We must make ourselves capable of contributing towards world welfare. If our roots are strong and we are capable enough, we will be able to take steps towards world welfare.

Our country has plenty of natural resources. It is the need of the hour that we start the value addition of these natural resources and human resources; and to take the country to new heights. How long shall we continue to export raw material to the world? How long will the process of exporting raw material and importing finished goods continue? So, we will have to be self-reliant. We will have to resort to value addition of our capabilities as per the world's requirements. It is our responsibility. We want to move ahead in the field of value addition to contribute to world welfare. Similarly, there was a time when we used to import wheat from

abroad; but our farmers have done a wonderful job. And now India is self-reliant in the agricultural sector. Today India's farmers not only supply the food grains for the citizens of India but India is also in such a position that it provides food grains to the other countries in need.

Though this is our strength- the strength of self-reliance in agriculture- value addition is also necessary in this sector. Our farm sector needs to evolve in line with requirements of world; Value addition is required for our farm sector

Today, the country is taking several new initiatives. You see, we have opened up the space sector. The youth of the country is getting opportunities. We have liberated the agriculture sector from the shackles of laws and have tried to make it self-reliant. When India becomes powerful in the space sector, neighbouring countries also get its benefits. If we become powerful in the energy sector, India can help those countries that want to dispel their darkness. When the country's health infrastructure becomes self-reliant, then India becomes a preferred country as a destination for health tourism. Therefore, it is necessary to see to it that 'Make in India' products get appreciated in the world. History is a witness to the fact that there was a time when the products made in our country by our skilled manpower were used to get appreciated all over the world.

When we talk about becoming self-reliant, then we do not merely refer to decreasing the import demands. When we talk of self-reliance, it is about our skills, our human resources. When we start sourcing things from abroad, then our capabilities start depleting and consequently, it gets completely destroyed over generations. We need to preserve it and enhance that caliber of ours. We need to accentuate our skills, our creativity and with that we need to touch new heights. We need to strengthen skill development for a self-reliant India, for improving our competency.

My dear citizens, I know that when I talk about becoming self-reliant then people raise several doubts. I do accept that there are millions of challenges while we travel on the path of becoming self-reliant and these challenges increase further in a competitive world. We should realise that for the millions of challenges we face, our nation has the capability to provide billions of solutions. My countrymen are there with the capability to resolve the issues.

You can see that in the challenging times of Corona, we were in need of many items which we needed to import but the world was unable to provide them. The youth of our nation, our entrepreneurs, the industry accepted the challenge. The nation that never manufactured N-

95, started doing so. We started production of PPE which was not being produced before, similarly we started producing ventilators in India, which were not being made here before. We are not only able to meet our own requirements, but now also become strong enough to export to the world. We can very well see how a self-reliant India can help the world. Therefore it is also the duty of India to work for the welfare of the world.

Enough is enough. What should be the mind-set of independent India? The mind-set of independent India should be 'Vocal for Local'. We should take pride in our local products. If we do not praise and support our indigenous products, then how will they get an opportunity to flourish and improve, how will they gain strength? Come, let's pledge that as we move towards the 75th year of our independence, we shall adopt the talisman of 'Vocal for Local' and together let's strengthen ourselves.

My dear Countrymen, we have clearly seen how our nation can do wonders, how it progresses. Who could have imagined that lakhs and crores of money would be directly transferred to the Jan-Dhan accounts of the poor? Who could have imagined that so many changes would be made in the APMC Act for the welfare of farmers? Who could have thought that the farmers who were living under the Damocles' sword of the Essential Commodities Act, would be freed of it after so many years? Could we have imagined that the space sector would be laid open for the youth of our nation? Today we are witnessing that National Education Policy, One Nation-One Ration Card, One Nation-One Grid, One Nation-One Tax, Insolvency and Bank Bankruptcy Code and the effort for merger of banks- all these things have become the reality of nation, fact for our nation.

The world is looking at the outcomes of the reforms that are taking place in India in these times. The world is closely observing the reforms we are bringing one after another, one linked to another. As a result of this Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in India has broken all its previous records last year.

Last year, there has been an 18% increase in FDI in India. So, even during the corona pandemic, top companies of the world are turning to India. This confidence hasn't been created just like that. The world didn't get fascinated with India without a reason. This confidence has grown because of the hard work put in by India in the field of its policies, democracy and strengthening the foundation of its economy.

Today many businesses of the world are viewing India as the hub of the supply chain. So now, we have to move ahead with the mantra of 'Make for World' alongside 'Make in India'.

Try to recall what happened recently and take pride in the capabilities of 130 crore countrymen. During this corona pandemic, there were cyclones in the east and the west coasts of India, umpteen number of people died because of lightning & landslides, and earthquakes of small intensity were felt time and again. As if these were not enough, swarms of locust created havoc for our farmers. A series of adversities struck one after another. Yet, the country didn't lose confidence and continued to move forward with self-confidence.

Today, it is our priority to pull the people and the economy of our country out of this corona pandemic. The National Infrastructure Pipeline Project will play an important role in this endeavour. Rs 110 lakh crore will be spent on this project. For this, about seven thousand projects have been identified in different sectors. This will also give a new direction and a fresh momentum to the overall infrastructure development of the country. It is often said that during crises, the emphasis should be given on infrastructure so that economic activity is speeded up and people get employment and it generates a cascading effect. Both small and large enterprises, farmers and the middle class benefit to a great extent.

And I want to recall one incident today. When Atal Bihari Vajpayee was the Prime Minister, he had started a programme with far-reaching impact called the Golden Quadrilateral. He had taken the road network infrastructure to the next generation level. Even today, the country looks at the 'golden quadrilateral' with pride and feels yes, our country is transforming.

My dear countrymen,

Atal ji had done this work in his time but now we have to carry it forward. We must give it a new thrust. We cannot work in silos. We do not need a situation where in the infrastructure sector, road sector will work only for roads and the rail sector will work only for rail. There is no coordination between the railways and the roadways, between the airport and the port, between the railway station and the bus station— this sort of situation is not desirable. We must ensure that the infrastructure is a comprehensive and an integrated one. It should be complementary to each other. The rail should be complementary to the road, the road to sea port and the sea port to the airport. We are moving towards a multi-modal connectivity infrastructure for the new century. And this will give a new dimension. We have started the work with a great dream. And I believe that by eliminating silos, we will give a new strength to all these systems.

Along with this, our coastline has a **very** important **significance** in the world trade. While **moving** on with Port led development, in the coming days, we will focus on working towards

building a modern state-of-art infrastructure towards the construction of four lane road across the entire coastline.

My dear countrymen,

Our scriptures said something very profound. It is said in our scriptures that- '**Samarthya mulam** Swatantryam, **Shram mulam** Vaibhavam' means 'Capability **is the source** of freedom, and labour **force** is the source of **grandeur, prosperity and progress of any nation**.

Therefore, **nothing can match** the hard work of the common man, **be it** cities or villages. When a toiling society gets amenities, the struggles of life ease, everyday troubles are reduced and this helps in boosting their energy paying rich dividends.

In the last six years, several campaigns have been launched to improve the lives of the toiling citizens of the country be it about their own bank accounts, owning a pucca house, construction of such a large number of toilets, providing electricity connection in every house, providing a gas connection to free **our** mothers and sisters from the smoke, making efforts to provide insurance protection to the poorest of the poor, **Ayushman Bharat Yojna to provide free treatment of upto five lakh rupees in the best of hospitals, connecting** Ration shops **through** digital technology. A significant progress was made in the last six years to reinstate transparency and remove discriminatory practices so that facilities reach every poor person.

These instruments have also helped a lot in delivering the services seamlessly during the Corona crisis. During this period, we continued to provide free gas cylinders to crores of poor families, irrespective of whether they had ration card or not the kitchen flames of more than 80 crores of my countrymen were kept alighted by supplying free food grains to the 80 crores countrymen; approximately 90 thousand crore rupees were transferred directly into the bank accounts. Just a few years ago, this would have been unimaginable that all hundred paise of a rupee disbursed from Delhi would reach the account of the poor. It was indeed beyond one's imagination hitherto.

Garib Kalyan Rojgar Abhiyan has been launched to generate employment in their own villages. We trust that our worker friends will be re-skilling and upskilling themselves. Having full faith in their efforts, relying on the skilled manpower, relying on rural and indigenous resources, we gave a clarion call "vocal for local" and "re-skill and up-skill" in an endeavor to empower our poor and our country's labour force.

Since the center of economic activity is the city, a scheme is being implemented for workers like street vendors etc who come from off villages to the cities for their livelihood, for providing finances directly by the banks. Lakhs of people have taken advantage of this in such a short span of time even during the period of the Corona crisis. Now they do not need to borrow money at high interest. The workers can now get their money with dignity and authority.

In the same way, when our workers migrate to the city, if they get good accommodation then their efficiency also increases. And keeping this in mind, we have formulated a major scheme for arranging affordable housing for them inside the city, so that when the workers come to the city, they can focus, deliver and progress with full faith and commitment.

My dear countrymen,

This is also true and we have seen that there are some segments of the society which get left behind, are not able to come out of poverty in the country's march towards development, Similarly, there are some areas, places, terrains which get left behind. Balanced development is very much necessary to make India self-reliant. We have identified more than 110 aspiring districts which are lagging behind compared to an average district. We have to bring each and every parameter of those districts at par with the country's average. We are making every effort so that people of these 110 districts, which are lagging behind, have access to better education, better health facilities and have opportunities for local employment.

My dear countrymen,

The priority of a self-reliant India is a self-reliant farming sector and self-reliant farmers. And we cannot ignore them. We have seen the condition of farmers. Various reforms have been undertaken since independence. We have to free them of all the shackles and we have done that.

You can't even imagine this. If you make soap, fabric or sugar in one corner you can sell it in any part of the country. But not many people know that our farmers could not sell their produce anywhere in the country and according to their will. He had to sell his produce at a notified area. We have eliminated all those restrictions.

Now India's farmer will be able to breathe free by selling his produce in any part of the country or the world according to his own terms. We have emphasized on several alternative measures to increase the income of the farmer. We are constantly working to reduce the input cost of the farming. How can he be provided a solar pump instead of a diesel pump, how can

the producer of food become an energy producer? We are working in a direction so that avenues like bee farming, fisheries, poultry, etc should be made available to him so that his income gets doubled.

Time demands that our agriculture sector becomes modern and there should be value addition, there should be food processing, food packaging. And it needs better infrastructure.

You must have seen that the Indian government has sanctioned 1,00,000 crore rupees for agriculture infrastructure even during the Corona pandemic. This infrastructure will be for the welfare of the farmers and they will be able to get better prices of their produce, and will be able to sell their produce in foreign markets. They will have greater reach to foreign markets.

There is a need to strengthen rural industries. Special economic zones will be created in the rural areas. A web of agriculture and non-agriculture industries will be created. We have tried to create FPO (Farmer Product Association) which will go a long way in their economic empowerment.

Brothers and sisters,

Last time, I had made an announcement for the Jal Jeevan Mission. It is completing one year. I am very proud to tell you that our dream of making available pure drinking water to all the people is getting realized. The solution to several health problems is directly linked to the pure drinking water. It also contributes to that nation's economy. That's why we have started the Jal Jeevan Mission.

Today, I am happy to say that everyday we are able to supply piped-water to over one lakh houses. And in the last one year, we have been able to provide water to 2 crore families, especially to the tribals living in the forests and far-flung areas. A huge campaign has been run. And I am glad that today 'Jal-Jeevan Mission' has created an environment of healthy competition in the country. There is a healthy competition among the districts, among the cities and also among the states. Everyone is hoping that the Prime Minister's dream of 'Jal-Jeevan Mission' is accomplished at the earliest in their respective areas. The new strength of Cooperative and Competitive Federalism has been associated with the 'Jal Jeevan Mission' and we are moving forward with it.

My dear countrymen,

Whether it is the agriculture sector, the small scale industries sector or the people in services sector, almost all these people, in a way constitute a huge middle class of India. The professionals from the middle class have made a name for themselves in the world today. Our doctors, engineers, lawyers, scientists, from the middle class have made a mark in the world. Therefore, it is true that whatever opportunities that the middle class gets, they make the most out of it and therefore the middle class needs freedom from government interference. The middle class must get more new opportunities and an open environment, and our government is constantly working to fulfil these dreams of the middle class. The middle class has the power to do miracles. So the middle class families get the greatest benefits of Ease of living. Cheap internet, affordable smartphones or cheap flight tickets under UDAN scheme or our highways or Information ways – all these things are going to increase the strength of the middle class. Today you must have seen that the prime dream of the middle class person who has come out of poverty, is to have a home; he wants an equal life. We have done a lot of work in the field of EMI in the country and as a result, the Home Loan rates have become cheaper. When someone takes a home loan, one can get a rebate of about 6 lakh rupees, by the time the loan is repaid. Recently, it was noticed that a lot of affected middle-class families have invested their money (to buy a house), but could not get the possession of the house due to lack of completion of the schemes and they were still living in a rented house. The Government of India has set up a special fund of 25 thousand crores rupees to complete the incomplete houses to ensure that middle class families get homes.

The rates of GST and the income tax have come down. Today, with these minimum establishment facilities, we are trying to take the country forward. Bringing co-operative banks under the ambit of RBI, in itself is a guarantee for safety of the money of middle class families.

The reforms undertaken in the MSME sector and the agriculture sector, will directly benefit these hard-working middle class families. Consequently, our businessmen and small entrepreneurs will get the benefits of the special fund of thousands of crores of rupees. The strength and energy of the common Indian is the big foundation of the Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan. Relentless work is going on at every level to maintain this strength.

My dear countrymen,

Education of the country is of great importance in building a self-reliant, modern, New India, an India which will be prosperous and happy. With this thought, we have become successful today in providing the country with a new National Education Policy after three decades.

Every nook and corner of India is welcoming it with renewed enthusiasm and a new vigour.. And this is the National Education Policy, which will connect our students with the roots. Alongside, it will help them become global citizens. The students will be well-rooted and still touching new heights.

You must have noticed that a special stress has been laid in National Education Policy on National Research Foundation because in order to progress, the nation needs to innovate. Higher the stress that will be laid on innovation and research, greater would be the strength to take India forward in this competitive world.

Who would have thought that there would be online classes in rural areas and such a momentum would be created so fast? Sometimes, in the times of adversity, new revolutionary initiatives emerge with force. That's the reason we have witnessed how in this pandemic situation, a culture of online classes has emerged.

You can see how fast the online digital transactions are increasing. Look at BHIM UPI app.... Anyone would be immensely proud to know that we could make transactions of Rs 3 Lakh Crore in the last month alone through BHIM UPI.. This is an excellent example of how we have accepted the changing scenarios.

If you see, prior to 2014, only 5 dozen panchayats had the optical fiber network. However in the last 5 years, 1.5 lakh panchayats are connected with the optical fiber network which is helping us today, immensely. We are working on the goal of taking it to every panchayat and this work is in progress in the remaining one lakh panchayats. In these changing times it is essential that Rural India is also brought under the ambit of Digital India. There is a surge in the demand of online facilities among the rural population. Keeping this in view, we had earlier proposed the extension of connectivity to every panchayat and today I would like to assure you that we have decided that we will connect all our six lakh villages, with the optical fiber network. As the requirements have changed, so have our priorities. In over six lakh villages, thousands and lakhs of kilometers of optical fiber would be laid down. We have decided that within 1000 days, we will complete the work of connecting over six lakhs villages with optical fiber.

In this era of technology, our dependence on cyberspace is going to increase manifold. However, cyberspace offers its own risks and threats. The world is very well aware of these. It can be a threat to the social fabric of our country, our economy and can even threaten the development of our nation; we are very well-aware of that. India is very cautious and is planning to take steps to combat these risks. Not only this, new systems are continuously being developed. In a short span of time, a draft of new cyber security policy would be presented to the nation. In the coming times, we will have to integrate everything and then work within the framework of this cyber security. We will formulate strategies to move forth.

My dear countrymen,

Whenever opportunities were given to women power in India, they have brought glory to the country and have strengthened the country. Today the country is committed to providing equal opportunities for employment and self-employment to women. Today women in India are working in underground coal mines. Today, the daughters of my country are also flying the fighter planes and touching the skies. Today India is among those countries of the world where women are being included in the combat role in the Navy and the Air Force. We have taken the decision of providing 6 months paid leave to pregnant women, liberating our Muslim sisters and women of our country from the suffering of triple talaq and the economic empowerment of women.

Out of the 40 crore Jan Dhan accounts, 22 crore accounts belong to our sisters. During the Corona period, about 30 thousand crore rupees have been deposited into the accounts of these sisters. Around 25 crore MUDRA loans have been given, in which 70% of the loans have been given to our mothers and sisters. Under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana, maximum registration is also being done in the names of women.

My dear countrymen,

This government has also been persistently concerned about the better healthcare for poor sisters and daughters. We have done a huge job to providing sanitary pads at one rupee each in Janaushadhi Kendra. In a short span of time, more than 5 crore sanitary pads have been delivered to these poor women from 6000 Janaushadhi Kendras.

We have formed a committee to ensure that the daughters are no longer suffering from malnutrition and they are married off at the right age. As soon as the report is submitted, appropriate decisions will be taken about the age of marriage of daughters.

My dear countrymen,

It is very natural that health sector draws attention in this period of Corona pandemic. As such, the biggest lesson of self-reliance has been taught to us by the Health Sector during this crisis. And to achieve that goal we also have to move forward.

You see, earlier there was only one Lab for testing in our country. Today there is a network of 1400 Labs, spread in every corner of the country. In the initial stage of the Corona crisis, only 300 tests could be conducted in one day, but in such a short span of time, our people have shown that today we can conduct more than 7 lakh tests per day. We started with 300 and reached 7 lakhs!

We are making continuous efforts towards modernization, construction of new AIIMS and new Medical Colleges in the country. In five years, the MBBS and MD seats have been increased for more than 45 thousand students. There are more than 1.5 lakh wellness centers in the villages and about one-third of them are already functional, which have helped a lot during this Corona pandemic. The Wellness Centers in the Corona times have helped the villages immensely.

A massive campaign is going to start in the health sector from today and technology will also play a major role in it.

The National Digital Health Mission is also being launched from today. It will bring a new revolution in India's Health Sector. Technology will be used prudently to reduce the challenges in treatment.

Every Indian will be given a Health ID. This Health ID will work like a Health Account of every Indian. This account will contain your details of every test, every disease, the doctors you visited, the medicines you took and the diagnosis. When and what was the report, all such information will be incorporated in the Health ID.

The National Digital Health Mission will eliminate all these difficulties related to appointment with a doctor, depositing money, making a slip in the hospital, etc. We are devising a system which will help each and every citizen to make a better and informed decision.

My dear countrymen, there is a curiosity among everybody when the Corona vaccine will be ready. This is natural. This anxiety is there in everybody and everywhere in the world.

I would like to tell my countrymen that our scientists are dutifully engaged in the laboratories. They are putting in great efforts. At present, testing for three vaccines is in different stages in the country. Once we get a green signal from our scientists, we will launch massive production of the vaccine. We have made all the preparations. We have drawn an outline to ramp up the production of the vaccines and to make it available to each and every person in the shortest possible time.

My dear countrymen, there are different scenes of development in different regions in our country. There are some regions which are well developed, whereas there are others which are left behind. I think this imbalance is an important challenge to make India self-reliant. As I said earlier, we are emphasizing on 110 ambitious districts. We want these districts to be at par with the developed ones. Our priority is to create an ecosystem for development and improve connectivity.

Now you see. The western, central and eastern parts of the country — be it eastern Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Northeast, or Odisha — have abundant reserves of natural wealth. The people of these regions are very capable, strong and talented, but there has been an imbalance in these regions due to the absence of opportunities. Therefore, we have taken several measures. We are developing Eastern Dedicated Freight Corridor, connecting the eastern region with the gas pipe line, developing new rail infrastructure and new ports. We are developing the entire infrastructure for the development in a very holistic way.

Similarly, Leh-Ladakh, Jammu-Kashmir have been freed from Article 370. It has been one year now. This one year is a major milestone in the new development journey of Jammu-Kashmir. This has been a year of providing basic rights to the women and to the Dalits. It has also been a year for our refugees to live a life of dignity. We have launched several campaigns like Back to Villages so that the villages get benefited. Today, the Ayushman Scheme is being used in the best possible way in the region of Jammu-Kashmir and Ladakh.

My dear countrymen, the true strength of our democracy lies in the elected local bodies. It is a matter of pride for us that the peoples' representatives of the local units in Jammu and Kashmir are actively pursuing a new era of development with activism and sensitivity. I congratulate their "panch, sarpanch"(village headmen) for their active participation in this development journey.

The delimitation exercise is going on in Jammu-Kashmir under the leadership of a retired chief justice of the Supreme Court. We want early completion of the delimitation exercise so

that there are early elections, there should be Jammu-Kashmir MLAs, its own cabinet, its Chief Minister so that it can march towards development with a new vigour. India is committed to it and is making all efforts in this regard.

We have taken a bold step to meet the aspirations of the people of Ladakh by making it the Union Territory which has been their demand for the last several years. Nestled in the heights of the Himalayas, Ladakh is progressing towards new heights. Work is going on for a central university, setting up new research centres, new courses for hotel and management. Plan is also under way for the creation of 7,500 MW Solar Park. But, my dear countrymen, Ladakh has several specialties. Not only do we have to preserve them, we have to nurture them as well. As Sikkim has made its mark as an Organic State in the northeast, Ladakh, Leh and Kargil can also create their own niche as a Carbon Neutral unit. Indian government has joined hands with the locals of the region to create a new model of development as per their own requirements.

My dear countrymen, India has shown that the march towards development is possible by balancing the environment. Today India is inspiring the entire world with its vision of one world, one sun and one grid, particularly in the field of solar energy.

India has established itself as one of the five countries in the world in the generation of renewable energy. India is both aware as well as involved in finding solutions to pollution. We are leaving no stone unturned whether it is the Swachh India campaign, smoke-less cooking gas, LED campaign, CNG-based transportation, or electric mobility. We are emphasizing on increasing the use of ethanol to reduce pollution caused due to petrol. What was the condition of ethanol in our country five years ago? Five years ago, there used to be only 40 crore litre production of ethanol. It has risen to five times in the last five years. Today, we are producing 200 crore litres of ethanol which is proving to be very helpful towards our environment.

My dear countrymen, we are working on a holistic approach to reduce pollution in the select 100 cities through an integrated approach and modern technology with people's participation.

My dear countrymen,

India can say this proudly that it is one of the very few countries where its area under forests is expanding. India is committed towards the promotion and conservation of its Biodiversity. We have successfully carried forward Project Tiger and Project Elephant. The Tiger population has increased in India. In the coming days, we are starting 'Project Lion' for the

Asiatic Lions. And under Project Lion the work on the required infrastructure for the protection and security of Indian lions and in particular, the special type of health infrastructure required will be undertaken. And emphasis will be laid on Project Lion.

Also, one more work we want to promote and that is – Project Dolphin. We will focus on both types of dolphins living in the rivers and in the seas. This will also give a boost to Biodiversity and also create employment opportunities. This is also a center of attraction for tourism. So, we are going to move forward in this direction too.

My dear countrymen,

When we embark on an extraordinary journey with an extraordinary goal, the path will also be full of challenges and these challenges too are extraordinary. Notwithstanding the recent adversities, there have been misadventures along the border which threw a challenge to the country. But whoever tried to threaten the sovereignty of our country right from the LOC to the LAC, the army of the country, our brave soldiers have given a befitting reply.

The whole country is full of zeal, driven by conviction and moving forward with unwavering devotion to protect India's sovereignty. The world has seen what our brave Jawans can do in Ladakh,, what the country can do to defend its resolve. Today, I pay obeisance to all the brave men and soldiers who sacrificed their lives for the motherland from the ramparts of the Red Fort.

Be it terrorism or expansionism, India is fighting against it valiantly. Today, the world's faith in India has become stronger. Recently, as a non-Permanent member of the United Nations Security Council, 184 countries out of 192 supported India. This is a matter of great pride for every Indian. This is an example of how we have made our place in the world. And this is possible only when India itself is strong, India is powerful and safe. With this thinking, work is being carried out on many fronts today.

My dear countrymen,

We are establishing deep relations based on security, development and trust with our neighbouring countries whether connected by sea or land. India has been making continuous efforts to deepen its decades-old cultural, economic and social ties with its neighbouring countries.

The world's one-fourth population lives in South Asia. We can create countless opportunities for the welfare of such a large population through cooperation and partnership. There is a huge and significant responsibility on the part of all the leaders of the countries in this region for the progress and development of such a vast population. I call upon all the people, political leaders, parliamentarians and intellectuals of South Asia to fulfil their responsibility. The peace and harmony in this entire region will be of immense help to the welfare of humanity. The interests of the entire world are intertwined with it.

Today, neighbours are not the only ones with whom we share geographical boundaries, but also those with whom we have close and harmonious relations. It is my pleasure that India has strengthened its relationship with all the countries in its extended neighbourhood in the last few years. The political, economic and human relations with the countries in West Asia have progressed manifold. Trust has increased manifold. The economic ties, particularly in the field of energy sector, are very important with these countries. There are a large number of people from India who are working in many of these countries. India is indebted to all these countries for their help to the Indian community during the Corona crisis by honouring India's request. I want to personally thank them.

Similarly, our ASEAN countries in the east, who are our maritime neighbours, also hold special importance. India has thousands of years old religious and cultural ties with these countries. The traditions of Buddhism connect us with them. Today, India is strengthening its cooperation not only in the field of security but also in the areas of marine wealth with these countries.

My dear citizens, India has as much commitment to make its security apparatus & armies strong as it has for establishing peace & harmony. Mammoth steps have been taken in the field of defence production, to make self-reliant India. Recently, we have put a stop on the import of more than 100 military equipment. From missiles to light military helicopters, from assault rifles to transport aircraft – all will be made in India. Our Tejas is getting ready to equip itself as per the modern requirements, for putting up a show of its majesty, speed and strength. Our borders and coastal infrastructure play a pivotal role in national security. Today emphasis is being laid on connectivity in every direction, be it at Himalayan peaks, or the islands of Indian Ocean. New roads are being constructed everywhere, from Ladakh to Arunachal Pradesh, keeping in mind national security.

Dear citizens, we have such a vast coastline. Alongside, we have over 1300 islands. Keeping the importance of a few identified islands in mind, we are developing them very fast. You must have seen, last week, five days back, a submarine optical fiber cable project in Andaman and Nicobar Islands was dedicated to the nation. Andaman and Nicobar islands will now have the internet facility just like Delhi and Chennai. Soon we will move forth in connecting Lakshadweep islands in the similar manner.

We are aiming at providing high speed internet connectivity to Lakshadweep islands in the next 1000 days. Alongwith the security and development, the youth residing in the coastal area and near borders mind, we are working on developmental projects and taking steps, starting a big campaign.

About 173 districts in our border areas, our coastal areas share their boundaries with some or the other nation's border or coastline. In the coming days, NCC would be extended in those border districts for the youth there. We will train around one lakh new NCC cadets from bordering areas, and we will work towards the idea that amongst those, one-third of them are our daughters. The Army will train these border area cadets. The cadets for coastal areas would be trained by the navy and wherever there is an air base, the air force will train those cadets. The border and coastal areas would get trained manpower for disaster management, and the youth would also get skill training for making their career in the armed forces.

Dear citizens, last year in my address from the Red Fort, I had said that the previous five years were for meeting the prerequisites, and next five years would be for fulfillment of aspirations. In last year itself, the nation has achieved many big and important milestones. On the 150th year of Gandhi's birth anniversary, India freed its villages from open defecation. Be it the Citizenship Amendment Act for the refugees suffering due to their beliefs, reservation rights for Dalits/Backwards/SCs/STs/OBCs, historic peace agreement in Assam and Tripura, appointment of Chief of Defence staff for making the collective power of armies more effective, or the construction of Kartarpur Sahib Corridor in a record period, India has created history, it saw history being created, extraordinary feats were achieved.

Ten days ago, the construction of Lord Rama's magnificent temple in Ayodhya began. A peaceful culmination has been achieved to the age-old issue of Ram Janmbhoomi. The citizens of India have shown an exemplary restraint and wisdom, and acted responsibly. It is simply unprecedented and a motivating factor for the future. Peace, unity and harmony- these are going to be the strengths of self-reliant India. This harmony, goodwill- this is the

guarantee of prosperous future of India. We need to advance with this harmony. Each Indian must sacrifice something or the other in the magnanimous yajna for development.

India will move forward with new policy, new customs in this decade. Now banal won't work. The time has gone when casual attitude used to suffice. We are no less than anyone in the world. We will thrive to be the best. For this, we need to work towards being best in manufacturing, best in human resources, finest in governance, and aim to make a headway while achieving the best in every field by the 75th anniversary of our Independence.

Our policies, processes, products- everything must be par excellence, the best, and then only the idea of 'Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat' can be achieved. Today, again we need to take a resolve that we will fulfill the dreams of those who sacrificed their lives for our freedom. This pledge must be for 1.3 billion citizens, for our future generations, for their bright future, for the self-reliant India. We must take a pledge, we must take an oath, that we will contribute towards reducing the import dependence, we will empower our small-scale industries, we all will be vocal for local. we will innovate more, empower our youth, women, scheduled tribes, scheduled castes, specially differently-abled, economically weaker sections, villages, backward classes, and everyone.

Today India has made impossible possible at an extraordinary pace. With the same willpower, similar dedication, same passion, each Indian must move forward.

Soon we will be celebrating the festival of the 75th year of our Independence in the year 2022. We are just one step away. We must burn the midnight oil. This third decade of the 21st century should be the decade when we fulfill our dreams. Corona is a big hurdle, but not that huge that it can stop us from moving ahead on the victorious path of self-reliant India.

I can see the dawn of a new era for India, rise of new self-confidence, a bugle of echo of self-reliant India. Once again, I extend my heartiest best wishes of Independence Day to all. Let's all come together, and raise our hands, and say with all the power at our command: –

Bharat mata ki Jai, Bharat mata ki Jai, Bharat mata ki Jai

Vande Mataram, Vande Mataram, Vande Mataram

Jai Hind, Jai Hind!