PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE

Bharatiya Janata Party
FIFTH NATIONAL COUNCIL SESSION, INDORE (M. P.)
6, 7 & 8 January, 1984
Madam Chairperson of the Reception Committee, Delegates, Brothers and Sisters,

We met nine months ago in Delhi where we had our last National Council meeting. These have been eventful nine months, even productive nine months. In Delhi I had given you an appraisal. I had also offered you a concept. In my appraisal I had painted a dark picture of the country's drift and of the wrong direction in which the Government was heading. In my concept I saw immediate hope of meeting this challenge through the formation of a national democratic alliance. I shared with you the vision of a new and strong India based on five unities—between city and village, between labour and capital, between citizen and administration, between centre and states, and between all the castes and communities of the nation.

Events during the last nine months have fully vindicated my appraisal and even gone beyond its worst fears about this Government's perversity. However, at the same time, our efforts during the last nine months have also resulted in the formation of the National Democratic Alliance. This has redoubled our resolve to preserve the unity of our nation and the integrity of its democratic system.

The conduct of this Government passes comprehension. It defies logic. The Government seems to be haunted by a death-wish. It has lost its will, or capacity, to govern. It continues to lurch from one crisis to another, from one exposure to another. Like one intoxicated, the Government persists on a suicidal course. The tragedy is that it threatens to drag the rest of society along with it.
Criminal waste and extravagance

Take wasteful expenditure. It has reached such astronomical heights as to threaten the economy and make a mockery of plan projections. The Prime Minister herself is aware of this. In a rare moment of candour she confided to the press that she had not fully realised the implications of the Asiad extravagance. Had she done so, she said, she might have decided differently. How hollow these words were became evident a little after they had been uttered. It is clear that wasteful expenditure has created a vicious culture of its own, not allowing its victims to extricate themselves from its coils. I say this because the Prime Minister's professed concern about extravagance was amply tested during the Commonwealth Conference subsequently. It is not just the figures of the expenditure that cause worry. It is the Government's entire attitude which is profoundly disturbing. Crores were spent on beautifying cities in which the visiting dignitaries stayed for a day or two. This colossal waste was justified by the plea that it should be considered as an investment for the benefit of the citizens at large.

What kind of investment was the renovation of the Ashok Hotel in Delhi for which the repairs of the lobby alone cost over Rs. 3.5 crores? The Ashok Hotel, along with other five star hotels, had been fully renovated just a year earlier for the Asiad, then again for the NAM conference. Would the proceedings or the arrangements of the Commonwealth Conference have suffered the slightest if this expenditure had been avoided?

Newspapers have compared the pomp and extravagance of this conference with the Emperor's Durbar at the beginning of this Century. During the NAM conference each hotel bathroom was renovated in honour of the foreign guests at the cost of over a lakh of rupees. These may appear to be very trivial matters. I cite them in order to draw attention to the Government's attitude of special consideration towards foreigners and its contempt towards the needs of our own people.
Development Thwarted

For while the Government persists with its drunken spree of spending, there are thousands of projects of dire necessity held up for want of funds. These are projects on which the very existence of our people depends. Vital projects initiated in the First Five Year Plan are still incomplete for lack of funds. Bihar state has such wonderful soil that it could become the granary of the whole nation. But after 30 years its irrigation system is not complete for lack of investment. Is this not criminal neglect? In Uttar Pradesh there are an estimated two crore people, out of the total twelve crore, who suffer from tuberculosis. It is a communicable disease. And there are only four thousand hospital beds for TB patients in the entire state. How will the situation change? Almost one-fourth Delhi’s population dwells in resettlement colonies in which there are no proper arrangements for the disposal of sewage. As a consequence the subsoil water is dangerously polluted. The Yamuna itself has become polluted. People are forced to drink the polluted subsoil water from hand-pumps. Yet the Government cannot spend for providing a proper sewage system in the capital of India itself. Perhaps the Government calculates that VIPs and foreigners living in five star hotels can manage with bottled mineral water. It is only the ordinary citizens who must drink the poison. It is not necessary for me to give you more examples. They are endless.

Common Man’s Misery

The Government has claimed that due to the IRDP and NREP investments 120 million people have been brought up from the poverty line. This is a bogus claim. Our workers have investigated and discovered innumerable cases where the investment has never reached the poor beneficiary. Experts have confirmed that only an estimated 7 million have been brought up from the poverty line. Corruption ate up rest of the money. This should also be taken note of as to how-
many of them again went down the poverty line and also the number of those who joined them afresh.

These examples merely provide live evidence of the dry statistics of the Sixth Five Year Plan which affirm that still there are 35 crore people in India who live on less than Rs. 2.30 per day, that one-third villages in the country lack clean drinking water, that fifty percent children in the country are in poor health, and that eighty percent of the housing in rural India is unfit for human habitation. These are the official figures. It is in this grim and fearful context that the Government concerns itself with extravagant jamborees like the Commonwealth Conference.

During the last four years the cumulative increase in wholesale prices of articles consumed by the common man has been approximately 51 percent. Our foreign exchange reserves have dipped to an alarming 1554 crores from the 5430 crores that this Government inherited in 1980. And the spectre of the IMF loan repayment to the tune of 5000 crores requiring an additional 3000 crores as interest is haunting the country like a nemesis. I cannot recall a single instance of such criminal waste during the tenure of the previous Janata Government. The nation's resolve to achieve self-reliance has been destroyed by this Government.

Black Record

And while the economy reaches a flashpoint, the ship of state seems to have been abandoned by the Government, left to the tender mercies of the winds of fortune. Mrs. Gandhi's Government is rudderless. Never in the history of our Republic has a government's reputation been tarnished by so many scandals. Every time we meet, we are confronted by the visage of the Government blackened by new blots, even while the stains of previous scandals have not been wiped clean. This Government has reached a new height in scandals. Just consider the record. The Antulay affair, the Bhagalpur blindings, the Harijan massacres in Deoli, Sadhupur and elsewhere, Jagannath's corruption cases, Bhajan Lal's engineered
defections, the unsolved death of the police guard in the house of a Congress (I) minister, the police rape of Maya Tyagi, the bearer bonds scheme to protect black money, the scandals of the Thal Vaishist, Hindustan Monark, Kuo Oil and the Feranti deals—one can go on and on. It seems as if the crimes and scandals of a century have been compressed within three years.

We have to forget these scandals. The Government leaves us with no choice. Each time the Government creates such sensational new scandals that we are compelled to forget the previous scandals. Since we met last, the Government has been exceptionally creative. It has created three new scandals which are exceptionally colourful and sensational.

**Latest Three Scandals**

First, there was the tallow scandal. Something heinous has been done. For the sake of profit, businessmen, colluding with the Government, deceived millions of people who were made to violate their most sacred religious beliefs unknowingly. But this is only one aspect of the scandal. There is another aspect which is more shameful. Instead of swift action to stop the rot and punish the guilty, the Government first tried to deny the allegations. It did everything to soften the punishment of the guilty. When the denials did not succeed, the present Government tried to twist facts and involve the previous Janata Government for crimes which were being committed under the former’s nose. Ministers spoke in contradiction to each other. The Prime Minister tried to minimise the whole affair. Why should the Government have behaved thus? The dark suspicion naturally arises that the Government has something to hide.

Tallow was being imported since 1964 for the manufacture of soap and grease. During the Janata Government’s tenure the price of tallow was so much higher than that of vanaspati that the question of adulteration did not arise. It was only after Mrs. Gandhi assumed office that this unholy crime
against the religious sentiments of the people began. Any normal administration would have reacted swiftly in such an event. But this Government is not normal. The Government itself is the culprit in most crimes being committed in the country. The Government is refusing to hold an inquiry into the matter. It is for the people to reflect on how debased our society has become when even the most sacred religious beliefs are violated for the lure of profit in collusion with the Government itself.

The Tainted Tapes

The Government is unmoved by scandals and exposures. It is unconcerned with disorder and violence. It is obsessed with a single point. It seeks to occupy every chair of office. The Government has arrogated to itself the divine right to topple every other government by fair means or foul. One general secretary of the ruling party proudly announced this. He stated this in response to the second sensational exposure within these past few months. I refer to the Moily tapes in Karnataka. This scandal is reminiscent of the Watergate scandal. Once again, the trail of guilt leads back to New Delhi. The banknotes amounting to Rupees two lakhs which the Karnataka Congress (I) leader offered as a bribe to obtain the defection of another MLA, carried the mark of a Delhi bank. This is a new dimension in scandals. The tape recording and the banknotes are there for the world to see. Mr. Bhajan Lal, let it be said to his credit, never allowed himself to be tape recorded by anyone while transacting his business. However, the Government at the centre has not expressed shock or regret over the incident. It has not disowned the guilty Karnataka leader. How can it, when that leader was merely carrying out orders?

The Gun-Running Brahmachari

And thirdly, of course, we had to witness the juicy episode involving the colourful Dhirendra Brahmachari. It was an extraordinary exposure. This gentleman, who for years has
had access to the Prime Minister, is accused of smuggling guns into this country under a bogus licence. Where are the guns sold? Does the Government have any record? Do they reach extremists in the sensitive border states? The Government remains tongue-tied. It is extraordinary that the Government fails to perceive this as a grave national security risk, under the Prime Minister’s own nose, as it were. Nor does the Government detect any foreign hand here, even though foreign guns are being smuggled into the country. It does not suit the Government to highlight this scandal.

If these scandals reflect the character of the Government, the mounting disorder and terrorism reflect, the condition of the country. The rot in Assam after spreading all over the region has crossed our borders to strain our relations with Bangladesh. The Government remains silent and helpless. But even Assam is getting rapidly overshadowed by the crisis in the Punjab.

A Bhasmasura in Punjab

Punjab has fully exposed this Government’s collusion with a section of the extremists, and its desire to fan hatred between different communities in order to reap electoral advantage. Now it seems that matters have got out of control. The Government has discovered that it has been nursing a Frankenstein. The Government did not hesitate to send in the police into the Sisganj Gurudwara in order to help one section of Sikhs against another. But the Government looks the other way when a self-styled saint from within a gurudwara calls for the bloodshed of Hindus. In an extraordinary statement to a Bombay weekly, the Prime Minister openly defended Bhindranwale. She said he is not alone in committing or encouraging violence. She went on to describe the violence in Punjab as resulting from ‘individual terrorism’. Now the Prime Minister, it seems does not even bother to hide her party’s collusion with Bhindranwale’s extremism. The Punjab is now being administered directly by the centre. Yet it is helpless when
Hindus are selectively killed by the extremists. Some cynics have suggested that when the Government finally will enter the Golden Temple to effect an arrest, that will be the signal which will herald the general election. So low is the Government's credibility that each move by it is viewed only in the context of electoral gain, regardless of the fact that the country is going towards ruin.

Search for Scapegoats

But in all these matters the Government has its own answer. It blames the Opposition. When that charge is received with disbelief, the Government finds another answer. It blames the foreign hand. Which foreign hand is it? Is it Pakistan? The Governor of Punjab, Shri B. D. Pandey, has categorically denied that there is any evidence of Pakistani interference in Punjab. But the Prime Minister persists in speaking differently. The Prime Minister is credited with the remark that it is very difficult to find evidence without sophisticated equipment. Perhaps the Prime Minister should seek the help of the Karnataka Chief Minister. The Karnataka Government managed to find concrete evidence of a hand attempting defections and seeking destabilisation. But that was not a foreign hand, it was only the Congress (I) hand that was discovered in Karnataka.

The Prime Minister's constant reference to a foreign hand is doing enormous damage to the country's morale. This damage should not be minimised. The Prime Minister repeatedly says that there is a foreign hand trying to destroy the unity of the country. Whom does she repeatedly say this? The public should see through this Government's diabolical game. The Government itself has a vested interest in creating a crisis atmosphere, in generating a sense of insecurity, in order to emerge before the people as their saviour and protector. No foreign hand is breaking up our country. It is only the Prime Minister herself who by her reckless policies and actions is endangering the unity and harmony of our nation.
International Scene

Nobody can deny the fact that the international security environment has deteriorated. Detente has been replaced by cold war. The dialogue between USSR and USA for arms limitation has been deadlocked. The arms race between the superpowers has assumed dangerous dimensions due to the installation of Cruise Missiles and Pershing-II in western Europe by USA.

Nearer home, in our own sub-continent also, the situation has become alarming. The concentration of Soviet troops near the Khyber pass and supply of deadly American weapons to Pakistan have produced a qualitative change in the security perspective of this region. The mounting superpower rivalry in the Indian Ocean region is a matter of concern to all the littoral nations.

It is regrettable that Indian diplomacy has failed to play any effective role in reducing international tensions. The chairing of the NAM and hosting of the CHOGM had offered opportunities, which the Government of India failed to utilise for taking initiative towards declaration of the mad arms race or curbing superpower arbitrariness. Afghanistan and Grenada are in fact two Acts of the same tragic drama. How long would smaller nations continue to be unfortunate victims of the expansionist designs of their neighbours? How long would weaker countries continue to face foreign pressures, foreign interference, foreign aggression and finally foreign occupation?

One expected from Mrs. Gandhi that she would take up the chairpersonship of NAM as a serious responsibility, and would step forward for creating a better understanding in international affairs. Neither the Indian Government was able to make any purposeful move for the cessation of Iran-Iraq war and for resolving the mutual conflict between palestinians, nor could it obtain universal endorsement for the proposal of holding an International Conference on declaring Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace.

India had succeeded in establishing far more stronger ties
with her neighbours during Janata regime. During those days a new climate of mutual confidence and co-operation was pervading all through this sub-continent. But during the past years mutual trust has been replaced by mistrust and co-operation by confrontation. The Tamil problem in Sri Lanka remains unresolved. Even the appropriate Indian decision to fence her borders with barbed wires has been considered as an unfriendly act by Bangladesh. Instead of strengthening the special ties with India, Nepal is equating us with other countries. A close neighbour like Bhutan is slowly drifting away from us due to the style of functioning at New Delhi.

The aims and objects of our foreign policy should not be to promote the image of an individual but to preserve and to protect the interest of the nation. Nobody denies the usefulness and relevance of the non-alignment policy, but we do differ in the manner of its implementation.

Questions of foreign invasion and interference are deeply related with world peace and international security. If instead of pursuing a uniform policy with regard to these issues India adopts double standards, it will neither enhance its prestige, nor would it be able to serve the cause of peace, disarmament and new international economic order.

The foreign pressures are bound to increase if we fail to keep our house in order. First things first, and therefore, it is imperative to do so. The present Government has miserably failed in discharging this primary obligation. The international conferences organised in New Delhi do offer us an opportunity to show how hospitable we are, but they are no solutions to our problems. For that, we will have to struggle on our own.

National Coalition

But the question arises: how are we to meet the challenge created by Congress (I) misrule and steer the country and its
system back to health? I have stated this before, and I repeat it today, there seems to be no escape from a national coalition government after the next general election. The Congress (I) has been weakened in the South, in Bengal and the Northeast, in Punjab and Kashmir. The real battle, therefore, is for the heartland of India. I believe that the nationalist democratic forces can provide a challenge to the Congress (I) in the heartland of India. In the recent bye-elections, despite triangular contests, the Congress (I) lost the Lok Sabha seat and 3 out of 5 assembly seats in U, P. Clearly, the people are disenchanted with the present Government. They seek an alternative.

**Let’s Consolidate**

In Delhi I had sought and obtained your consent to attempt forging a national democratic alliance. Since then we have not remained idle. We communicated with all the like-minded opposition parties. The response from the Lok Dal was positive. From some parties it was lukewarm. From others it was positively cold. We had agreed in Delhi that a national democratic alliance was a historical necessity at this juncture of our nation’s affairs. And we believe that history waits for nobody. Therefore, we decided to go ahead. Along with the Lok Dal we formed the National Democratic Alliance. We believe that it is a step in the right direction. We would like the consolidation of all the nationalist and democratic forces in the country. The Lok Dal and the Bharatiya Janata Party are working like a team. We will continue to strengthen our bonds and work like a team. We believe that ultimate victory will be ours, because we best represent the needs and aspirations of India today.

Our opponents ask us: who will be your Prime Minister? I can assure them that we will have no problem on that score.

But I ask our opponents: what will be your programme? They cannot even recall the twenty points of that ill-fated programme hastily scribbled by their leader during the Emer-
gency in an effort to lend respectability to her dictatorial steps.

**Strong Centre But with Strong States**

We ourselves are clear about what must be done to unite and integrate our nation. We want a strong Centre helped by strong States. The Government is committed to maintaining the status quo. We believe that Centre-States relations require political, financial and administrative reforms. The Inter-States Council must be set up. The Governor's role must be defined. The Centre's power to dismiss a state government should be restrained and made subject to proper norms. A greater share of plan expenditure and revenue must be given to the states. We want real harmony between the Centre and the States.

We want revised priorities permitting much greater investment for rural development and welfare. To obtain justice for rural India we want price parity between industrially manufactured goods and agricultural produce on the basis of cost inputs. To help the small and cottage sectors of industry we want the spheres of production between them to be clearly demarcated by law.

**Grass-Root Democracy**

We want to make it a statutory obligation for the Government to hold civic and Panchayat elections periodically all over the country. Certain financial powers must also be given to these local bodies. We also believe that it is desirable and feasible to make the police, at the lower level, accountable to these elected local bodies. If this system can work well in Britain, there is no reason why it should not work as well in our country. As a colonial power, the British created a police force which acted like an occupation army. That system has been allowed to continue. We are determined to bring the police into the mainstream of the community in which it operates.

To rejuvenate industry and establish sound relations bet-
ween management and labour we want a thorough implementation of labour laws. We also favour a workers' Sector of industry in the large corporate sector in which workers will have a share in the ownership, management and profits of industry. The Government was put on the defensive by our demand made in the National Executive in Lucknow that workers should be given a share of the management, profit and ownership of the textile mills nationalised in Bombay. The Government has announced that the workers will get a share in the management in some of these mills. We are unimpressed by such half-measures and gimmicks. We want genuine industrial democracy to revolutionise and modernise our industrial sector. If private textile mills are mismanaged, the state of the public sector National Textiles Corporation is no better. Clearly, there is need to think afresh and Chart a new course for industry to streamline management, reduce strikes and increase production.

We want to truly integrate the nation. A proper education policy for the nation must be formulated in conformity with employment need. A sense of oneness, a sense of Indianness requires to be created among our youth to halt the mad rush towards an imported five star video-culture.

We believe that through dedication and perseverance we will realise national unity and create a new India of our dreams. In Delhi I had given you a slogan: Unite and win. Today we are achieving unity. Tomorrow we will achieve victory.

Vande Mataram