



Independence Day Special

INDIA NEWS

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Address to the Nation by The President of India K.R. Narayanan on the Eve of Independence Day

Fellow citizens, Friends,

On the eve of the 52nd anniversary of India's Independence, I have great pleasure in extending to all fellow citizens, whether living in India or abroad, my warm greetings and felicitations.



I send a special word of greeting and felicitation to our brave jawans and to our kisan and mazdoor brothers and sisters, who toil and sweat from dawn to dusk and keep our country going.

I would like, this year, to convey the boundless admiration and gratitude of the nation to our Defence and Para-military Forces. It is the death-defying courage of our young men, hailing from every State, and every part of India, the sons of our common folk, fighting on the bleak and hazardous heights of Kargil, Batalik and Dras that protected India's sovereignty and territorial integrity, driving the intruders from our sacred soil across the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir.

Tomorrow when the national tri-colour flies atop the ramparts of the historic Red Fort and over a multitude of humble dwellings across the land, it will flutter in salute to the flower of our youth who sacrificed everything to preserve the honour of our flag. We must resolve now that their sacrifice does not go in vain.

Years ago, our First Prime Minister Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru had noted a common failing of our country and observed that "the basic fact remains that we have yet to develop as a unified nation... Under some calamity or external danger, we may well unite. When the immediate danger is removed, we fall back into our respective shells and lose the

Message from Ambassador Naresh Chandra

Once again, the 15th of August comes as a day of pride for Indians all over the world. I feel privileged in extending greetings to all my fellow citizens in the United States as well as the Indian-Americans who have contributed so much to the glory of India. In over 50 years, India has emerged from an exploited colony to a resilient, free and strong democracy. Our progress in several fields of development has been widely recognised. Our great pool of technical manpower, impressive strides in agriculture and industry and creative achievement in science and space research have made India a front-ranking country among the leading nations of the world. Challenges and many problems still remain, and these require greater effort and endeavour on our part.

This year as we unfurl the National Tricolour, our first thoughts go to the valiant officers and men of the Indian armed forces whose sacrifice and courage have once again enabled us to defeat the aggression on our soil. We share the grief of the bereaved families and commit ourselves to their welfare. The country owes them, as we do our freedom fighters, an everlasting debt of gratitude. Let us take pledge to honour their memory not only with memorials but also with renewed commitment to strengthening our nation/state to realise the full potential of the people of India, both at home and abroad.

sense of the whole. We try to get out of these shells and then, something happens that lays bare our inner urges and failings. Whether it is provincialism or caste, we still live in a tribal age". Kargil has shaken us out of our narrow shells and forged a new national unity in the crucible of the common danger suddenly imposed on us. Friends, we hear voices from the other side threatening more Kargils

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Kargil and Beyond

Speech by Sh. Jaswant Singh, Minister of External Affairs at
India International Centre on July 20, 1999

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and
Gentlemen,

It is now time to look ahead; to look beyond Kargil. But even in charting our course for the future we have to assess what Kargil 1999 was all about? What were the challenges — military and diplomatic? What new facets of our total national commitment and endeavour emerged? What lessons for the years that lie ahead? ‘Operation Vijay’ — as the Prime Minister said some days back — has resulted in ‘Vijay’ for India. As we re-examine the military and diplomatic challenges that then confronted us, and which were successfully managed, we need to have a preliminary analysis, draw some first conclusions and above all, looking beyond Kargil, draw a route chart for the tomorrows to come.

First, the military dimension. Kargil was a military aggression by Pakistan, with Pak army regulars, across a stretch of the LoC, in four pockets, from the Mushkoh Valley in the west to Tartuk in the Yaldor-Batalik sector in the East. Initially, with the aggressor — as with all aggressors lay the element of surprise. This was soon countered locally. Initially, the terrain, too, conferred some advantage to the aggressor. They had intruded along ridgelines to occupy some key heights and features that dominated a vital road link, between Dras and Kargil. The depth of the ridge-

lines north of the LoC and their gradients, along with nullah approaches enabled the Pakistan army to provide crucial logistical and administrative support to their troops.

The Indian army’s response to the military challenge was measured yet swift, it was focussed, thus effective. The first task was to contain the intrusion. For this an accurate assessment was necessary about the degree and extent of it. This involved, amongst other activities the drawing of fire. Simultaneously, a redeployment of troops took place. Through a successful containment of the aggressor’s intrusion was ensured the inevitable defeat of this misadventure by Pakistan. The element of surprise was countered by the Indian army through the speed and lethality of its response. On 26th May, the Air Force swung into action in support of the ground operations.

Our military objective had been clearly spelt out to the intruders — retreat or the Indian army shall evict you. In any event once the intruder’s aim of interfering with the Dras-Kargil Highway had been thwarted the whole rationale of this aggression had got defeated. A mere holding of heights was militarily a counter productive venture. They were bound to be evicted — in detail — one by one; for their occupation served scant military purpose. For India, occupation of territory, south of the LoC, was

simply not acceptable both physically and as a violation of a principle. Tactical surprise having been lost early by the aggressor, the military principles of superior force, concentration and firepower were bound to tell. And they did, decisively. This phase of eviction did not, indeed could not be a phase of battles of maneuver. The nature of the terrain, the adversary’s dispositions plus most importantly our self-imposed restraints about the LoC, precluded those options. The battles for the heights thus became classic infantry actions in high altitude, combining mountaineering and fighting, against fixed enemy positions at a higher elevation. They were actions that demanded grit, stamina and dauntless courage. Our troops displayed all these qualities in full measure.

Let us be clear about one other vital aspect. This aggression in Kargil sector was by the Pak regular army, it had the logistic and administrative support of not the Pakistani Army alone but of their total state machinery. Secondly, this misadventure was not aimed at infiltrating into the Srinagar Valley, it was to occupy territory in Kargil and in holding that. This purpose, too, was defeated.

The Kargil aggression is not an extension of the problem of externally aided and abetted cross border terrorism that we have combated uptill now. It is an

overspill of the 'Afghanistan' disorder syndrome'. That is also why it had to be defeated.

In parallel to the military, we also had major diplomatic challenges on our hands. A firm signal had to be conveyed to Pakistan, as also a clear and unambiguous message to the international community. Let us accept that in today's age no conflict, least of all one between two nuclear weapons possessing states can escape global media spotlight. This was an additional and a new factor. Managing all these required a qualitatively new level of coordination between the two wings of the South Block — the Ministries of Defence and External Affairs. This, too was achieved to demonstrable effect.

Of course, Kargil posed a challenge both to the substance of our foreign policy as also to the conduct of our diplomacy. The Prime Minister had at the very beginning directed the MEA that the true challenge lay in turning back the aggressor, in defeating all his designs, in reversing the aggression but with the maximum of restraint. The MEA had, therefore, also placed before itself the objective of protecting the international flank of the MoD; so that our operations on the ground and in the air could go on unhindered. This was also achieved in no insignificant measure. The first requirement, thus was establishing the fact of Pakistan's intrusion and aggression. I would venture to claim that we succeeded in doing so. The next requirement was to spell our objectives with clarity, consistency and candour. This was done early, repeated whenever necessary and can be summed up, sequentially, as the following irreducible minimums.

They were:

- A] Pakistan's armed intrusion in Kargil will be evicted and its aggression vacated. All Pakistan regular troops and extremist elements under its command and control will have to withdraw. For this purpose, our armed forces will take all necessary action on our side of the Line of Control.
- B] Once this intrusion has been cleared, Pakistan would need to reaffirm the inviolability and sanctity of the Line of Control.
- C] Dialogue, as part of the Lahore process, which after all, was initiated by us could only then be resumed.

Our diplomatic machinery was geared fully to convey these objectives to the international community, as being valid and worthy of support. Continuous interaction was maintained, with all the major powers, and the rest of the international community through our diplomatic missions abroad, the diplomatic community in New Delhi and through personal interaction. It is a measure of the justness of India's cause that what I have cited above, as the irreducible minimums, found such a large community of countries standing up in support. Principally, let me repeat, it was because India's stand was recognised as just, thus it was acted upon. I wish to also emphasize that the importance of the inviolability and sanctity of the Line of Control, for maintaining peace and tranquility, was totally accepted by the international community, and Pakistan was held as having violated this Line. Its efforts

at terming it as imprecise also failed. Even more, the international community accepted India's view that Pakistan was guilty also of transgressing the territory of trust. The international community also concurred with our assertion that Kargil was a manifestation of this medieval malevolence spilling over from Afghanistan, that these were no freedom fighters, thus there was a need to confront such impulses; in the interest not just of our region but of the larger global community.

It is noteworthy that under the leadership of the Prime Minister the Ministries of External Affairs and the Ministry of Defence worked as one, the combined synergy of which demonstrated the true power and effectiveness of the Indian State. This is, of course, how it should be. But it is a matter of satisfaction nevertheless, that this was achieved at a time of trial, a time which tests the mettle of any Government's machinery. In this is also a lesson for the future.

There was an added dimension to our total national endeavour. It was the role of our media during Kargil operations. It was marked by exuberant enthusiasm bordering, at times, on the reckless. These young men and women of the media, who were in Kargil brought the valour of our troops, in the face of great odds, directly into the homes of our citizens. They touched our hearts and eyes with the tales of the bereaved and the families of the fallen. This was our first experience of conflict in the TV/information age. We learnt as we went along. It would be no exaggeration, therefore, to say that the role of the electronic

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and the print media, in fully informing and mobilizing public opinion, was an invaluable part of the total national effort to meet the challenge of Kargil.

Why did Pakistan undertake such an ill-conceived misadventure? Perhaps, they thought that they could translate the advantage of tactical surprise into a strategic gain by bringing about a defacto realignment of the LoC, in the region, thus rendering the Srinagar-Leh National Highway vulnerable. They were wrong. They miscalculated India's resolve, they did not comprehend the sense of national outrage at this blatant breach of trust, the sheer motivation of the Indian soldiers and the leadership quality of the Indian Army officers who led from the front.

Perhaps, Pakistan calculated on provoking India into an escalation. They were wrong again because the decision of not crossing the LoC was taken early and maintained scrupulously, in the face of high casualties and even when the decision to employ air power was taken. The area of conflict was not expanded. Pakistan having disowned its troops as "freedom fighters", could hardly thereafter have opened up a new front, to ease pressure in Kargil.

What of the future? Looking beyond Kargil provides us an opportunity to renew our faith in ourselves, our society, our polity and our nation. It compels us to look ahead in all fields of national endeavour but particularly, in the spheres of national security and foreign policy. One simple message emanating from

Kargil is that adequate resources have to be made available for national defence, that the kind of relegation of defence needs that we witnessed in the late eighties and nineties is unsound policy, that technological upgradation cannot be postponed, that the nation must always think of the welfare of those who are in the first rank of its defence.

Kargil has many pointers for our foreign policy and diplomacy too. As in the present instance, we should always be ready to engage with the world as full and responsible members of the international community, but, of course, keeping our national priorities and interests as the guiding principle; we ought to have no reluctance, leave alone fear, in engaging with the world on any issue. Indeed, we serve the national interest when we engage the world on the basis of equality and mutual respect. Such engagement is the very substance of diplomacy. That is not any internationalization of an issue. Nor does it imply mediation or any acceptance of intermediaries.

Issues have to be addressed bilaterally between concerned countries, and in the case of India and Pakistan, that is what the Lahore process is all about. We would like to renew that process and we would like Pakistan to facilitate a resumption of the process, by reaffirming the inviolability and sanctity of the Line of Control. Clearly, a sponsorship of terrorism across the Line of Control, or elsewhere, is a violation of the Line of Control, as indeed of Simla Agreement and Lahore Declaration. There

is a need, for Pakistan, to abjure sponsoring, aiding or abetting cross-border terrorism. These are not any pre-conditions for dialogue. We are after all, the initiators of this dialogue process and our commitment to it is firm and abiding. But it is only right for our nation, at this juncture, to expect that Pakistan will repair the damage that it has done to trust, that it demonstrates this through concrete and tangible steps. Trust is not built by engaging in dialogue in winter and committing aggression in summer. Continuous calls for *Jihad* can also hardly be read as messages for dialogue and peace. And it is in this vein that I suggest that high pitched propaganda against India also does not inspire confidence in Pakistan's interest in dialogue.

I would venture to suggest that Pakistan, too, has to come to terms with its history, as indeed with its geography. It has to realize that there simply is no military solution to what it presumes is its *locus-standii* in Jammu and Kashmir. It is, of course, for Pakistan to determine its priorities but fomenting religious fundamentalism can hardly be employed as a tool against want and poverty. India recognizes the permanence of the sovereign state of Pakistan and that is final. While India remains ready for dialogue, the pace at which it can move forward will depend entirely on when and how the state of Pakistan, and what it has now become, permits it to do so.

Our foreign policy has not been fixated on Pakistan, but that has been a significant preoccupation

of it. We need to re-examine this in detail. Globally, India has to move purposefully towards realizing its true dimensions — as a major civilisational state, with its own strategic autonomy and strategic space, born out of its economic and political interaction with other countries particularly in the Asia-Pacific community. The real wealth of a nation is its people. History and paucity of appropriate resources prevented us from participating in the economic transformations brought about since the Industrial Revolution. In 1820, Asia contributed 58 per cent of the World GDP; today it is at 37 per cent; by 2020, expectations are that it could regain the level of 200 years ago. India has a signal role to play in the coming decades. With our democratic institutions, a large skilled manpower base, geographic location, we must ensure that India rides the crest of this wave.

Through the travail and fire of Kargil our nation has been renewed. The mood though sombre, is confident. National will stands sharpened. The sacrifice of our youth has not and will not be in vain. That is the solemn message of Kargil to the nation and to the world. I close with the poignant words of the memorial at Kohima, that stands tall and proud on a hill, commemorating those who fell in another war:

“When you go home
Tell them of us
And say
For your Tomorrow
We gave our Today.”

Embassy Diary:

- With approvals from several US authorities in hand, the plans for the construction of the Mahatma Gandhi Memorial are now in their final stages. The memorial, which will be installed on Massachusetts Avenue opposite the Embassy, will have a statue of the Father of the Nation as its centerpiece.
- The Embassy worked on all fronts to put forward India's position during the Kargil crisis to US policy makers both in the US Congress and in the Administration. The Ambassador, Deputy Chief of Mission and other senior officials also met prominent members of think tanks and the US media to keep them up-to-date on developments. Embassy's website www.indianembassy.org was also usefully employed to project India's viewpoints during the Kargil crisis.
- The Embassy continued its efforts to reach out to different sections of the United States public as well as the Indian American community. The Ambassador and the Deputy Chief of Mission sent out letters at regular intervals to apprise the community of current developments in Indo-US relations and Government of India's policies. They and other officers also participated in several community functions both in Washington and other parts of the country including the Indo-American Friendship Council's annual meeting in Washington, Independence Day festivities and Parade in Chicago, the 17th Annual American Association of the Physicians of India's origin, San Francisco, JAINA Convention, Philadelphia besides several other functions.
- The Embassy continued its interaction with all sections of the media including major television networks. Ambassador Naresh Chandra spoke at a function at National Press Club on May 20 and Deputy Chief of Mission Mr. T.P. Sreenivasan spoke at another function organized at the National Press Club on August 9.
- The Embassy cooperated with the Smithsonian Institution in organizing a six part lecture series on Rajasthan, with the National Museum for Women in Arts to present the creation of Indian women, and with the John Hopkins Institute and the Smithsonian Institute for their programme on religion and traditions in India.

PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS *from page 1*

in the future. We have to remain united and prepared not only when war-like situations come upon us, but in normal times also, so that we are not ever again taken unawares by surprise attacks. We have to pay special attention to strengthening our armed forces, equip them with the latest weapons and force multipliers. Hitherto our expenditure on defence has been one of the lowest in the world in terms of percentage of the GDP, much lower than that of our neighbours. It is incumbent upon us to rectify this imbalance.

At the same time let us remember that a country is defended not by arms alone but by wise policies and the strength of its economy, by the justice and cohesion of its society, by the unity of its people. We are a peace-loving people by nature and tradition. We wish to live in peace with our neighbours and with the entire world. Indeed it was due to this passion for peace and our desire to avoid a fratricidal civil war, in the sub-continent, that the leaders of the Indian National Congress agreed to the partition of our motherland into India and Pakistan. It is ironic that this great sacrifice on our part and our desire to live in peace with Pakistan have not prevented unprovoked aggression and subversion against our country. In October 1947, in the very first year of our independence, Pakistan launched an attack on us in order to wrest Jammu and Kashmir from the Indian Union. On October 29th Mahatma Gandhi said at his prayer meeting in Delhi that now that "the Maharaja of Kashmir has announced his decision to accede to the Indian Union ...and that he has taken refuge in the Indian Union, he should be protected". Answering the question as to what should the small band of Indian soldiers sent to Srinagar by air do, Gandhiji said: "Let them fight to the end. The job of armed soldiers is to march ahead and repel the attacking enemy. They die in fighting, but never retreat". It was this advice by the Father of the Nation and the apostle of non-violence that our brave soldiers followed in 1947 and in the recent attack on us in the Kargil area in Jammu and Kashmir.

In January 1948 Gandhiji said "We must never, under any circumstances, treat anyone as our enemy...My reason and my heart tell me that, if for some reason, we are unable to forge friendship between Muslims and Hindus, not only here but in Pakistan and in the whole world, we shall not be able to keep our free India for long. It will pass into the hands of others", and the freedom gained by both India and Pakistan "will be lost". On the awful prospect of a war between India and Pakistan he further warned, with his shrewd insight into the real politik of the world, that "If you imagine to-day that we can fight and win, let me say that even before you do so, some other world power is going to swallow us up. It will swallow, in fact, both the countries.

If all my friends who are sensible people and who have spent several years with me in my work, understand that much, we would all be safe".

While driving this basic point home Gandhiji had a clear grasp of the reality of the situation and said "The fact is that Pakistan has invaded Kashmir. Indian troops have gone there as defenders at the express invitation of the

Maharaja of the State and of Sheik Abdullah who is the real leader of the Kashmiri people. I shall advise Pakistan and India to sit together and decide the matter. If they are interested in a settlement what is the need for an arbitrator." Gandhiji was against the intervention of a third party or of a foreign hand as arbitrator. I recall these words today because they sum up the totality of the position which we have followed. That was our position at the Shimla Summit in 1972 and that was the position our Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee took when he traveled to Lahore this year and signed the Lahore Declaration with the Prime Minister of Pakistan. We adhere to the same friendly stand but, as we have been let down more than once in the past, it is prudent of us and it is our duty to our people to be prepared for any surprise attack on us. We have to act according to the old adage that eternal vigilance is the price of freedom as well as of peace.

Friends, as we celebrate our Independence to-morrow we recall in grateful remembrance the band of great and selfless men and women who led us in the struggle — Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, Babu Rajendra Prasad, Chakravarti Rajagopalachari, Sarojini Naidu and the incomparable Netaji Subash Chandra Bose, and a host of others. We also recall the foot soldiers of that struggle, countless heroes and heroines who carried aloft the banner of Swaraj. Their aim was to free this ancient land so that millions of Indians sunk in poverty, disease and squalor would rise and live in dignity as free human beings. We have yet to redeem the pledge they gave to our people. One third of our people still live below the poverty level, almost half of our adult population is illiterate, and more than half of our children are under-nourished. And withal our population is increasing at an alarming rate - it has been estimated that India's population would cross the one billion mark on Independence Day. The great strides we have made in economic development and in the improvement in the condition of our people has been, to some extent, negated by this population explosion. We have to gather the political and social will to stem this tide, instead of frittering away our energies in the pursuit of the politics of power and pelf. Great causes cry out for our urgent attention. The women of India have not yet come out of the long night of discrimination, inequality and denial of rights in which they have been living for ages. But it is gratifying to note that in different parts of India they have been rising and organizing themselves in movements for self-employment and economic empowerment. They need political support. The struggle for the basic and minimum needs of our people - for food, nutrition, health, education, drinking water and energy — remain an unfinished business. The magnitude of these problems is so immense that if we do not address them as our over-riding political, social and economic priorities, the galloping population would overwhelm us in the future. Against this background I am glad to recognize the grass-root movements cropping up in different parts of our country for supervision of development programmes by the people for education, health, employment, etc. for which Government has set apart large sums of money. The Right to information is one such grass-root movement which deserves wider popular and legislative support. Our natural environment and life sources such as air, water and land

are to-day receiving greater attention than before, thanks to the efforts of citizens and NGO's. But I am afraid, by and large, we remain reckless consumers than preservers of these life-sources. It is time that we took conservation and other environmental questions not as fashionable positions but as matters of life and death. No development will be sustainable or justifiable that ignores Nature and the human being.

On the 26th of November this year it will be 50 years since we adopted, enacted and gave to ourselves the Constitution of India. The Constitution is the sheet anchor of our polity. It is my earnest hope that it would continue to be respected by all, and be an instrument of social change and transformation of the status of the underprivileged as envisaged by Babasaheb Ambedkar.

Science and technology, which occupy the centre stage in our progress is paying heed to the human dimensions of development. Thanks to the efforts put in during the first two or three decades India can today boast of a stabilized green revolution, a diversified industrial infrastructure, and a Science and Technology-base for our further development. While Jawaharlal Nehru's vision of "science solving the problem of hunger and poverty" in our country has not yet been fulfilled, we have been able to break the back of the demon of hunger by resort to science in our agriculture. Our progress in the development of satellites, atomic energy, information technology and bio-technology are not merely climbing the high peaks of Science and Technology, but are applying the techniques to grass-root problems and to the human needs of the country. It is heartening that our scientists are now wide awake to the importance of patenting our diverse genetic riches before they are taken away by the advanced nations. India is bound to emerge as a major scientific-technological power in the new millennium.

Rolling back or putting a cap on the advancement of science is contrary to the very spirit and nature of science, and against the equitable world order that we are pledged to bring into being.

Friends, in a few weeks from now the people of India will be exercising their franchise to elect the 13th Lok Sabha and some of the State Assemblies. Our record of orderly elections, which form the basis of our democratic polity, is now acknowledged by the world. Indian voters have exercised their franchise and chosen their representatives with practical common sense; they have reposed confidence with generosity; withdrawn it without ambiguity; created, preserved and demolished mandates. No one dares take the Indian voter for granted. It is gratifying for us that today the world significance of Indian democracy has begun to dawn upon the developed democracies of the world. But still we must not forget that often in global power-politics the blood of strategic affinity is thicker than the life-giving waters of democracy.

I would like to avail this opportunity to urge all contestants and campaigners in the coming polls to maintain our democracy's track record, to abjure appeals of a narrow sectarian nature and show a broad tolerance of opinions of others. I trust that the ugly phenomenon of voter-intimidation and booth-capturing which has marred voting in some

pockets in the past, will not be tolerated anywhere on this occasion. The firmness shown in this regard by our Election Commission has been widely appreciated.

Our Election Commission, our Judiciary and other Constitutional authorities like the Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India, are institutions of which we are proud for their impartiality, objectivity and sense of responsibility.

Likewise we derive great satisfaction from the functioning of the National Commissions that have been set up for the welfare of our minorities, women, scheduled castes and scheduled tribes and other vulnerable sections of our society.

Fellow citizens and friends, on this last Independence Day of the century we have every reason to look forward to the new millennium with hope and self-assurance. Despite all the obstacles set in our path we are well served by the strength of our democratic institutions and we draw sustenance from our rich heritage from the past and from the reawakened spirit of our people. In this spirit we send our greetings to our neighbours in South Asia - to Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, Maldives and Pakistan with whom we are engaged in the adventure of building up SAARC as a prosperous and viable regional entity. We also send our greetings to the friendly countries of ASEAN with whom we are closely associated, to Japan and to the countries of West Asia and Central Asia with whom we have traditional ties of friendship. I am delighted that our relations with the People's Republic of China have improved. On the 50th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China and of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries, I would like to send our warm greetings to the people and government of China. It is a matter of satisfaction to us that our relations with the countries of the sister continent of Africa, the Commonwealth of Nations, the European Union and the United States of America are marked by warmth and understanding. Our close relations with our time-tested friend, Russia, continue to develop and diversify in several fields as well as in multilateral fora; this is most gratifying.

From the inception of our independence India has been striving for a one-world that is free from the scourge of war and free of weapons of mass destruction. In the new century that is at our doorstep we pledge ourselves to persist with this effort. Towards this we would like to see the full potential and scope of the United Nations Organization realized through wider representation and restructuring. We will continue to attach the greatest importance to the Non-Aligned Movement in the formation of which we take pride and which has played an important role in ending the nightmare of the Cold War and which we believe is of relevance in providing stability and balance to the pluralistic world order that is emerging.

Friends, on this Independence Day let us resolve to imbue our lives with the spirit of that midnight hour when we made our tryst with destiny. May the tricolor continue to inspire us and fulfil our destiny as a people and as a nation.

Jai Hind

Text of Joint India-US Communique on the Exchange of the Instruments of Ratification of the Indo-US Extradition Treaty

New Delhi, July 21, 1999

“The Governments of India and the United States today exchanged instruments of ratification for the bilateral Extradition Treaty which was signed by both countries in June 1997. The exchange has brought this treaty into force from today.

The new extradition treaty has replaced the 1931 Extradition Treaty between the United States and the United Kingdom which was, till date, also in force between the United States and India. The treaty is an important step in India-US law enforcement cooperation and cooperation in the area of counter-terrorism. This exchange constitutes yet another milestone in the continuing cooperation between our two democracies to promote the continued growth of our contacts and exchanges in different areas on the basis of mutual benefit and goodwill.”

Salient Points of the Extradition Treaty signed between India and the U.S. in June 1997

Extraditable offenses:

The offense is extraditable if punishable under the laws in both contracting parties by imprisonments for more than one year or by a more severe penalty. This applies:

- a) whether or not the laws in the contracting state place the offense within the same category of offenses or describe the offense by the same terminology;
- b) whether or not the office is one for which United States federal law requires the showing of such matters as interstate transportation, or use of the mails or of other facilities affecting interstate or foreign commerce, such matters being merely for the purpose of establishing jurisdiction in a United States federal court; or
- c) whether or not it relates to taxation or revenue or is one of a purely fiscal character.

Extradition shall be granted for an extraditable offense regardless of where the act or acts constituting the offense were committed.

While extradition shall not be granted for a political offense, the following shall not be considered to be political offenses:

Murder or other willful crime against a Head of

State or Head of Government or a member of their family, aircraft hijacking offenses, aviation sabotage, crimes against internationally protected persons including diplomats, hostage taking, offenses related to illegal drugs, or any other offenses for which both contracting states have the obligation to extradite the person pursuant to a multilateral international agreement.

Procedures:

All requests for extradition shall be submitted through the diplomatic channel and be supported by required documents, statements, information describing the facts of the offense, statements of the relevant provisions of the law regarding the offense as well as the punishment, a copy of the warrant or the order of arrest, and such information as would justify the committal for trial of the person in the requested state. For those already convicted of an offense, extradition request shall be supported also by a copy of the judgement of conviction or a statement by a judicial authority that the person has been convicted.

In case of urgency, a contracting state may request the provisional arrest the person sought pending proposal of the request of extradition.

Prime Minister Vajpayee's Independence Day address to the Nation

Sisters, Brothers and
Dear Children,

Accept my greetings on the sacred occasion of Independence Day. This is a day of hallowed remembrance for us. This is a day of dedication for us.

This year's Independence Day has special significance for all of us. The present century is coming to an end. The world will have entered the next century by the time of the next Independence Day.

As we stand at the sunset of the 20th century, and look back at the events of the era that has passed, we see the end of colonialism from Indian soil to be the most important development. Our great leaders, and many generations of our countrymen, waged a powerful struggle for independence. By doing so, they paved the way for the independence of other countries, too. We pay our homage to those self-sacrificing and devoted leaders and patriots who struggled for freedom throughout their lives, and, when necessary, even laid down their lives as *aahuti* (offering) in the great *yagya* of freedom.

Come, all my countrymen, let us strive to become worthy heirs to those great leaders. We dedicate today's sacred day to their memory.

In the same way, I offer my condolences to the valiant jawans, officers and others belonging to the Army and the Air Force, who displayed magnificent heroism and the spirit of sacrifice in recapturing that part of our Motherland in Kargil from the enemy. All of us bow our heads in gratitude for those who were martyred in the Kargil war.

Almost all our countrymen have seen on television glimpses of the impossible summits, which our heroes overcame and pushed out the enemy. To gain victory at such heights is not only to surmount the sky-piercing peaks, it displays the full might of the nation. It is a symbol of the bravery of our Armed Forces.

How can we forget such heroes?

How can we forget those wounded soldiers whose only wish was: how fast can we get well and rejoin our battalion to repulse the enemy?

How can we forget the members of the families of those brave martyrs, who, on receiving the body of their beloved, said, "We do not have tears in our eyes, we have pride in our heart"? How can we forget the mother whose lament was that she had had only one son, and therefore, could not send another to fight for our country?

I know that mere words of solace are not enough. We

have to take concrete measures for the families of the martyrs and wounded soldiers so that they may live a life of comfort and dignity. It has been said that we remember and honour soldiers during a war, and in the immediate aftermath. But as the days pass, we forget them. And it is a sad fact that many who sacrificed their life and limb in previous wars were often forgotten. I give you my personal pledge that this will not happen again.

This Red Fort and its world-renowned ramparts are not merely a geographical spot. The very heartbeat of India's freedom struggle is linked to this fort and its ramparts. In the First War of Independence of 1857, this is where Bahadur Shah Zafar was held a prisoner.

Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose made this very fort the target of his campaign in 1943 and, blowing the bugle of Independence, gave the stirring call to his countrymen: "*Dilli Chalo, Chalo Lal Kile*"

It is from this very fort that our first Prime Minister, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru hoisted for the first time, the tricolour of Free India in 1947.

More than half a century has passed. Today, we stand at the threshold of a new era. Come, let us enter this new era united in step and united in resolve.

When I addressed you from this rampart last year, there was uncertainty and cynicism in the atmosphere. It was being asked:

- Will we be able to withstand economic sanctions?
- To what extent will we be able to ward off the economic crisis, which had struck the Tiger economies of Southeast Asia?
- Will the Government be allowed to carry on its work?

Today, speaking to a self-confident India, I declare:

- Sanctions have lost their effect. They have become a thing of the past. We have dealt with them in such a way that they hardly had any effect on our economy;
- We kept the South-east Asian economic crisis at bay;
- Yes, the Government was brought down, but the country was not. It continued to march ahead, fulfilling the mantra of *Charaiveti, Charaiveti* (Move on, Move on). The Government continued to discharge its duty.
- Most important, a war was imposed on us.

We have not just triumphed over difficulties, we have achieved much. In spite of obstacles that were put in our way,

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- Our National Income has grown by 6 percent;
- Having crossed 200 million tonnes, production of foodgrains is higher today than ever before;
- Food stocks are higher today than ever. For this our kisans deserve our felicitations. Our agricultural scientists are also worthy of our praise.
- Industrial production is reviving at an energetic pace;
- The new initiatives which have been taken in infrastructure have infused a new purposefulness right across the economy;
- At over 30 billion dollars our foreign exchange reserves are higher than ever before;
- The Sensex in the stock market has risen to record levels. In spite of Kargil, our companies have been able to increase their market value by over Rs. 200,000 crore.
- The off-take of cement for building houses is 22 percent higher than it has ever been;
- Facilities which were known only to the rich, to the few, and in our cities alone — insurance for their output, credit cards — are now available to, and are being taken advantage of by farmers and by others in our far-flung villages.

And we are stronger than ever. Pokharan has given us enviable strength and self-confidence. AGNI-2 has been tested — in the face of pressures — and will be integrated into our defence arsenal.

PSLV and INSAT 2-E have been launched. What a feat our scientists have accomplished: sending not just one, but three satellites on a single rocket far out into space, and placing each of them at the precise point in space, which had been fixed. This has been a magnificent achievement.

Yes, one thing has certainly come down. It is the rate of inflation. At 1.3 percent, this is the lowest rate in seventeen years.

There has also been a sea change in the way the world sees us. Last year we had taken a major step — Pokharan-2 — which was essential for our security, a step which had been contemplated for long but which could not be taken because of the pressures which were put on successive governments.

Some did not agree with our assessment. Some even sought to portray us as an irresponsible nation. However today, within a year, in the councils of the world, "India" is synonymous with "responsibility".

The world has seen that we will protect our national interest at all costs: whether it is in developing an atomic weapons capability, whether it is in developing missile-capability, whether it is in driving adversaries out of our land:

- The world has seen that we will withstand all pressures that are intended to keep us from taking the

measures that we consider necessary in our national interest;

- Also the world has seen that whatever we will do will be for self-defence, never for aggression.

But the world has also seen that we are capable of doing so with utmost restraint, with utmost responsibility. These were the principles, which guided us when Pakistan forced the Kargil war on us. Our response was well-thought out. It was so effective that it left the enemy stunned.

The world today has well realized that we would do whatever is required to protect our country. The world has also understood that we would act with utmost responsibility and restraint even when so gravely provoked. This has raised the reputation of India in the international community.

The Lahore bus journey was taken to improve our relations with Pakistan. This made the world realize that we truly want peace and friendship. This journey was not a showpiece. It was a serious and well-considered move, which we made knowing fully well that there could be risks in it.

Our honesty made an impact on the international community. Later, when the bus to Lahore was taken to Kargil, it did not take much time for the world to realize that Pakistan not only violated the Shimla Agreement and the Lahore Declaration, but it also crossed the borders of trust and goodwill.

That is what turned the world's opinion. Pakistan stood completely isolated on the world stage. India received widespread support in the world for the first time.

I do hope that the people of Pakistan too will reflect on these events. We reached out to you with a message of friendship. What did we gain in return? Hundreds lost their lives. Relations were spoilt. The resources which ought to have been used for economic and social development were instead spent on war.

We need peace in order to raise the standard of living of the people in both countries. For peace, we need trust. Has trust increased on account of all that happened in Kargil, Does the path of armed intrusion lead to friendship?

Terrorists are being trained in Pakistan. Camps are being run for them. Hordes of terrorists are being sent into India. They are killing innocent people. They are targeting women and children. How can meaningful dialogue take place in this atmosphere?

Pakistan must realize that no problem can be resolved if it continues to promote terrorist activities. We shall not let the evil designs of terrorists succeed. Today, Punjab is free of terrorism. The people of Jammu and Kashmir are fed up with terrorism. Even Assam and the North-East are affected.

All of us want peace. People are worried about the future of their children.

Terrorism is a curse on the world. When it is com-

bined with religious extremism, it becomes a graver danger to humanity. All of you are familiar with the saying “*Karela Aur Neem Chadha*” (The bitterness of Karela is further worsened by adding to it the bitterness of Neem.)

In our case, over thirty five thousand of our people have been killed by terrorists. Terrorism has become a big problem in many other parts of the world, too. It is obstructing the path of peace and development. Today, there is a need to mobilize world opinion against terrorism. Today, on the occasion of Independence Day, India stands with full self-confidence. Our gaze is turned to the future. Our standing in the world has risen. Now, the people are not attracted by the controversies and narrow disputes of yesterday.

Throughout the war in Kargil, I was specially satisfied by two features.

- There was no communal tension anywhere in the country. Goodwill and brotherhood prevailed everywhere, including in Jammu and Kashmir. This must have despaired those who thought that riots would break out in India as soon as the spark of war is lit. Those who hatched the conspiracy of strife, must have been truly disillusioned. The people of all sections of society worked for India’s success in the war. A powerful wave of patriotism traveled everywhere.
- When I went to Kargil and met our jawans, I saw our entire country there: soldiers from Nagaland, from Assam, from Tamil Nadu, from almost every state were fighting for the country. There was not the slightest distance between them on account of caste or religion or region.

This is the real India. We must make their oneness our own. We have to live for this India. We have to work for this India. And, if necessary, we have to lay down our lives for this India, as our brave jawans did.

Kargil has once again shown that whenever our patriotism is aroused, all of us stand as one with full confidence and determination, as a fist clenched in conviction. We face our challenges unitedly. Our adversaries should beware of this.

At the same time, there is an equally important lesson for us. Now that the crisis has been beaten back, do not unclench this fist of unity.

The battle is not over. New challenges are knocking at our doors. The patriotism that coursed through the veins of Indians should be made a permanent feature of our lives.

All of us remember the talisman Gandhiji gave us: when in doubt about what to do, he taught us, think of the least, of the most helpless man you have seen, ask yourself, “Will this step be in his interest?” he said, and you will see all your doubts melt away.

Kargil gives us a second talisman: As we contemplate a step, let us ask ourselves: “Is it worthy of the soldier who gave his life on those mountains? Does

the impulse which lies behind it measure up to the spirit which filled that soldier as he fought to protect our Motherland?”

The challenges that confront us cannot be overcome only by the men on the frontiers doing their duty. There is a need for an organized and disciplined nation to stand behind them. We must defend our country and develop our society by keeping national interests utmost in our minds. If our economy is not strong, and if we are not self-reliant in important matters of national security, then we cannot successfully face external challenges.

All of us, wherever we may be, whatever work we may be doing, we should discharge our responsibilities well. We must never allow any limb of our nation or society to become weak. It is clear from the effective way in which we have overcome our challenges and dealt with our difficulties, that we can do anything if we resolve to do it. What is needed is to take a pledge: that whatever we can do, we will now do.

I have a vision of India: an India free of hunger and fear, an India free of illiteracy and want.

I dream of an India that is prosperous, strong and caring. An India, that regains a place of honour in the comity of great nations.

- Come, let us build an India in which we have balanced development that benefits all regions and all sections of society. I note with regret that several regions in the country — including the North-Eastern States — have been the victims of unbalanced progress. The nation has an especially pressing obligation to bring the people of the North-East into the developmental mainstream.
- Come, let us build an India in which Dalits, Adivasis, and Backward Classes are not only freed from economic deprivation, but also enjoy the fruits of social justice. The path that will take us to this ideal is the path of *samata*, *mamata*, and *samajik samarasata*.
- Come, let us build an India in which our *nari shakti* — our women — are able to realize its full potential — from shaping the future of their families to shaping the future of the nation. It is our collective responsibility to empower them economically, socially, educationally and also politically. In this regard, I would like to see early passage of the legislation to reserve seats for women in Parliament and State Assemblies. We have already seen how women have given an excellent account of themselves wherever they have got an opportunity to serve in panchayats and other local bodies.
- Come, let us build an India in which the minorities fully enjoy the fruits of national development, while having full opportunities to contribute to it. Our country belongs to all. And all are entitled to equal and fair treatment in the eyes of the law and the Government. India, which is home to the great secu-

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lar principle of *Sarva Panth Samabhav*, fully guarantees the religious freedom of all communities. It is a matter of immense pride for India that all the religions of the world have a harmonious co-existence here. Unity in Diversity is our priceless heritage.

It is also a matter of much satisfaction that the past year has seen a record low in communal violence.

- India is the largest democracy in the world. The tradition of democracy in our country is very old. When this Century opened, democracy was the preserve of just a handful of countries, and even in them it was limited to small sections of the people. Today there are just a handful who are still out of the pale of democracy. There is scarcely a country whose people do not aspire to it.

Come, let us strengthen Indian democracy. Let us make it an ideal for other countries of the world. Let us transform our political democracy into economic and social democracy.

- Come, let us make India a nation of high achievers — in every sphere. In business and economy, in education, in science and technology, in arts and culture, and also in sports. Let us make India synonymous with “achievement”, achievement of the kind that can be benchmarked globally. All of us are heartened by what our young men and women have achieved in recent times. The success stories of young Indians working abroad are making headlines almost every day. If young Indians can script such shining successes abroad, why shouldn't we create conditions for them to do so *right here*?

Come let us together build a Parishrami Bharat, a Parakrami Bharat, a Vijayi Bharat.

To realize this vision, let us step out of the swamp of negativity.

Let us not be obsessed with the past. Face the future. March with confidence towards the goal. Turn from problems — to solutions.

Today, when the 20th century is coming to an end, and the 21st century is knocking at our doorsteps, let us draw inspiration from our glorious past and resolve to build an even more glorious future.

We are inheritors of an ageless culture and a proud civilization. Greatness is our past — and also our future.

Come, let us make good use of the natural and human resources of our Motherland, Bharat and make the 21st century, India's century.

Come, let all of us together raise our voice in saying:

Jai Hind,
Jai Hind,
Jai Hind.

Excerpts from

Ambassador Naresh Chandra's Chat

on Rediff on the Net — August 11, 1999

- Q. “Dear Mr. Chandra, congratulations to you and your staff at Washington, DC for doing such a wonderful job in presenting India's case during the Kargil crisis. What do you think the NRI community in the US should do to better represent India?”
- A. “Thank you for your good wishes. People of Indian origin and NRIs are doing a great job and all I can suggest is that all should keep themselves informed and interact meaningfully with our American friends to point out areas of mutual interest and concerns. This way we can utilise Indo-US relationships for the benefit of the South Asia region as a whole.”
- Q. “Hello Mr. Chandra, hearty congratulations to you on a job well done. Sir, what repercussions do you see to India downing a Pakistani surveillance plane? In fact, today they have fired a missile at us. Do you agree that the main battle will be won on the diplomatic front? Are we prepared for it?”
- A. “Thank you. I agree with you that a solution does not lie in military activity. Diplomacy is a better option, but the best option is to improve people-to-people relations. There is a lot of goodwill in India for people in Pakistan and I am sure many sections of Pakistani people reciprocate this feeling. What we have to prepare for, is to do everything possible to counter misinformation and propaganda and promote more understanding between the peoples for their mutual benefit and development.”
- Q. Mr. Chandra, India has been at odds with Pakistan since Independence How do you see us resolving our differences? Is there a middle road? What in your opinion is the best solution? Why can't we demarcate the border properly once and for all?”
- A. It is unfortunate that India and Pakistan have been at odds but believe me, there is a middle road and the people of South Asia are increasingly realising that their future lies in cooperation and economic development. To reach this best solution, we have to counter terrorist and propagandist activity, ie, discourage the wrong set of people and encourage the more responsible sections for our mutual benefit.”
- Q. “Hello Mr. Chandra. It is true that Kargil has indeed changed US perceptions towards India — albeit to a small extent? That is certainly encouraging. But do we — the Government of India, the diplomatic corps and you people on the spot who are the pointsmen — have the big picture in mind? A comprehensive strategy to put India-US relations on a truly collaborative course? If so what are its salient features?”
- A. US perceptions about India and Pakistan have been changing for some time. Kargil only helped to bring it out into the open. The US and other Western countries as well as China are concerned at the growth of fanaticism and fundamentalism in Pakistan and Afghanistan. Kargil was the latest example of a very dangerous nexus between terrorists and a professional army. This has alarmed most countries who in a friendly way are also deeply concerned about its adverse effects on Pakistani society itself. We have the big picture in mind and our attempt is not to show Pakistan down but to normalise the situation and bring about the necessary atmosphere for meaningful dialogue and cooperation with them. That is the big picture we have for India-Pakistan and other people in South Asia”

National Defence Fund

Government of India and Embassy of India continue to receive a number of offers for contributions to the welfare of the armed forces in India. Taking these into account, the Government of India has decided that those who wish to make voluntary contributions may do so by sending check in dollars or rupees to the National Defence Fund.

Checks/Money Orders should be drawn in favor of National Defence Fund can be sent to any one of the following addresses.

National Defence Fund
Embassy of India
Attn: Commodore V.K. Bhansali
Naval Attaché
2107 Massachusetts Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20008

National Defence Fund
Secretary
Prime Minister's Office
South Block, New Delhi 110011
India

Additionally, Checks/Money Orders can also be sent to Army Welfare Fund. The checks/money order should be drawn in favor of Army Central Welfare Fund.

Deputy Director(CW-8)
Army Central Welfare Fund,
Adjutant General's Branch
Army Headquarters,
West Block-III
R.K. Puram, New Delhi 110 066
India

To facilitate payment by NRI's in the US, ICICI Banking Corporation Limited has opened an account in New York. Contributors must instruct their banks with the following instructions:

Pay

First Union Bank International,
180 Maiden Lane, 18th Floor
NY 10038, New York, USA

Swift Code: PNBPUS3NNYC

Routing Number: (FEDWIRE ABA) - 021000021

CHIPS UID No: 340828 for Credit of Account No. 2000191000069

ICICI Banking Corporation Ltd.

Account No. 01/6823 at New Delhi, INDIA

Checks/Money Orders can also be sent to Air Force Welfare Fund. The checks/money order should be drawn in favor of Indian Air Force Central Welfare Fund.

Indian Air Force Central Welfare Fund
AFGIS Building, Subroto Park, New Delhi - 110010 INDIA

For Non-Resident Indians: Contributors may remit their donations in

CITI BANK N.A,
111 Wall Street,
New York-NY-10043, USA

for credit to

CANARA BANK,
Foreign Department,
New Delhi,
A/C No. 36052814

for further credit to Indian Air Force Central Welfare Fund

A/C No. 'KRG-IAF-503'
Subroto Park, New Delhi Branch- 110 010 INDIA

The Election Commission

Role

Under Article 324 of the Indian constitution the Election Commission is vested with the role of supervision, direction and control of preparation of the electoral rolls for, and the conduct of, all elections to Parliament and to the Legislature of every state and of elections to the offices of the President and Vice President.

General Elections 1952 - 1998

There has been a marked increase in the total number of candidates contesting in the elections. While in 1952 there were 1864 candidates for 489 seats, the number steadily increased to 4,620 candidates in 1980. During the 1991 elections the number of candidates contesting had increased almost twice fold to 8,699. In the 11th General elections a record of 13,952 candidates contested for the 543 seats. During the 12th General elections however the number had fallen to 4,750 due to the increase of security deposit amount.

| Year | Elective Seats | Candidates | Electorate | Votes Polled | Polling Stations |
|------|----------------|------------|-------------|--------------|------------------|
| 1952 | 489 | 1,864 | 173,213,635 | 105,944,495 | 196,084 |
| 1957 | 494 | 1,864 | 193,652,069 | 123,461,815 | 220,778 |
| 1962 | 494 | 1,985 | 216,372,215 | 119,904,315 | 238,244 |
| 1967 | 520 | 2,369 | 249,003,334 | 152,724,611 | 267,555 |
| 1971 | 518 | 2,784 | 274,094,493 | 151,536,802 | 342,944 |
| 1977 | 542 | 2,439 | 321,174,327 | 194,263,915 | 358,208 |
| 1980 | 542 | 4,620 | 355,590,700 | 202,405,413 | 434,442 |
| 1984 | 542 | 5,481 | 399,816,294 | 249,585,334 | 505,751 |
| 1989 | 543 | 6,160 | 498,906,429 | 309,050,509 | 579,810 |
| 1991 | 543 | 8,699 | 514,126,380 | 275,205,803 | 594,797* |
| 1996 | 543 | 13,952 | 592,572,288 | 334,873,286 | 767,462 |
| 1998 | 543 | 4,750 | 605,884,103 | 375,454,034 | 773,494 |

*Excluding Jammu & Kashmir

Before each general election to the House of the People, the Legislative Assembly of each State, the first general election and thereafter before each biennial election to the Legislative Council of each State having such Council, the President may also appoint Regional Commissioners as he may consider necessary to assist the Election Commission in the performance of functions listed above. The conditions of service and tenure of office of the Election Commissioners and the Regional Commissioners

shall be determined by the President as per rules, and subject to the provisions of any law made by Parliament:

The President or the Governor of a State, will make available as many staff as is required by the Election Commissioner the discharge of duties conferred on the Election Commission as stated above.

General Electoral Roll and Elections based on adult suffrage

There can be no special category, electoral role based on grounds of religion, sex or race, and elections to the House of the People and to the Legislative assemblies is to be on the basis of adult suffrage, i.e, every Indian citizen who is not less than eighteen years of age on such date as may be fixed under any law, made by the appropriate Legislature and is not otherwise disqualified on grounds of non-residence, unsoundness of mind, crime or corrupt legal practice, shall be entitled to be registered as a voter at any such election.

Representation of Women in the Lok Sabha

| Year | Total number of seats | Number of Women members | % to the total |
|------|-----------------------|-------------------------|----------------|
| 1952 | 499 | 22 | 4.4 |
| 1957 | 500 | 27 | 5.4 |
| 1962 | 503 | 34 | 6.7 |
| 1967 | 523 | 31 | 5.9 |
| 1971 | 521 | 22 | 4.2 |
| 1977 | 544 | 19 | 3.4 |
| 1980 | 544 | 28 | 5.1 |
| 1984 | 544 | 44 | 8.1 |
| 1989 | 517 | 27 | 5.22 |
| 1991 | 544 | 39 | 7.18 |
| 1996 | 544 | 40* | 7.18 |
| 1998 | 543 | 43 | 7.20 |

* One member was nominated by the President

Constitution of the Election Commission

The Election Commission consists of the Chief Election Commissioner and such number of other Election commissioners, if any as the President may from time to time fix, and the appointment of the Chief Election Commissioner and other Election Commissioners shall be made by the President, subject to the provisions of any law made in that behalf by the Parliament. If any other Election Commissioner is appointed, then the Chief Election Commissioner acts as the

Chairman of the Election Commission.

Provided that the Chief Election Commissioner is not removed from his office except in like manner and on like grounds as a Judge of Supreme Court and his conditions of service shall not be varied to his disadvantage after his appointment.

Provided that any other Election Commissioner or a Regional Commissioner shall not be removed from office except on the recommendation of the Chief Election Commissioner.

General Elections - 1999

| Number of Constituencies voting on different poll days in States & Union territories | | | | | | | |
|--|--------------|-----------|---------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|--------------|
| States & Union Territories | Poll Dates → | | Sept. 5, 1999 | Sept. 11, 1999 | Sept. 18, 1999 | Sept. 25, 1999 | Oct. 3, 1999 |
| | Total | | Day 1 | Day 2 | Day 3 | Day 4 | Day 5 |
| | Seats | Poll Days | | | | | |
| Andhra Pradesh | 42 | 3 | 13 | 15 | 14 | | |
| Arunachal Pradesh | 2 | 1 | | | | | 2 |
| Assam | 14 | 1 | | | | | 14 |
| Bihar | 54 | 3 | | | 19 | 19 | 16 |
| Goa | 2 | 1 | 2 | | | | |
| Gujarat | 26 | 1 | 26 | | | | |
| Haryana | 10 | 1 | 10 | | | | |
| Himachal Pradesh | 4 | 1 | | | | 4 | |
| Jammu & Kashmir | 6 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 2 | | |
| Karnataka | 28 | 2 | 15 | 13 | | | |
| Kerala | 20 | 1 | | 20 | | | |
| Madhya Pradesh | 40 | 3 | | 14 | 14 | 12 | |
| Maharashtra | 48 | 2 | 24 | 24 | | | |
| Manipur | 2 | 2 | | | | 1 | 1 |
| Meghalaya | 2 | 1 | | | | | 2 |
| Mizoram | 1 | 1 | | | | 1 | |
| Nagaland | 1 | 1 | | | | 1 | |
| Orissa | 21 | 2 | | | | 10 | 11 |
| Punjab | 13 | 1 | 13 | | | | |
| Rajasthan | 25 | 2 | 10 | 15 | | | |
| Sikkim | 1 | 1 | | | | | 1 |
| Tamil Nadu | 39 | 2 | 19 | 20 | | | |
| Tripura | 2 | 1 | | | | | 2 |
| Uttar Pradesh | 85 | 3 | | | 30 | 24 | 31 |
| West Bengal | 42 | 1 | | | | | 42 |
| Andaman & Nicobar Islands | 1 | 1 | 1 | | | | |
| Chandigarh | 1 | 1 | 1 | | | | |
| Dadar & Nagar Haveli | 1 | 1 | 1 | | | | |
| Daman & Diu | 1 | 1 | 1 | | | | |
| Delhi | 7 | 1 | 7 | | | | |
| Lakshadweep | 1 | 1 | 1 | | | | |
| Pondicherry | 1 | 1 | | 1 | | | |
| Total Constituencies | 543 | | 146 | 124 | 79 | 72 | 122 |
| Total States/UTs polling on this day | | | 16 | 9 | 5 | 8 | 10 |

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