

Our policy-making is based on the pulse of the people: PM Modi

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Today is a day of irreparable loss and unbearable pain for me. Mr. Shinzo Abe, my close friend and former Prime Minister of Japan, is no longer with us. Mr. Abe was not only my friend, but he was an equally reliable friend of India. The India-Japan political relations not only reached a new height during his tenure, we also took

forward the relations of the shared heritage of both the countries. Mr. Shinzo Abe will remain in the hearts of India for years to come because of the pace of India's development today and the development work being carried out here with the help of Japan. I once again pay my deepest condolences to my friend.

Today's event is dedicated to my close friend Arun Jaitley ji. When I recollect the days gone by, I recall many of his conversations and incidents related to him and I can also see many of his old friends here. We were deeply impressed with his oratory and his one-liners would reverberate in the air for a long time. His personality was full of diversity and his nature was very friendly. All the people who are in front of us come from different walks of life but all of them were friends of Arun. This was the characteristic of Arun's friendly nature that everyone remembers this quality of his personality even today and misses him. I pay my humble tributes to Arun Jaitley ji.

The topic of this lecture in the memory of Arun ji is 'Growth through Inclusivity, Inclusivity through Growth', which is the basic mantra of the development policy of the government. I am especially grateful to Tharman (Shanmugaratnam) ji for accepting our invitation. I have listened to him many times and I also keep following his works. Not only in India, but when he goes to other countries of the world, he does a lot of research and there is a local touch in his academic thinking. We have experienced his philosophy today also the way he described the global situation and connected with the children of our country. I am very grateful to him that he took time off from his schedule for this event.

If I have to describe the topic on which we have started the Arun Jaitley lecture today in a simple language, then it is 'Sabka Saath-Sabka Vikas'. But at the same time, the theme of this lecture also captures the challenges and dilemmas faced by today's policy makers.

I want to ask a question to all of you. Is growth really possible without inclusion? You ask this to yourself. Can we even think of inclusion without growth? I have had the opportunity to work for more than 20 years as the head of the government and the gist of my experiences is that - without inclusion, real growth is not possible. And the goal of inclusion cannot be achieved without growth. Therefore, we have adopted the path of growth through inclusivity by trying to include everybody.

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The speed and scale with which India has worked for inclusion in the last eight years, you will never find such an example in the whole world. India has given free gas connections to more than nine crore women in the last eight years. This number is more than the combined population of South Africa, Australia, Singapore and New Zealand. Look at the scale! India has made more than 10 crore toilets for the poor in the last eight years. Tharman ji has described this achievement very passionately. This number is more than twice the total population of South Korea. India has opened more than 45 crore Jan Dhan bank accounts in the last eight years. This number is also almost equal to the combined population of Japan, Germany, Britain, Italy and Mexico. India has given 3 crore pucca houses to the poor in the last eight years. I remember once I mentioned these figures to Singapore's minister S. Iswaran and he told me that it is akin to building a new Singapore every month.

I would like to give you another example of 'Growth through Inclusivity, Inclusivity through Growth'. We started the Ayushman Bharat scheme in India a few years back, which was mentioned by Tharman ji. He also cited the health sector as one of the major sectors in the near future. Under this scheme, more than 50 crore poor have been ensured of free treatment up to Rs. 5 lakh in the best hospitals anywhere in India. Free treatment up to Rs. 5 lakh to 50 crore people! More than 3.5 crore people of the country have got their free treatment under Ayushman Bharat in the last four years. We focused on inclusion in this scheme. The poorest of the poor in the last row of society should also get the best health facilities. With the passage of time, we have seen that the aspect of inclusion also led to growth. Those who were previously excluded joined the mainstream of development. As a result, the demand increased and opportunities for growth also expanded simultaneously. When one third of India's population, which was excluded from better healthcare facilities, got access to treatment, its direct effect was that the healthcare capacity had to be strengthened accordingly. Let me tell you how the Ayushman Bharat Yojana has transformed the entire healthcare sector.

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years of its independence, today we are moving ahead by preparing a roadmap.

On an average, about 50 medical colleges used to be built in 10 years in the country before 2014. In the last seven- eight years, about 209 new medical colleges have been built in India, which is more than four times. Now you can imagine the difference between 50 and 209! And if I account for the next 10 years, this figure is going to touch 400. There has been an increase of 75 percent in undergraduate medical seats in India in the last seven- eight years. Now the number of annual total medical seats has almost doubled in India. In other words, the country is now getting more doctors and modern medical infrastructure is being built rapidly. We can absolutely see the impact of a scheme brought in for inclusiveness in terms of growth. We can certify this figure. And I can count dozens of such schemes.

India's Digital India campaign, as mentioned by Tharman ji, has brought the Internet within the reach of the poorest of the poor in the villages with the setting up of about five lakh Common Service Centers. India's BHIM-UPI has connected crores of poor with the facility of digital payment. India's SVANidhi scheme has given an opportunity to the street vendors in our metropolitan municipalities with whom we have a daily relationship to join the banking system. Earlier, a street vendor who would be selling his goods to a bank manager had no access to the banking system, but we have made it possible. Similarly, India has done a great job in another field. The economists of the world are writing a lot on it these days and major agencies are also rating it.

The Aspirational District Program is another initiative of India, which is uplifting crores of people living in more than 100 districts of the country. The vision of this aspirational district is to address the aspirations of those who have been left behind in comparison to other districts of India. The endeavor is to bring them to the top position of that state and then gradually bring them to the top at the national level.

It has had such a huge positive impact, and these 100 districts are being included in the world of development. India's National Education Policy is a huge paradigm shift and Tharman ji also emphasized a lot on it. The one who does not know English and is excluded will now also get a chance to progress further by studying in his mother tongue.

Our digital economy is also growing rapidly. Record investments are being made in physical and digital infrastructure.

India's UDAN scheme has revived many airstrips in the country and built new airports even in distant Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities. The UDAN scheme has conceived air travel in a fixed amount. India's UDAN scheme has connected different corners of the country by air and has also given the poor the courage to fly in airplanes. I used to say that even the one who wears Hawai chappals will be able to fly in an airplane. In a way, both inclusion and growth are happening simultaneously. Today the aviation sector is growing so much in India that more than 1,000 new aircraft have been ordered. The purchase of more than 1,000 new aircraft in this country is the result of our approach towards passenger inclusion.

Jal Jeevan Mission is connecting every house in the country with piped water supply, which Tharman ji talked about, and I worked very prominently regarding this in Gujarat. Water is not only available from taps, but it also saves time and resolves people's problems. Water plays an important role in the health of people. Keeping these things in mind, this mission is playing an important role in social life. Pure drinking water is also an important issue of nutrition for children and our 'Nal Se Jal' (water from tap) Abhiyan is a part of a bigger campaign to address that issue as well. In just three years, this mission has connected more than six crore households with water connections.

Roughly, there are 25 to 27 crore households in India, out of which water has been supplied to six crore households. This inclusiveness today is making the life of the common man of the country easier and encouraging him to move forward. And how important it is in the development of any country, the people of the world of economics who are sitting here know very well.

I will give you another example. You also know and I have seen that it is discussed frequently in the UN also. Right to property is an important SDG issue as part of its development goals. Property rights in many countries have remained a major issue in the world for decades. And when it comes to property rights, the ignorant are the most vulnerable. They do not have any documents. They have to face many problems. But you will be happy to know that the speed with which India has worked in this direction is unprecedented. And I believe that the academicians and economists of the world would study the Svamitva Yojana and share with the world how the mapping of houses and buildings in rural areas of the country is going on a

large scale under this scheme. Until now, we have completed this work with the help of drones in 1.5 lakh villages of India. Survey is done by drones and the entire village is present during the entire process. And this survey has been completed with drones in more than 1.5 lakh villages. The mapping of 37,000 square kilometer land has been done and property cards have been made for more than 80 lakh people with the consent of the owners. It is a long process involving discussions with the property owner and the people of his neighborhood. It means that it has become easier for the people of the villages to get bank loans and their land is now free from legal disputes.

Today's India is preparing a roadmap for the next 25 years through reforms by conviction instead of reforms by compulsion. With the goal of where the country will be when it celebrates 100 years of its independence, today we are moving ahead by preparing a roadmap. Decades ago, the country saw that when a reform is carried out under compulsion, there is little hope of it being institutionalized.

As soon as the compulsion ends, the reform is also forgotten. The more important the reforms are, equally important is the environment and the motivation. Earlier, major reforms took place in India only when the earlier governments were left with no other option. We do not consider reforms as a necessary evil but as a win-win choice, in which there is national as well as public interest. Therefore, whatever reforms we have carried out in the last eight years has paved the way for new reforms.

Wherever Arun ji is today, he will be satisfied that the country is getting the benefits of the mission in which he was a participant. Discussions on GST or IBC continued for years and today their success is in front of us. Reforms such as decriminalizing the Companies Act, making corporate taxes competitive, opening up space, coal mining and atomic sectors are the reality of 21st century India today.

Our policies are based on the pulse of the people. We listen to more and more people and understand their needs and aspirations. That's why we did not let our policies come under the pressure of populist impulses. India has witnessed during the Covid period and has also demonstrated to the world the difference between taking decisions according to the people's pulses and succumbing to populism. What the important economists of the world were saying during the pandemic? During the pandemic, there was populist compulsion on the world for bail-out packages for demand-driven economy. We were also under pressure and were criticized for not doing anything. What all was not said about us? It was also said

that people want this, experts want this and great scholars want this. But India did not succumb to the pressure and took a different approach calmly with prudence. We provided security to the poor with a people-first approach, focused on women, farmers and MSMEs. We were able to do something different from the world because we were aware of the people's pulse i.e. what the people want and what is their concern? Therefore, we can clearly see the difference between the recovery of India and the rest of the world.

I often talk about Minimum Government and Maximum Governance. Our government has abolished 1,500 such laws, which were unnecessarily interfering in the lives of the people. I remember when the Bharatiya Janata Party made me the Prime Ministerial candidate in 2013 and elections were to be held in 2014 that people from a business association called me for a program in Delhi. The mood was very hostile and they were asking me many questions, whether I will make particular laws or not. I was also under pressure as I was the (Prime Ministerial) candidate in the run up to the polls. I told them that you want laws, I can't guarantee new laws, but I promise you that I will abolish one law every day. Friends, I abolished 1,500 laws in the first five years which had become a burden on the general public.

You will be happy to know that our government has abolished more than 30,000 compliances, which were hindering the ease of doing business and ease of living. Eliminating 30,000 compliances means emergence of an era of unprecedented trust among the people. I also said during my address from the Red Fort that I want the government to go out of people's lives as much as possible. The influence of the government in the lives of the people should be minimal, but those who need government should not feel its absence. We have tried to follow these two principles.

Today it gives me satisfaction to inform you that the approach of Minimum Government is also leading to maximum outputs and outcomes. We are expanding our capacity very fast and the results are in front of you. Take the example of Covid vaccines. Private players of our country have done a very remarkable job, but the government was behind them in full force as a partner in progress. From virus isolation to speedy trial, from funding to rapid roll out of vaccines, the companies that were manufacturing vaccines got full support from the government.

Our space ecosystem is another example. Today India is one of the most reliable and state-of-the-art space service providers in the whole world. Our private sector

ecosystem is doing a great job in this area too. But behind them also is the full strength of the government in the form of a partner in progress, which is helping them by providing every facility and information.

When we cite the example of the digital payments ecosystem of India, we have FinTech as well as many big players associated with digital payments. Here too, the JAM Trinity, RuPay, UPI and supportive policies of the government have a strong base behind them. I have only shared a few examples with you. But I consider these subjects of research for the world and emphasize the academic world to go deeper into it. I invite economists from all over the world to look at its nuances. How are we progressing in spite of being a huge country with many diverse needs? In a way, now the issue of extreme models dominated only by the private sector or government is out of date. Now is the time that the government should encourage the private sector as a partner in progress and we are moving forward in this direction.

It is this spirit of taking everyone along, trusting both the public and private sectors of the country, due to which India is showing amazing enthusiasm for growth today. Today our exports are making new records. The service sector is also moving towards rapid growth. The impact of PLI schemes is beginning to be visible on the manufacturing sector. The entire electronic manufacturing sector, including mobile phones, has grown manifold. You will be surprised to know that when I held a summit on toys during the Corona period, many people were wondering that the PM sometimes talks about brooms, cleanliness and toilets and now he is talking about toys. My words did not go down well with many as they were confined to the grandiose issues. I concentrated on toys and toy manufacturers, technology, innovation and the financial sector. Two years have not been completed since then and my countrymen will be proud that the import of toys has decreased very much. Otherwise, we used to have foreign-make toys at our homes. Indian toys are being exported more than what they used to be imported earlier. That is, there is a huge untapped potential. You talked of tourism. I completely agree with you. The potential of India's tourism is so immense but we were stuck somewhere. We lost the mentality to present India in its complete form before the world. I always urge my foreign guests to visit some places in India. This year we held programs on Yoga at 75 iconic places so that people get to know about our tourist destinations. You rightly said that the potential of tourism is so much in India that it can become a major attraction for the world.

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physical and digital infrastructure. That is, every sector related to our growth engine is running at full capacity today.

The 'Amrit Kaal' of independence is bringing countless new opportunities for India. Our determination is firm and our intention is unwavering. I am sure we will fulfill our resolutions and we will achieve the height that India deserves in the 21st century. And as Tharman ji was referring to some challenges, I agree that there are challenges but if there are challenges then there are 130 crore solutions too. This is my belief and with it we have taken the resolve to move forward by challenging the challenges. Therefore, we have chosen the path of inclusion and we intend to drive growth through the same path. Remembering Arun ji once again, I end my speech. Special thanks to Tharman ji! I express my heartfelt thanks to all of you too.

Thanks!

