Opening Remarks by Shri A. B. Vajpayee

RESOLUTIONS ON

* Shah Bano Case
* Follow-up of Punjab Accord
* Economic Situation
* Bhopal Gas Tragedy
* Sri Lanka Issue
Election of the President

National Executive Meeting
3-4 & 5 January, 1986

CHANDIGARH.
Bharatiya Janata Party
OPENING REMARKS BY BJP PRESIDENT,
SHRI ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE AT THE
MEETING OF THE NATIONAL EXECU-
TIVE HELD AT CHANDIGARH ON 3rd,
4th & 5th JANUARY, 1986

The resounding defeat of the Congress (I), first in Punjab and now in Assam, is proof of the fact that even while Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi may be receiving compliments for the Punjab and Assam Accords from the rest of the country, the people of these two states hold the Congress Party squarely responsible for the tragic developments in these States during the past few years, and so deemed it their duty to penalise the party for its doings.

Not only in the Punjab and Assam elections, but in most of the Lok Sabha and Assembly bye-elections also, the Congress (I) has been badly mauled. These results only confirm that the extraordinary success scored by the Congress (I) in the 1984 Lok Sabha elections was the outcome of the extraordinary situation which was precipitated by Mrs Gandhi's assassination, and which was very cleverly exploited by the ruling party. Two months later when the Assembly elections were held, the sympathy wave had considerably subsided. By now, deep disillusionment has set in in regard to the Congress (I) government. Indeed, even the much-maligned Janata Government had not lost public confidence as rapidly as this.
The victory of the Bharatiya Janata Party in both the bye-elections in Punjab has once again demonstrated that the principled approach of the party towards the Punjab problem has wide popular endorsement. The two main ingredients of Bharatiya Janata Party's Punjab policy have been: firstly, no quarter to terrorism and secessionism, and secondly, uncompromising insistence on Hindu-Sikh amity. The party will continue to pursue this path steadfastly in the future. We are proud that all through these last few years we have not allowed considerations of electoral advantage to dilute our commitment to national unity and integrity.

It is noteworthy that out of 22 states in the country, the Congress (I) is in power only in 13. Poll results during 1985 indicate that in these 13 states also, the Congress (I) is fast losing ground. Governmental media are being grossly abused to project the Prime Minister's image. But this image cannot deceive the people with regard to the reality that the Congress organisation is today an empty shell. The multi-crore Party extravaganza held in Bombay last week at governmental expenditure served only to highlight the hollowness of the party. Loud-mouthed declarations about moving into the 21st century cannot conceal the fact that regionalism is on the rise, disparities are growing, and communal intolerance is ruling the roost.

At its Gandhinagar conclave three months back, the Bharatiya Janata Party accepted Integral Humanism as its basic philosophy, and reiterated its commitment to five principles including Gandhian Socialism. The decisions taken then satisfactorily answered all the questions raised about the Party's ideology, and the Bharatiya Janata Party is today all set to face the challenges of the future.
RESOLUTIONS ADOPTED BY THE
NATIONAL EXECUTIVE

SHAH BANO CASE

The Bharatiya Janata Party National Executive strongly condemns the virulent campaign launched against the Supreme Court by the Muslim League and the Jamaat-e-Islami following the Court’s judgement in the Shah Bano Case.

The verdict of the Court is pre-eminently just and sensible. It ordered a husband to pay to his erstwhile wife a pittance of a financial allowance. The husband was rolling in wealth and the wife in abject poverty. She had faithfully served the husband for decadese and bore him many children. She was callously cast away for no reason whatsoever. No relative, near or distant, or any charitable organisation had noticed her existence or rendered her any help or solace. The order of the Court came to her as a great relief. The judges who delivered this judgement deserve encomiums and the acclaim of all right thinking people whatever the religion they profess.

The National Executive feels shocked that a Minister of the Central Government, Mr. Z.R. Ansari, should have, on
the floor of Parliament, denounced not only this judgement but even the judges who delivered it. The tone and tenor of his speech was highly objectionable. The fact that notwithstanding his intemperate tirade against the judiciary he continues to be the ruling party's principal spokesman on the issue only confirms the suspicion that Mr. Ansari's was only a command performance.

The National Executive deplores the conduct of those who organised a procession in Bombay in which slogans of 'Supreme Court Murdabad' were shouted, and the effigy of Ex-Chief Justice Chandrachud was publicly burnt. The crowd included a Congress(I) Minister of the State and an ex-Union Minister. If the rule of law is to be maintained the offenders must be prosecuted and punished.

In his address to the Momin Conference organised by the Congress(I), Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi has indicated that the Government is considering amendment of the law in order to meet objections raised against the Supreme Court judgement.

Shah Bano secured relief from the Supreme Court by virtue of Section 125 of the Criminal Procedure Code which entitles a wife neglected by her husband to secure a proper maintenance allowance from her husband. In this provision, wife includes a divorced woman, following any religion.

The amendment now contemplated by Government would aim at precluding Muslim women from invoking this provision.

The Bharatiya Janata Party fully stands by Article 25 of the Constitution which guarantees freedom of conscience and religion to all citizens. But it rejects the Muslim League view that this judgement is an interference in the religious
affairs of the Muslims. In fact, the National Executive regards this move to amend Section 125 Cr. P. C. as retrograde, anti-woman and a surrender to obscurantism and bigotry. It also goes counter to the spirit of the Indian Constitution one of whose Directive Principles requires the State to move towards a Uniform Civil Code. Indeed, from a party contemplating such surrender, all claims to modernity and perpetual references to the country's advent into the twenty-first century sound absolutely hollow, and fraudulent. The Bharatiya Janata Party demands that the amendment proposal be abandoned forthwith.
FOLLOW-UP OF PUNJAB' ACCORD

The settlement of the Punjab problem between the Late Sant Harchand Singh Longowal and the Government of India is now getting to be six months old. The Bharatiya Janata Party is happy that following the accord, the democratic process has been restored in the state, and communal tension has abated. It must, however, be acknowledged that incidents of terrorism and violence continue to occur. The authorities must take adequate steps to put an end to these.

The core purpose of the Accord was, and remains, complete national integration and perfect social harmony. These cannot be achieved without perfect justice to all communities. The Bharatiya Janata Party urges the Akali Dal Government to so conduct itself that no citizen gets any feeling that he is discriminated against, or unfairly treated. It is imperative that the rich Punjabi identity is preserved and all disputes that threaten it are amicably resolved.

A major objection of the Bharatiya Janata Party to the Accord has been with regard to the provision relating to sharing of river waters. In the tripartite talks of 1983 the Akali Dal itself had agreed that the 1955 agreement under which Rajasthan receives its share of Ravi-
Beas waters, would not be reopened. There was no justification, therefore, for any reference being made in the Accord, to Rajasthan. Also, as drawn up, the Accord had created serious misgivings in the minds of the Haryana farmer about his future.

According to the Agreement, the Satluj-Yamuna-Link Canal is to be completed by August 15, 1986. But statements made by ruling party leaders in Punjab about the alignment of this Canal have created apprehensions in the minds of the people of Haryana.

The war of words over the river-waters and territorial disputes, now being waged between the Chief Ministers of Punjab and Haryana, has led to mounting tension. It is amazing that even while a climate of confrontation is rapidly building up between Haryana and Punjab, New Delhi is maintaining a mysterious silence.

Under the Accord, Chandigarh was to be transferred to Punjab on 26th January, 1986, and in lieu thereof, certain Hindi-speaking areas of Punjab were to be transferred to Haryana simultaneously.

These areas were to be identified by a Commission before 31st December, 1985. But even after the last date has elapsed, there is no word on the subject from the Mathew Commission.

Other territorial claims and counter-claims were supposed to be settled by another Commission. But almost six months later, this second Commission has not even been appointed.
The Bharatiya Janata Party urges the Central Government to take all necessary steps required of it in furtherance of the Accord, and also to intervene to have issues clarified and doubts dispelled without delay. The present drift is dangerous. In particular, the Bharatiya Janata Party demands:

1. The report of the Mathew Commission should be expedited and the transfer of Chandigarh to Punjab, and of areas in lieu thereof to Haryana, should take place simultaneously, as provided in the Accord.

2. In order to dispel suspicions that have arisen in the minds of the people of Haryana with regard to the Satluj-Yamuna Link Canal, Central Government officials and officials of the Haryana as well as Punjab Governments should visit the Canal site and make an on-the-spot survey. All necessary steps must be taken to ensure that construction of the Canal is completed by 15th August, 1986 as scheduled, and that the people of Haryana feel reassured in this regard.

3. Under the Accord, the claims of Punjab and Haryana with regard to river waters were to be referred for adjudication to a Tribunal presided over by a Supreme Court judge, and this Tribunal was to give its decision within six months. Even though five months have elapsed since the signing of the Accord, the Tribunal has not even been appointed. The Bharatiya Janata Party demands that this
4. The Bharatiya Janata Party holds that natural resources like river waters are national resources, which must be shared by the States for optimal use in the national interest. This, we feel, must be the guiding principle before the Tribunal entrusted with the task of determining the respective shares of Punjab and Haryana.
ECONOMIC SITUATION

Despite the fanfare and razzle-dazzle of publicity, the government’s so-called New Economic Policy has brought no benefit to the country’s common man and in fact it has created more uncertainty, contradictions and disillusions in the public mind. Rajiv Gandhi’s first year in office has been a year of stagnation, marked by a fall in foodgrain production, and no marked increase in the rate of industrial output. The first year of the Seventh Plan has thus been as disastrous as the last year of the Sixth Plan—which was Mrs. Gandhi’s final year—and there are no indications that any improvement is in sight.

In his address to his party at Bombay, the Prime Minister scoffed at the performance of the Janata Government on the economic front. But the fact is that Rajiv Gandhi’s first year compares poorly in nearly every respect with the first year of the Janata Government. There was an increase of 9 per cent in the national income in 1977-78, as against only 3 per cent this year. There was a 14 per cent increase in foodgrains production as against 2 per cent fall this year. Wholesale price went up by a fraction of one per cent in 1977-78 as against 5 per cent this year. And the foreign exchange reserves rose by Rs. 1600 crores, or more than 50
per cent over the previous year, as against a fall of Rs. 100 crores so far this year. In addition, the nation's foreign as well as the internal debt has gone up by leaps and bounds since 1980 and will probably double by the end of Seventh Plan, as the government goes on a vast borrowing spree both externally and internally in the name of liberalisation. In fact the national debt which was of about 50-52 per cent of our net national product, has come to be of about 68-70 per cent of net national product resulting into payment of 18 per cent to 28 per cent of our tax revenue as debt-charges.

This year, the trade gap is expected to cross Rs. 6000 crores, or nearly 60 per cent of exports which have stagnated for the last two years.

There is a consistently anti-poor and pro-rich bias in Government's policy. In this year's budget, direct taxes were reduced, on both personal and corporate incomes, thus triggering off the biggest boom on the stock market. However, indirect taxes were raised substantially as a result of which prices of most commodities have been rising. The same policy has been continued in the Long Term Fiscal Policy under which direct taxes have been frozen for the next five years—though the present Government's life does not extend beyond the next four years—but no action has been taken on indirect taxes, apart from an indication—they will be rationalised. The Government should have begun with indirect taxes—which impinge directly on the expenditure levels of the common man—and then tackled direct taxes which in any case account for a fraction of revenue but it has done exactly the opposite, thus betraying the built in bias against the poor. It is not enough that the financial policy should bring in more revenues to the government. It should not collect more revenue from the poor and let the rich go off the hook.
The same bias is evident in the Congress Party's love affair with multinationals, as is clear from the recent changes in industrial policy under which the distinction between Indian companies and FERA companies has been virtually abolished: It is now possible for foreign companies to set up almost any industry anywhere in India, in competition with our own companies, and make anything from beer to hamburgers, although these have no connection whatsoever with the basic requirements of a vast mass of our people. Such a policy not only runs counter to the principle of self-reliance but will also ultimately result in a big drain on our resources. The excuse of modernisation and technical upgradation that is cited by the Prime Minister and others is not only misleading but mischievous. At this crucial stage in its development, India does not need technology to make better hamburgers or frothier beer, but to build cheaper houses for millions, and cheap but durable textiles for them.

The elitist anti-poor bias is also evident in the New Textile Policy which was announced during the year. The policy places on par large and powerful companies with sales of crores of rupees with tiny handlooms and powerlooms which operate on hand to mouth basis. It places on par a poor cotton-grower with the powerful multinationals whose synthetic fibres supplant cotton.

The textile industry is still the largest industry in the country and employs nearly a fifth of the total labour force. The industry should certainly be modernised and placed on a more viable footing but not at the cost of lakhs of textile workers who labour at the bottom of the rung in handloom and powerloom sector.

It has handed over the more profitable sectors of the ailing industry on a platter to millowners, thrown out over
a million workers in powerlooms and handlooms sectors out of jobs thereby transferred the sickness of organised sector to unorganised sectors, promoted imports of synthetics at the cost of cotton growers who were desired remunerative prices at home, and all this without the slightest benefit to the harried consumer who is now totally at the mercy of the monopoly mill owners.

The policy makes neither economic nor social sense and can have been introduced only by a party with a perverse social sense. It seems to be a deliberate attempt to undermine the country's self-reliance and self-confidence at the behest of foreign agencies who have never concealed their hostility to this country on this issue.

The stagnation in the economy which is a direct result of the policies being followed under the tutelage of foreign agencies like the World Bank is, however, nothing in comparison to what is in store for us if the Government presses on with them even during the Seventh Plan. The Plan was rushed through the National Development Council and the Parliament as if the government was either ashamed of it or was not too keen to throw it open to close public scrutiny before it was officially approved. The plan is big in size and bigger still in verbiage but seems lacking in credibility. It makes tall promises on the basis of unsubstantiated figures that bear little resemblance to reality. The experts in the Planning Commission have apparently yielded to the image-makers in the Prime Minister's office and have come forth with a document of dubious value that would apparently put even a Goebbels to shame.

The plan makes tall claims about poverty or rather its removal, and employment. Two items that impinge directly on what is said to be the central aim of the plan, namely,
social justice. The document claims that the percentage of people below the poverty line has been brought down from 48 per cent in 1977-78 to 37 per cent in 1984-85 and this will be further reduced to 26 per cent at the end of the plan period, viz, 1989-90 and to below 5 per cent when we enter the 21st century. Even USA or Europe cannot claim such great reduction in their poverty. This means that the proportion of the poor will have been dramatically halved in 12 years, lifting no less than 360 million people above the poverty line during that period. 'No explanation has, however, been given as to how such a near-revolution has been or will be brought about during a period that has been totally bereft of any dramatic developments on the economic front. On the other hand, it is well known that the economy has been decelerating since 1970, and the rate of growth of national income in overall, as well as per capita terms has been steadily going down whatever the Congress politicians may claim. Between 1970 and 1977, the per capita income grew at the rate of 1.4 per cent a year; during the next seven-year period 1978 to 1985, the rate of growth dropped to one per cent. Under these circumstances, one would expect the number of poor to go up, not down, unless the planners have indulged in some fancy jugglery of figures.

If so, the government is playing with the lives of millions of countrymen who continue to wallow in poverty at a time when the government and its experts claim that their number is going down. A question also remains: If the number of poor goes down when economic growth is also on decline, why is the government so keen on growth.

The claims about employment are equally tall and therefore equally suspect. The plan says that it will increase employment by 21 per cent, that is, by 4.2 per cent a year, which is 1.6 times the rate of growth achieved over the past decade. In manufacturing, an important sector, the growth
rate so far, has been around 2 per cent; it is now going to be, if the planners are to be believed, 5 per cent. In construction it has been no more than 0.7 per cent a year; this will suddenly jump six-fold to 4.2 per cent. In railways and other modes of transportation, the rate during the past decade has been no more than 2.2 per cent; it will now be 4.5 per cent. The planners have given no reason why all these sectors will suddenly begin employing twice or thrice or six times the number of people they have been doing in the past, and that too at a time when the government is actually discouraging employment and is going in for computers and high technology which, by definition, are designed to save labour. The unrestricted use of computers in banking and railways will slow down employment all round, rather than improve it, unless one goes by the spurious calculations of the planners.

The Bharatiya Janata Party calls upon the government to appoint a committee of non-official experts to scrutinise the estimates of employment and poverty, as the entire exercise seems to be based on assumptions that bear no relations to the stark reality outside government offices.

We are convinced that the Seventh Plan will do precisely what other similar plans have done, if not worse, for it is no different from other Congress-inspired plans. It will increase unemployment and push more people below the poverty line than ever before. It will in fact do what the textile policy, introduced with much fanfare as the harbinger of a new industrial revolution, has done. The plight of the agricultural sector is identical. Enlarge this picture a thousand-fold and we get an idea of the shape of things to come under the new dispensation of the Seventh Plan, which whatever else it might do, offers no succour to the poor and the jobless, and will almost certainly worsen their fate in the name of modernisation and progress.
BHOPAL GAS TRAGEDY

The National Executive of the Bharatiya Janata Party strongly condemns Government's decision summarily to wind up the Commission of Enquiry appointed to probe the Bhopal Gas Tragedy of December, 1984 which staggered the whole world and brought to mind the blood curdling memories of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Even according to official statistics, more than 2500 citizens lost their lives in this tragedy. Tens of thousands suffered irreparable damage to their health. The baneful effect this dark, unforgettable night would have on unborn children whose mothers had to pass through this trauma is still to be assessed.

Immediately after the occurrence, a Commission of Enquiry headed by Justice Shri Nipun Kumar Singh was set up to enquire into the incident, and to submit its report by December 15, 1985. For over three months, that is, till March, 1985, Government failed to provide it with the wherewithal even to start its work. The Commission publicly voiced its unhappiness on this score. Then, the State Government, whose testimony in the matter was crucial, kept delaying presentation of its case to the Commission. Revision of the Commission's terms of reference was yet another reason why the Commission could not complete its task before the scheduled deadline. It was generally expected, therefore, that the Commission's tenure
would be extended. It came as a shock to many when on December 15, 1985 the N. K. Singh Commission was abruptly allowed to fold up.

In the State Assembly, the State Government tried to defend its decision by arguing that as the Central Government has appointed the Varadarajan Committee, the N.K. Singh Commission had become unnecessary. This argument does not hold. The Varadarajan Committee's function is to investigate the gas leakage from the technical angle. It cannot be a substitute for the Commission one of whose principal tasks was to pinpoint the responsibility for the tragedy.

The winding up of the Commission, the Bharatiya Janata Party is convinced, is essentially in the nature of an Operation Cover-up, intended to conceal, on the one hand, the sins of omission and commission of the multi-national which owns this plant, and also on the other hand, the unholy nexus which has subsisted between the ruling party and this multi-national.

Between 1981 and 1983 there had been a series of accidents in the plant involving several fatalities. Every time protests were made in the state legislature and the press, and the demand was made that the plant be shifted away from the city, Government spokesmen would rush to the rescue of the plant management, and affirm that hereafter adequate precautions would be taken.

The Bharatiya Janata Party National Executive strongly feels that the country owes it to itself, and to future generations, to have this gory episode thoroughly examined, the responsibility pinpointed, the guilty punished, and proper steps taken so that a tragedy of this kind never happens again.
The Bharatiya Janata Party demands that the Central Government set up a new Commission of Enquiry headed by a Supreme Court judge principally to pinpoint responsibility for the happening.

Incidentally, the Bharatiya Janata Party regards it preposterous for the Union Carbide to plead before an American Court that the gas leakage occurred because of terrorist mischief. It is gratifying that the U.S. judge has dismissed this mischievous contention. Viewing the developments in their totality, the Bharatiya Janata Party Executive feels that Government would be well-advised to consider the takeover of all plants owned by Union Carbide in this country.

The National Executive feels anguished that even in the matter of providing relief and rehabilitation to the victims of the gas tragedy, Government has been callous and negligent. The foodgrain ration being supplied to them has been discontinued. The Bharatiya Janata Party demands immediate restoration of ration supply, and also creation of a special monitoring cell to ensure that this task of their relief, rehabilitation and medical care is accorded highest priority.
The National Executive of the Bharatiya Janata Party expresses its deep concern over the deteriorating situation in Sri Lanka with regard to Sri Lanka Tamil citizens. The Sri Lanka Government seems to have closed its mind to the Sri Lanka Issue and news emanating from that country shows that in the name of suppressing terrorism state violence on poor and innocent is increasing. The continuation of this state violence and retaliatory terrorism is bound to build up tensions further to a point of no return.

We had at the very beginning cautioned the Government of India to approach its role of mediator in the issue with due seriousness. We are on record as having clearly stated that should this not be done the cause of Sri Lankan Tamils would suffer.

It is a matter of deep concern to Bharatiya Janata Party that this is precisely what has happened. The talks held in Thimpu and subsequent ceasefire in Sri Lanka should have had the commitment of Government of India to its preservation. It is a measure of the Government’s failure that innocent Tamils continue to get killed daily and talks have reached an impasse which we are unable to influence.

Any prolongation of such a situation would cause incalculable harm to Sri Lankan Tamils. Of greater concern
to the Bharatiya Janata Party are the harmful consequences of such a development to our internal polity and to our external security interests. Bharatiya Janata Party has already made known that it stands for a negotiated settlement for Sri Lankan Tamils. The Bharatiya Janata Party is of the view that both Sri Lanka Government and Tamil representatives should strive to arrive at an amicable solution on the basis of federalism. Towards these aims the Government of India must bring greater international pressure on the Government of Sri Lanka.

The Bharatiya Janata Party, as an expression of its concern, has decided to send a delegation led by its President to Sri Lanka and hold discussions with all representative elements.
ELECTION OF THE PRESIDENT

In accordance with Article XVII of the Party Constitution and the Rules framed thereunder the following programme has been announced by Shri Jagannath Rao Joshi. All India Returning officer for the election to the post of the Bharatiya Janata Party President, for the next two years:

Completion of elections to the State units and Members of the National Council ... Upto 23.2.1986

Nominations ... From March 1 to 7, 1986
11.00 A.M. to 5.00 P.M.

Scrutiny ... On March 8, 1986
At 11.00 A.M.

Last date for Withdrawals ... March 12, 1986
Till 3.00 P.M.

Polling, if necessary ... On March 23, 1986
From 11.00 A.M. to 5.00 P.M.

Announcement of Result ... Before March 30, 1986.
RELEVANT INFORMATION

1. All elected members of the National Conucil and all elected members of all the State Councils shall constitute the electoral college to elect the Party President.

2. Any 10 members from the electoral college shall jointly propose the name of a person for the post of the Party President.

3. The nomination papers will be received by the Returning officer at the Bharatiya Janata Party Central office, 11-Ashok Road, New Delhi.

4. The place for scrutiny of the nomination papers, withdrawals, counting of votes and all other formalities shall also be at the Central office of the Party at 11, Ashok Road, New Delhi.

5. In case there are more than one names left in the field after withdrawals the election shall be held through secret ballot. Each State shall have one polling station at its state capital and the Presiding Officers shall be appointed for every polling station to supervise the polling.