PRIME MINISTER'S
15 IMPORTANT INITIATIVES
ON INDEPENDENCE DAY 2002
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In addition to the announcements made in the Prime Minister’s Address to the Nation on the occasion of Independence Day on 15 August 2002, the following 15 important initiatives have been approved—

1. Indian Railways, which has contributed immensely to India’s economic progress and national integration, is celebrating its 150th anniversary this year. A befitting way to pay tribute to this great institution is to put it on a path of fast-track growth.

The Government is drawing up an important non-budgetary investment initiative for the development of Indian Railways, to be called the National Rail Vikas Yojana. Under this, all the capacity bottlenecks in the critical sections of the railway network will be removed at an investment of Rs. 15,000 crore over the next five years.

These projects would include—

- Strengthening of the Golden Quadrilateral to enable Railways to run more long-distance mail/express trains and freight trains at a higher speed of 100 kmph, at a cost of Rs. 8,000 crore;

- Strengthening of rail connectivity to ports and development of multimodal corridors to hinterland, at a cost of Rs. 3,000 crore;

- Construction of four mega bridges — two over the Ganga, one over the Brahmaputra and one over the Kosi — at a cost of Rs. 3,500 crore;
• Accelerated completion of last mile and other important projects, at a cost of Rs. 763 crore.

Today, there are sanctioned projects worth Rs. 40,000 crore, which have been languishing for a long time. At the present rate of allocation, it will take more than 25 years to complete them. The Government has decided to draw up a plan to complete all the viable Sanctioned Railway Projects within the next 10 years. Indian Railways will launch "Operation Cleanliness" to significantly improve the standards of sanitation at railway stations, on platforms and inside railway compartments.

2. Work on the Rs. 3,564-crore project for constructing the Udhampur—Baramulla railway line in Jammu & Kashmir will be given on a single-tender basis to IRCON and Konkan Railway Corporation Limited, which have an excellent track record of undertaking construction of railway projects in difficult terrain. The first train would roll into Kashmir Valley before August 15, 2007.

3. In pursuance of the Prime Minister’s announcement on Kargil Vijay Diwas last year, the Ministry of Defence has finalized a scheme for medical care for ex-servicemen and their dependants. It will be launched within three months.

The Ministry will take several new initiatives to strengthen national security, of which the important ones are—

• Production and induction of AGNI class of missiles into the Army;
• Production and induction of Brahmos, the supersonic missile capable of launch from multiple platforms, into the Services;
• Supply of two LM-2500 engines for Naval Frigates to the Indian Navy;
• Delivery of 11 Advanced Light Helicopters to the Armed Forces;
• Rolling out of T-90 tanks assembled from kits from Russia.

4. The Ministry of Home Affairs will prepare a plan to issue *Multi-purpose Machine-readable Identity Cards to all Citizens*. For this, a pilot project will be launched in October to cover select districts in eight States. This pilot project will be completed within a year. These identity cards will also facilitate the implementation of *e-Governance* initiatives.

5. Social security is a matter of serious concern for most citizens. The fall in the interest rates on deposits, coupled with the difficulties faced by some of the financial institutions, have caused worry to the saving community.

The Government proposes to introduce soon a comprehensive and participative scheme of social security, which will seek to address the *Life-Time Concerns of the Poor and the Middle-class* such as income-enhancing education; provision for the needs of the girl child; emergency health care needs; economic security in old age; and protection to families in the event of untimely deaths of breadwinners.

Alleviation of hunger among the most vulnerable sections of the society such as old people, widows and disabled persons without family or societal support will be an important component of the initiative on *Life-Time Concerns*. Accordingly, extending the scope of the *Antyodaya Anna Yojana*, and taking advantage of the surplus stock of foodgrains, the Government will operationalise a *Major Food-based Social Security for the Destitute*. 
6. So far, nearly two and a half crore Kisan Credit Cards have been issued. Efforts will be made to cover the entire population of eligible farmers under this scheme in the next two years.

Public sector general insurance companies will promote a new initiative to expand and further improve the provision of Crop Insurance needs of our kisans. The Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution will set up a National Commodities Exchange to streamline commodity futures trading in the country.

7. The Ministry of Power, guided by the slogan “Power for All” by 2012, will launch a programme for accelerated completion of the electrification of all villages in the country by 2007, and all households in the next ten years, relying significantly on local renewable energy resources and decentralized technologies. For this, it will set up a Rural Electricity Supply Technology (REST) Mission. The Accelerated Power Development & Reforms Programme (APDRP) would intensify the Ministry’s cooperative interaction with State Governments to restore the commercial health of SEBs/Utilities.

8. Thanks to the initiatives taken by the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology, 130 lakh New Telephone Lines will be added in the coming year. Of these, 75 lakh will be mobile telephones. This is expected to take India’s teledensity from 4.38 to 5.61 – the highest ever yearly increase since Independence.

The Ministry will implement a comprehensive programme to accelerate e-Governance at all levels of the Government to improve efficiency, transparency and accountability at the Government-citizen interface. E-Bill
Post and Internet-based E-Post Service network will be expanded to cover all districts in the coming year.

The establishment of Media Lab Asia, a joint collaboration between the Department of IT and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, USA, has been an important initiative to address the challenge of Digital Divide in India and other developing countries. It would pursue high-end research in four areas germane to the needs of rural India— "World Computer" (low-cost computing devices); "Bits for All" (bringing low-cost connectivity to the doorstep of rural masses); "Tools for Tomorrow" (creation of low-cost learning tools to bring out the spirit of innovation among the rural youth); and "Digital Village" (where the above three research programmes would be demonstrated for palpable impact). Media Lab Asia has been designated as an Asian Regional Hub of the United Nations ICT Task Force for coordinating activities of academia and the private sector in the area of IT for the Masses.

9. The Ministry of Petroleum, together with other concerned ministries, will take steps to universalize blending, with petrol and diesel, of ethanol from various feedstocks, including sugar factories. It will also promote use of other bio-fuels. Sale of gasohol will become mandatory in nine States and four Union Territories from January 1, 2003.

10. The Ministry of Textiles will earmark Rs. 100 crore for a one-time special rebate on handloom fabrics to kickstart this employment-intensive industry and revive its production cycle. An additional Rs. 125 crore will be spent for skill upgradation of one lakh handloom weavers. The Government will start a special contributory insurance
scheme for ten lakh weavers and artisans, which will combine the *Jan Shree Bima Yojana* with group insurance.

11. The Ministry of Urban Development and Poverty Alleviation is working on early introduction of a *Model Municipal Law* to facilitate participation of the private sector in urban infrastructure projects, especially in water supply and sanitation. The Ministry will operationalise "City Challenge Fund" this year to promote urban sector reforms, with a special focus on making the urban local bodies viable.

The *Valmiki Ambedkar Awas Yojana (VAMBAY)*, which was launched last year, has become highly popular in a short time. The scheme will support construction of over one lakh houses in the slum areas in the current year, with an allocation of Rs. 256 crore. The scope of construction of community toilets in slum areas, under the *Nirmal Bharat Abhiyan*, will be further expanded.

12. The Ministry of Human Resource Development will formulate a *National Plan of Action for Children*, which will contain the developmental targets relating to India's children in the next decade. *A National Charter for Children* will be adopted in the coming year. The *National Nutrition Mission* will be fully operationalised during the current year. The *Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS)* will be universalized in all the 5,652 blocks in the country.

13. The Government will amalgamate all the different schemes, presently being run by Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Ministry of Rural Development and Ministry of Urban Development and Poverty Alleviation, for speeding up the *Liberation and Rehabilitation of Scavengers*.

14. The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment will launch a scheme to provide National Scholarships to
disabled persons for pursuing higher technical education. The scheme will be implemented under the National Fund for People with Disabilities.

15. The Ministry of Culture will launch a National Mission for Manuscripts to preserve and unlock the precious treasurehouse of scientific, intellectual, literary and spiritual knowledge in different Indian languages, contained in different kinds of material. Among other things, the Mission will set up a National Manuscripts Library and promote ready access to these manuscripts through publication in book form as well as machine-readable form.