



*JPNN/New Delhi/Aug 15, 2015 / Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in his customary Independence Day address, Saturday asserted that the frenzy of communalism or the poison of casteism have no place in India but did not announce any major scheme unlike last time as he answered criticism on fighting corruption. In a 85-minute speech from the ramparts of the historic Red Fort, he referred to the major issue facing his government -- 'One-Rank, One-Pension' (OROP) -- on which he said the government has accepted in principle. But he stopped short of announcing acceptance of the demand of ex-servicemen who are agitating for over last two months. Wearing a printed orange-coloured turban and delivering probably the longest Independence Day speech by a Prime Minister, Modi avoided any reference to the disruption in Parliament over which President Pranab Mukherjee yesterday expressed concern. He mentioned the announcements made during his first Independence Day address last year like Swachh Bharat and Jandhan schemes and said many of them had been implemented in a time-bound manner like building of toilets. The government programmes are focussed on welfare of the poor and other under privileged sections while ensuring reduction in inflation and efforts to boost growth to double digit, he said. While talking about efforts for development, Modi made a strong pitch for communal harmony and peace. "The world keeps signing praise about India's diversity and greatness. Like diversity, the country also has simplicity and unity, which are our capital. These have been nurtured over the centuries. This capital has to be preserved," he said. "Be it the poison of casteism or the frenzy of communalism, these have no place in the country and should not be allowed to grow. These ills have to be eradicated through the nectar of development," he said.*

*He said if the unity of India is destroyed, then the "dreams" of the people will also be shattered as the country looking forward to development and progress. Modi, in his second Independence Day address, focussed largely on the issue of corruption and asserted that the steps taken by his government over the last 15 months to deal with this "termite" had started yielding results. Responding to opposition criticism that nothing is happening on dealing with the problem of black money, he said "some people love to spread pessimism" as he informed that about Rs 6500 cr of undeclared money has been disclosed during the compliance window provided by*

*the government. Asserting that there is no allegation of even one paisa corruption against his 15-month-old government, he pledged to free the country from this malaise "braving all kinds of attacks" and ridiculed those questioning this endeavour. Responding to opposition criticism on dealing with corruption and black money, Modi said, "some people love to spread pessimism. It is like an addiction. They cannot get sleep without it. For them, there is no meaning for programmes and initiatives. They keep on saying that nothing is happening, nothing is visible."*

*Though he did not name anybody, his remarks assume significance as Rahul Gandhi had only last week in Parliament questioned what had been done on dealing with black money. "There is a lot of talk in our country about corruption. It is like a sick person giving suggestions to others on how to remain healthy, there are people who are themselves corrupt, who give suggestions on how to deal with corruption," the Prime Minister said. "Giving suggestions to each other is also an art. I want to give an account today... We have not shown our commitment to fight corruption by addressing press conferences. We are working on the ground. We have shown results," he said. He said corruption had become a part of the system and "contractors were running the nation". Noting that his government had taken steps to correct the system, he said corruption has to be "severed from the system" and it has to start from the top.*

*He said the "termite" had spread wide and deep but nobody took any action against it over the last 60 years and it is only his government which started dealing with it. Mentioning the new Act made on black money, he said people have been complaining that it is "too tough" a law. "We have received messages that the law is too tough and it should be diluted," he said, without naming anybody. He spoke about a number of initiatives to end corruption and bring transparency and proposed doing away with the practice interviews for small jobs, contending that this becomes a route for corruption. "One form of corruption is through jobs... Why should there be interview? I am yet to come across any psychologist who can assess anybody in two minutes (of interview). I have to stop this 'bimari' (practice)... Let us end the requirement of an interview for small jobs immediately," he said, adding he would make a request to states also in this regard.*

*Referring to the much-anticipated OROP, he said the government has "in-principle accepted" it and he was hopeful of a positive outcome of the ongoing discussions which are in the "last stage". In his first Independence Day speech from Red Fort last year, he had announced a number of significant decisions and schemes like disbanding the Planning Commission and launch of Swachh Bharat and Jandhan schemes. "All governments make programmes but what matters is implementation," he said. Agency*