

From promises in 2014 to Majestic India of 2022

PM's 4 I-Day speeches: initiatives, resolution of legacy issues, delivery of promises, new dreams

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IN HIS four Independence Day speeches from the ramparts of Red Fort so far, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's narrative has followed a pattern of progression from ideas through their implementation to new hopes that look beyond the end of his current tenure.

From announcing schemes to justify the popular hope behind his election at the beginning of his tenure (2014), Modi moved on to projecting his government's success in resolving legacy issues from the previous government (2015). And after he highlighted the delivery of his initiatives in his third speech (2016), the Prime Minister used the penultimate speech of his current tenure to showcase the dream of a New India that goes well beyond the 2019 elections.

This gradual progression becomes strikingly obvious from one substantial difference between his first speech in 2014 and his latest Tuesday.

As against seven initiatives — Jan Dhan Yojana, Skill India, Make in India, Digital India, Swachh Bharat, Saansad Adarsh Gram Yojana and abolition of the Planning Commission that paved the way for NITI Aayog — that he had announced in 2014, there was the announcement of only one launch today: of a website to provide account of the valour of Gallantry Award winners.

In his fourth speech, Modi chose to set out goals for a "majestic India" by 2022, well beyond his current tenure that ends in 2019.

"I shall urge you to take up the New India Pledge and move ahead," Modi said. "So for Team India, for the 125 crore countrymen, we have to take the pledge to achieve the goal by 2022. We will do it with dedication to see a great, majestic India by 2022."

Modi's goals included pucca houses for the poor, farmers earning double of their current earnings by 2022, enough opportunities for the youth and women, and a country that is uncompromising with corruption and nepotism, and free of terrorism, communalism and casteism.

"We are trying to put the whole country on a new track without decreasing the speed," Modi said. "We have maintained the speed."

So, if Modi's first Independence Day speech was full of promises, he used his sec-



'At Home' at Rashtrapati Bhavan Tuesday: PM Narendra Modi and Congress president Sonia Gandhi greet each other as Lok Sabha Speaker Sumitra Mahajan looks on. PTI

ond address in 2015 to project his government's success in clearing the contentious legacy challenges from the previous UPA government.

That year, Modi announced acceptance of One Rank, One Pension for armed forces and dwelt at length on how he had managed to clear the mess in allocation of natural resources — coal, minerals and spectrum — by instituting auction mechanism.

He pointed out how these issues hung fire during the UPA government. "It has been 15 months (in power), there is not a single taint of corruption against your govern-

ment," Modi said in 2015 after highlighting his success in tackling the legacy challenge of alleged corruption in allocation of natural resources.

Having been in power for 15 months, Modi used the 2015 speech to announce the launch of Start-Up India, Stand-Up India along with a promise to provide power to remaining 18,000 villages within the next 1,000 days. He also announced initiatives such as abolition of interviews to benefit job-seekers in Group C and D.

Modi's third speech, in comparison, sought to project his government's record in

delivery of his promises. "I can present before you a very detailed account of work done and also multiple issues regarding the performance of the government," he had said last year. "During the tenure of two years, the government has taken innumerable initiatives and multiple tasks have been done. If I start giving details, I am afraid I will have to talk about it for a week."

Modi highlighted achievements big or small, such as online appointment in AIIMS, 15,000 train ticket bookings per minute, online tax refund, swift issuance of passports to major improvements such as improved

pace of road construction, acceleration in wind power generation, and laying of power transmission lines. He also gave account of progress in Jan Dhan accounts, MUDRA scheme, electrification of villages, toilet construction, reviving stalled irrigation and development projects and steps to settle sugarcane farmers' dues, among others.

Modi has used his fourth Independence Day address to communicate a message of empathy in Jammu and Kashmir, even as he had used his 2016 speech to corner Pakistan by referring to Balochistan and Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir.