

Modi outlines his vision for India @75

In I-Day speech, PM sets 2022 as deadline for transformation into a “new India”

BY ELIZABETH ROCHE
elizabeth.r@livemint.com

NEW DELHI

As India celebrated the completion of 70 years of independence, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday gave the country a new slogan—Unify India (*Bharat Jodo*)—as he outlined a vision of building a “new India” that’s free of caste and religious differences, corruption and terrorism, and where all Indians have access to housing, electricity and water.

In his fourth speech from the Red Fort that lasted about an hour, Modi set a deadline of 2022—the 75th anniversary of India’s independence—for the transformation of the country into the “new India” that would fulfil the dreams of the young and women, and see the income of farmers double. It would also be free of dynastic rule, he said.

Analysts say the vision of a new India was the biggest takeaway from Modi’s speech, which also covered the government’s pet themes—the tenet of co-operative federalism, the goods and services tax (GST), the fight against corruption and black money—and its approach to addressing the Kashmir issue and the agrarian crisis.

In his speech, Modi referred to the Quit India movement, where, “from 1942 to 1947, the country demonstrated collective strength” in working for India’s independence. “In the coming five years, we have to take the country forward with the same collective strength, commitment and hard work.”

The key to building a new India is in abandoning the casual “*chalta hai* (anything will do) attitude and

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We have to change this ‘*chalta hai*’ (anything goes) attitude. We have to think of ‘*badal sakta hai*’ (things can change)

We have to work for the progress of Jammu and Kashmir. Neither with foul language and abuses, nor with the bullet—Kashmir’s problems can only be solved by embracing Kashmiris.

thinking of *badal sakta hai* (we can change)”, Modi said.

“The big takeaway really is that he (Modi) wants to look at a new India,” said Manisha Priyam, a New-Delhi based political analyst.

Priyam added that Modi’s speech had “targeted messages for specific parts of the electorate” including young people and women.

But Modi’s vision of new India isn’t restricted to just developmental goals. “India is about *shanti* (peace), *ekta* (unity) and *sadbhavana* (good will). Casteism and communalism will not help us. Violence in the name of *astha* (faith) is not something to be happy about, it will not be accepted in India.”

Some analysts see this as another indirect message to self-styled cow vigilante groups that have lynched people in the name of protecting cows.

On Kashmir, Modi signalled a softer approach in dealing with the

people of the state, while adopting a hardline approach to terrorism. He promised to “stand shoulder-to-shoulder with our brothers and sisters in Jammu and Kashmir”, who he said had “suffered a lot due to terrorism”.

Priyam said Modi used his speech “to make a direct appeal” to Kashmiris. “This is the one political talking point that has raised a lot of enthusiasm and is going to be watched.”

Referring to the steps taken to usher in a corruption-free environment, Modi said: “Our fight against black money and corruption will continue. Those who have looted the nation and looted the poor are not able to sleep peacefully.”

On cooperative federalism, Modi said this had changed the terms of engagement between the centre and the states. “There was a feeling that the centre was the big brother and states the younger brothers. I

have been a chief minister and am aware of the importance of taking states along,” Modi said. “We have focused on co-operative federalism and now competitive cooperative federalism”, with the rollout and implementation of GST, he said.

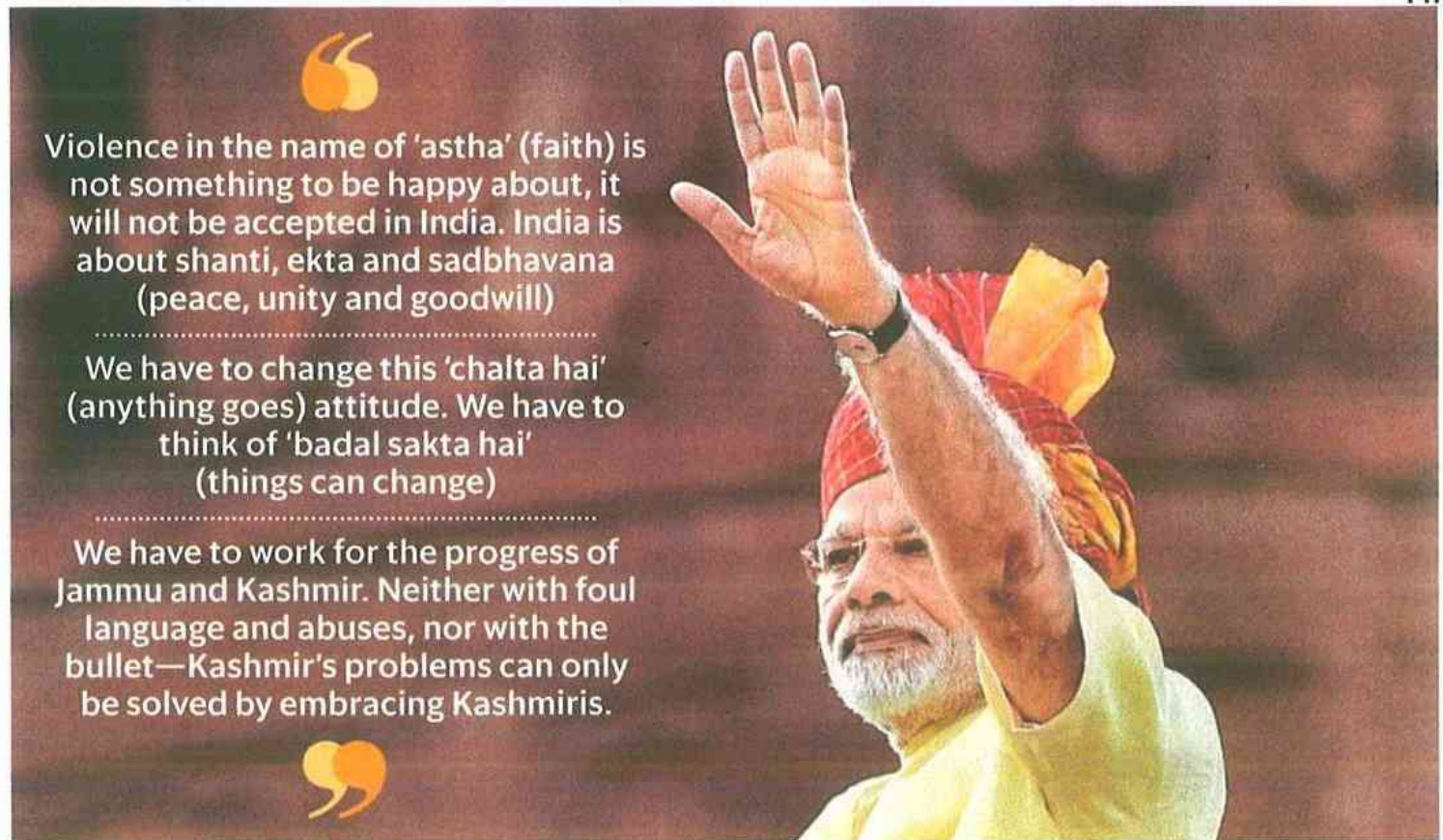
The opposition Congress described the Prime Minister’s speech as “most disappointing”, *PTI* reported. “After three years, it was time for him to give an account of the failure of his government in fulfilling its promises to the people, especially the youth, farmers and weaker sections,” Congress spokesperson Anand Sharma was quoted as saying.

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