

Show collective will to build a New India, says Modi

Asks country to adopt 'Bharat jodo' slogan and shun 'chaltha hai' attitude

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In his shortest Independence Day address yet, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday sketched out the broad contours of his idea of a "New India" as one that was free of communalism, casteism, terrorism, corruption and nepotism, and also one that would require the citizens to do their bit to create it.

Making special mention of the fact that those born in the new millennium, in the year 2000, will be turning 18 next year, he underlined the fact that just as the period between 1942-47 was a decisive one for India's struggle for independence and demonstration of a firm collective will for change, so too should the period of 2017-22 be for creating a "New India" with the same collective will.

"When Mahatma Gandhi stood against the might of the British, it was the crores of Indians, with the khadi yarn in their hands, who bolstered his efforts. We need to show that collective will now," he said.

The Prime Minister said communalism had no space in this conception of New India. "Violence in the name of faith is not something to be



Making a point: Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressing the nation from the ramparts of the Red Fort in New Delhi on Tuesday. ■ SANDEEP SAXENA

happy about, it will not be accepted in India. The sentiment in India should be *Bharat jodo*," he said, adding that the status quoist "*chaltha hai*" attitude should be shunned.

Gorakhpur deaths

Early on in his speech, he spoke about the death of over 30 children at a government hospital in Gorakhpur, reportedly due to a shortage of oxygen cylinders. "In the

last few days, we heard of the death of several of our innocent children. In this hour of grief, the entire country is with those affected, and I assure you that whatever needs to be done as remedy shall be done with utmost sensitivity."

Corruption and the steps taken by his government to deal with it were highlighted by Mr. Modi. He returned to the theme three times in his 56-minute speech.

He spoke at length on demonetisation, announced by his government last year, as a move that may have created some difficulties for the people, but that which assured citizens that keeping to the law and honesty was being celebrated again.

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Show collective will to build a New India: PM

“Even today the corrupt are not getting a full night’s rest,” he said.

He revealed that ₹3 lakh crore had come back into the banking system, ₹1.75 lakh crore transactions were under the scanner and explanations had been sought for ₹2 lakh crore deposits.

Mr. Modi also said that nearly 18 lakh individuals had been identified as those with more than known sources of income, and at least three lakh bogus shell companies have been identified and action initiated against them. (These figures, in the absence of precise figures by the Reserve Bank of India till now, will of course be up for scrutiny).

“Some people said, when I announced demonetisation, that now Modi is gone,

but the people of India participated in the drive,” he added. “We brought in the Benami Properties Act that had been hanging fire for long and managed to seize ₹800 crore worth of property,” he said.

He linked strong action against corruption by his regime to a concomitant speed in decision-making and good governance, linking it further to people’s expectations of governments. “We can, as a nation, reach Mangalyan in nine months, but the other day when reviewing a railway project, I found that we had failed to build a 70 kilometre stretch of track in 42 years. When an ordinary citizen looks at governance, he will wonder how it pertains to him,” he said.