

# Moving on right track

Modi regime has reasons to celebrate three years in office, but has many tasks ahead

On completion of three years in office, the Modi Government has reasons to be satisfied by its performance. The causes of contentment are both perceptual and tangible. Positive perceptions among a large mass of the population are as follows: The first is that Prime Minister Narendra Modi has provided a strong and decisive leadership unhampered by forces from within or outside the governance system. This is in contrast to the 10 years of Manmohan Singh's regime when the then Prime Minister was seen taking directions from extra-constitutional authorities and faithfully implementing them. The second is that the Modi Government has been corruption-free and has cracked down in various areas that have been traditional breeding ground of graft, such as painful bureaucratic red-tape, archaic laws and institutions. Towards this endeavour, it has introduced greater transparency in the allocation of activities to utilise natural resources, through e-tendering etc. This perception again must be set in the context of the Manmohan Singh-led Government's image riddled with corruption charges — from 2G Spectrum scam to the coal block allocation irregularities and more. The third is that the Modi Government has not shied away



from targeting the menace of black money; the bold demonetisation decision is one such instance. The fourth perception is that the incumbent Government in its three years in office has targeted agencies and schemes that have either underperformed or outlived their purpose. Thus, while the Aadhaar project and the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme have been revamped, the Planning Commission of India and the Foreign Investment Promotion Board have been dismantled. The fifth, and perhaps the most important perception from an electoral angle, that the Modi regime has created is that it cares for the needs of the common man by going beyond lip service.

In other words, the *suit-boot ki sarkar* image which the Congress had tried to foist on Prime Minister Modi has been effectively dealt with.

Perceptions are of course not grounded in a vacuum; there has to be visible complement, which is there for the people to see. So they can be debated. But the rivals are on slippery ground when they take on the Prime Minister and his Government on issues where success is more than evident, or tangible. The Government has been able to turn around the country's economy for the better. GDP growth rate has stabilised to above seven per cent and is likely to go higher. Just over three years ago, India's sovereign rating was perilously close to be deemed as 'junk'; today it is positive. Policy paralysis is a thing of the past, with the Modi regime taking a slew of decisions that has had far-reaching consequences. A sense of purpose and direction is visible in all areas of governance, and a good showcase of this is the revitalisation of the country's foreign policy with both soft and masculine touches. Taken together perception and visible gains give Prime Minister Modi and the BJP confidence to approach the 2019 battle. Meanwhile, the Government still has many tasks to do.