



Dear Member,

India turned 60 on last Wednesday. On the midnight of August 15th, 1947, founding Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru declared that at midnight, India was keeping its trust with destiny. While the world slept, India awoke to freedom.

When India gained its independence many did not give the young nation much of a chance of survival. Winston Churchill said: "India will fall back quite rapidly through the centuries into the barbarism and privations of the Middle Ages". Well, he was horribly wrong. India not only survived but survived as thriving democracy.

Undoubtedly, it has not been easy. We have had linguistic agitations, separate movements, sectarian violence and divisive politics. India is now seen by the world as a youthful, energetic, emerging global power of the 21st century and as the world's largest functional democracy. A vociferous civil society, an active press and media, an inquisitive judiciary, vigorous opposition parties and an election machinery, are the strengths of the working of India's democratic institutions.

Using purchasing - power parity, India is now the world's fourth - largest economy. The economy is expected to grow by 6 percent to 9 percent annually and account for more than 12 percent of world's economic growth in the next 15 years. India will move from 24th to the 10th biggest trading nation in the world. Unlike foreign investment fuelled growth of many countries, India's growth is rooted in domestically generated funds and enterprise and likely to prove more resilient and self-sustaining, less exposed to exogenous shocks.

Yet, India languishes in the bottom third of the human development index. Poverty and illiteracy are a major problem. Access to safe water and sanitation remain a far-fetched dream for most people. The state enterprise is too large and parasitical, public debt too high and the labour market far too rigid. Markets are under developed and infrastructure is risible. Economic growth is yet to translate into significantly rising employment.

Relations with Pakistan are less tense than they used to be, but still subject to eruptions with a startling suddenness on the most unexpected of provocations. Relations with China are the most cordial in decades, although both maintain a watchful eye over each other's intentions, capability and actions. Against the weight of its own history of animosity since independence, India currently enjoys excellent relations with the United States. What used to be a clash between two self-righteous countries convinced of their own rectitude has been replaced by a deepening friendship between two peoples convinced of their exceptionalism.

Before I conclude, I thank you all for your cooperation.


Atluri Subba Rao

President writes