

TRAIN TO VALLEY

In a momentous development for the region, the much-anticipated inaugural train service to Kashmir was warmly welcomed by jubilant crowds, marking a historic milestone in India's transportation and integration efforts. The arrival of the train in the Kashmir Valley for the first time symbolizes not only enhanced connectivity but also the strengthening of emotional and economic bonds between Kashmir and the rest of the country.

Traditional Kashmiri music, cultural performances, and the waving of National Flags created a vibrant and festive atmosphere.

The train, part of the ambitious Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramulla Rail Link (USBRL) project, had commenced its journey from Banihal, making stops at key towns and passing through the engineering marvel of the Chenab Rail Bridge-the world's highest railway bridge. The line is extended up to Baramulla, linking remote areas of Kashmir to the national rail grid.

Local residents echoed similar sentiments. Many expressed hope that regular train services would ease transportation issues, especially during winter months when road links are often cut off due to snowfall. Traders and entrepreneurs also see the railway as a lifeline for business expansion, better logistics, and tourism development.

The railway project has been hailed for overcoming enormous geographical and climatic challenges. With over 38 tunnels and more than 900 bridges, it is regarded as one of the most difficult rail projects in India's history. The successful operation of the train is seen as a tribute to the resilience and dedication of thousands of engineers, workers, and security personnel who made it possible.

Security arrangements were tight yet cordial, ensuring a smooth event without disruptions. The administration emphasized that train services would run regularly with affordable fares, ensuring accessibility for all sections of society.

The "Welcome Train to Kashmir" marks a new chapter in the region's development journey-one that promises peace, prosperity, and better integration with the rest of the nation. For the people of Kashmir, it is not just about the arrival of a train, but the arrival of new opportunities and renewed hope.

11 Years of Modi: Fuelled by Vision, Powered by Energy

■ SHRI HARDEEP S PURI



A few days ago, India overtook Japan to become the world's fourth-largest economy. Since 2014, under Prime Minister Modi's leadership, India's GDP has more than doubled to USD 4.3 trillion in 2025. This is the result of a decade-long strategy centred on reforms, resilience, and relentless pursuit of self-reliance.

India has not only become the world's fastest-growing major economy but also a strategic force. The energy sector, integral to this rise, has undergone a structural transformation during the first year of Modi 3.0, building on ten years of foundational change.

More importantly, India's growth rate of 6.7% in the last quarter places it on a fast trajectory that none of the other countries can remotely hope to achieve in the coming years.

India is now the third-largest energy and oil consumer, fourth-largest refiner, and fourth-largest LNG importer globally. With energy demand expected to grow two and a half times by 2047 and 25% of incremental global demand set to come from India, the roadmap is clear: energy security is development security.

Modi government's energy strategy addresses the Energy Trilemma of availability, affordability, and sustainability through a four-pronged approach-diversification of sources and suppliers, expansion of domestic production, transition to renewables, and affordability.

In the upstream oil and gas sector, India's exploration acreage has doubled from 8% in 2021 to 16% in 2025. With a goal of covering 1 million sq. km by 2030, the government aims to unlock 42 billion tonnes of oil and oil-

equivalent gas. This expansion has been enabled by landmark reforms such as the reduction of 'No-Go' areas by 99%, streamlined licensing through OALP rounds, and attractive pricing incentives for new gas wells.

The revised gas pricing mechanism-linking prices to 10% of the Indian Crude Basket and offering a 20% premium for new wells-has enhanced gas availability for city gas networks and industrial usage. To reduce costs and accelerate monetisation, new revenue-sharing contracts allow shared infrastructure among E&P players.

Technological and geophysical efforts have complemented policy reforms. The National Seismic Programme, Mission Anveshan, AGG surveys, and Continental Shelf Mapping have expanded data and exploration confidence, especially in frontier basins like the Andamans, Mahanadi, and Cauvery.

ONGC and Oil India have together made over 25 hydrocarbon discoveries across Mumbai Offshore, Cambay, Mahanadi, and Assam basins in the last four years. Noteworthy among these are the Suryamani and Vajramani wells on the west coast offshore and the Utikal and Konark fields on the east coast deep waters. These discoveries add over 75 MMTOE and 2,700 MMSCM of gas to India's reserves.

Collaborations with global majors are bearing fruit. ONGC's partnership with BP is projected to boost output from Mumbai High by 44% for oil and 89% for gas. A data centre at the University of Houston now facilitates access to India's exploration datasets for international investors.

Downstream infrastructure has seen parallel expansion. India now operates 24,000 km of product pipelines, nearly 96,000 retail outlets, and has significantly strengthened its strategic reserves and LPG storage. Over 67 million people visit petrol pumps daily-testi-

mony to the scale and efficiency of India's fuel supply ecosystem.

India's city gas network has grown from 55 Geographic Areas in 2014 to 307 in 2025, with PNG connections up from 25 lakh to 1.5 crore and over 7,500 CNG stations in operation. Unified pipeline tariffs and city gas expansions have ensured affordable access even in distant states.

Biofuels have emerged as a cornerstone of India's green strategy. Ethanol blending in petrol has surged from 1.5% in 2013 to 19.7% in 2025. Blending quantities have expanded from 38 crore litres to 484 crore litres. This saved 1.26 lakh crore in foreign exchange, reduced emissions by 643 lakh MT, and paid ₹1.79 lakh crore to distillers and over ₹1 lakh crore to farmers.

Feedstock diversification-ranging from molasses to maize-has created a robust ethanol ecosystem. Parallely, the SATAT initiative has commissioned over 100 compressed biogas (CBG) plants and aims for a 5% CBG blending mandate by 2028. Central support for biomass procurement and CBG-pipeline connectivity is accelerating circular energy adoption.

Green Hydrogen has been given a massive thrust with 8.62 lakh tonnes of production and 3,000 MW of electrolyser tenders awarded. Oil PSUs are leading from the front-IOCL recently awarded a landmark 10 KTPA green hydrogen tender to Larsen & Toubro for its Panipat refinery. BPCL, HPCL, and GAIL are similarly progressing with large-scale hydrogen projects, while NRL's green hydrogen unit in Assam is poised to become a first in the Northeast.

India's natural gas pipeline network now spans over 25,000 km and targets 33,000 km by 2030. Strategic pricing reforms and inclusion of gas in the 'No Cut' category for transport and domestic segments are ensuring sup-

ply stability. Gas production has increased steadily from 28.7 BCM in 2020-21 to 36.4 BCM in 2023-24, with further growth projected.

No other country has so drastically altered its 'Systems' as India, as evinced by the Oilfields (Regulation and Development) Amendment Act 2024 has enabled hybrid leases, allowing renewables alongside hydrocarbons. DSF fields now operate under simplified contracts with minimal compliance burdens, unlocking marginal fields across basins. These sweeping policy reforms show that we are ready to tweak and do more for making India's upstream sector as competitive as any in the world.

Through PM Gati Shakti, the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas has digitally mapped over 1 lakh assets and pipelines. Integration with the National Master Plan ensures real-time project visibility and synergy across ministries. Key projects like the Indo-Nepal pipeline and Samruddhi Utility Corridor have benefitted from route optimisation and cost savings of over ₹169 crore.

Affordability remains central. Despite global LPG prices rising by 58%, PMUY beneficiaries pay ₹553 per cylinder, supported by targeted subsidies and compensation to oil companies. Fuel prices in India have been kept stable through excise cuts, insulating citizens from volatility seen in neighbouring countries.

Eleven years into PM Modi's transformative leadership, India's energy sector is no longer defined by anxiety. It is now marked by confidence, self-reliance, and strategic foresight. Energy is not just a commodity, it is a catalyst for sovereignty, security, and sustainable development.

(The writer is Union Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas in the Government of India)

Fighting Terrorism Together: India Acts, the World Must Follow

■ RAJNATH SINGH



Terrorism is a scourge on humanity, an anathema to cherished values of a civilised society; it thrives on misguided notions of revolution, martyrdom, and a romanticised view of violence. The assertion that "one man's freedom fighter is another man's terrorist" is a dangerous misnomer-true freedom can never be built on fear and bloodshed.

The currency of terrorism and terrorists is fear. Yet, even in spreading fear, they have failed to instill any sense of pessimism. And India is testimony to this fact. Whether it is 26/11 or the 2001 Indian Parliament attack or the recent Pahalgam attack, India stands taller, stronger, and more resolute than ever.

In the face of a united India, terrorism, both in its warped ideology and twisted utility, is destined to fail on its own. Its very existence-even for a day-challenges our collective conscience and commitment to peace. All peace-loving nations and individuals need to come together to eradicate this menace once and for all.

India has shown how this can be done.

For decades, we have been a victim of state-sponsored cross-border terrorism originating from Pakistan. The recent Pahalgam attack was a brutal and failed attempt to fracture Indian unity and

instill fear among its people. This was evident in the manner in which terrorists inquired about the religion of tourists before killing them. A similar attempt to threaten Indian unity emerged when Pakistan utilised drones and artillery to attack various religious sites belonging to different faiths.

No religion can sanction such dastardly acts. Terrorists strategically misuse and invoke religion to justify their barbaric acts. By hiding behind the veil of religion, terrorists seriously undermine the faith they claim and pretend to uphold. This misuse of religion is not accidental or impulsive; it is a deliberate tactic, a carefully crafted strategy to lend false legitimacy to atrocities.

India has made it clear that we have a zero-tolerance policy towards terrorism. Talks and terrorism cannot go hand in hand. Any future dialogue with Pakistan will focus solely on terrorism and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir. Also, if Pakistan is serious, it must hand over UN-designated terrorists like Hafiz Saeed and Masood Azhar to ensure justice.

For a long time, we have reacted to terrorist acts while searching for a long-term vision and strategy. Our armed forces were earlier only allowed to engage in defensive action. With Surgical Strikes (2016), Balakot Strikes (2019), and now Operation Sindoor (2025), India has made a fundamental reappraisal in its policy towards the terrorists and their progenitors in Pakistan. Now, we understand that moral and political disapproval, along

with a defensive posture, are not enough. It is now our policy that we will proactively eradicate terrorists wherever they are. Any act of terror is now considered an act of war. If there is a terrorist attack on India, a befitting reply will be given without differentiating between the government sponsoring terrorism and the terrorists themselves. If Pakistan is unable to rein in terrorists operating from its soil, it will have to pay the price for its inability.

At the 3rd 'No Money for Terror' Ministerial Conference on Counter-Terrorism Financing in New Delhi, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has categorically affirmed: "We consider that even a single attack is one too many and even a single life lost is one too many. So, we will not rest till terrorism is uprooted." With Operation Sindoor, the Indian government and armed forces demonstrated to the entire world that we are committed to uprooting terrorism. In a 'focused, measured and non-escalatory' operation, we targeted terrorist infrastructure in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Jammu and Kashmir, from which terrorist attacks against India have been orchestrated and directed.

We know that military action against terrorists is necessary, but not sufficient. It is the foundations of the terrorist infrastructure that need to be destroyed. Since Pakistan uses terrorism as a tool, India has successfully isolated Pakistan diplomatically and economically. We have kept the Indus Water Treaty 'in abeyance' until Pakistan cred-

ibly and permanently renounces its support for cross-border terrorism. This decision carries significant implications for Pakistan, which relies on the Indus River system for 80% of its 16 million hectares of agricultural land and 93% of its overall water usage, and supports 237 million people and contributes one-fourth of Pakistan's GDP.

Terrorism is not just an Indian problem; it is a global problem. According to the Global Terrorism Index (GTI), the number of countries experiencing terrorist incidents has increased over the years. To effectively dismantle terrorist networks, combat radicalisation, and ensure a safer future for generations to come, we need to move beyond piecemeal efforts. Instead, we should embrace a principled, comprehensive, consistent, and coordinated global strategy. This involves five key measures.

First, define the term 'terrorism'. There is no consensus yet on what constitutes terrorism. The closest we have come to defining terrorism is in the Comprehensive Convention against International Terrorism in the UN, based on an Indian proposal. Semantic issues must not limit the battle against terrorism; we need a widely accepted definition required for investigating or prosecuting terrorist acts, or ensuring their extradition from abroad.

Second, we need to freeze the finances of not only terrorist organisations but also states sponsoring terrorism. Multilateral agencies and donor countries must recognise that Pakistan has a history of misusing bailout packages

and uses debt financing for state-sponsored cross-border terrorism. As India pointed out in a statement to the IMF, "rewarding continued sponsorship of cross-border terrorism sends a dangerous message to the global community, exposes funding agencies and donors to reputational risks, and makes a mockery of global values." There is no doubt that funds given to Pakistan end up with the military-terror complex working towards an unstable world. Hence, Pakistan needs to be again greylisted by FATF, and any funding needs to be cut off till the time Pakistan credibly and irrevocably renounces its terror operations. The same standard should be used against other countries harbouring terrorists in their territory.

Third, something that was known for a long time but has become more evident is that state and non-state actors are two sides of the same coin in Pakistan. This was apparent recently when designated terrorists were accorded funerals with state honours attended by military officials in uniforms. In Pakistan, there is a persistent threat that atomic weapons may end up with non-state actors. The international community must acknowledge this serious risk, and Pakistan's nuclear weapons should be placed under the supervision of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

Fourth, warfare by proxy is a dangerous menace. There is a need to call out the countries that use surrogates to destabilise their neighbourhood. The scope and severity of reactions to ter-

rorist acts cannot depend on where they occur or the nationality of the victims. When countries pick and choose which acts of terrorism to condemn based on convenience or interests, it weakens the collective response, emboldens perpetrators, and provides tacit approval to such acts.

Fifth, terrorist safe havens in Pakistan have worldwide implications due to both their international reach and their adoption of emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence, autonomous systems, augmented reality, biotechnology, and nanotechnology. This is why global cooperation is essential to address the threats posed by terrorists exploiting these vulnerabilities. It is time for all countries to come together and sign the Comprehensive Convention against International Terrorism.

Advocating such a treaty, Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, said in the UN General Assembly, "We must firmly rebuff any ideological, political or religious justification for terrorism." Quoting Rabindranath Tagore, he went on to say, "From now onward, the anxiety that each country has for its own safety must embrace the welfare of the whole world."

India remains steadfast in its quest to eliminate terrorism in all its manifestations.

We urge all peace-loving nations to join us.

(The writer is Union Minister of Defence)

World Environment Day: A Call for global action and responsibility

■ MOHAMMAD HANIEF



World Environment Day, celebrated annually on June 5th, is a powerful reminder of humanity's collective responsibility towards the preservation and protection of the environment. Established by the United Nations in 1972 during the Stockholm Conference on the human environment, this day has grown into a global platform for raising awareness, encouraging action, and promoting sustainable practices to address pressing environmental challenges.

Each year, millions of people across the globe participate in activities aimed at improving the health of our planet. As the threats to our environment become more severe and urgent-ranging from climate change to biodiversity loss and pollution-World Environment Day serves as both a wake-up call and an opportunity to recommit ourselves to environmental stewardship.

The theme for World Environment Day 2025 is "Ending Plastic Pollution", with the global campaign slogan #BeatPlasticPollution. This theme underscores the urgent need to tackle the escalating crisis of plastic waste, which poses significant threats to ecosystems, marine life,

and human health.

Globally, over 430 million tonnes of plastic are produced each year, with two-thirds being short-lived products that quickly become waste. This waste often ends up polluting oceans, harming marine life, and entering the human food chain. The 2025 theme aligns with ongoing international efforts to develop a legally binding agreement to end plastic pollution, including in marine environments.

This theme resonates deeply with the global climate agenda and the need to implement practical solutions that not only reduce environmental damage but also reverse it. Restoration can take many forms-from planting trees, cleaning up rivers and coastlines, to adopting regenerative agricultural practices and conserving endangered species.

This theme aligns with the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (2021-2030), a global movement to prevent, halt, and reverse the degradation of ecosystems worldwide. Restoring ecosystems can help reduce poverty, combat climate change, and prevent mass extinctions, ultimately leading to a more sustainable and equitable world.

The urgency of the environmental crisis cannot be overstated. Rising global temperatures, melting glaciers, increasing frequency of extreme weather events, and the loss of biodiversity are all consequences of unchecked industrialization, deforestation, pollution, and

overconsumption of natural resources. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has repeatedly warned that if global warming exceeds 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels, the world could face catastrophic environmental and economic consequences.

Air pollution alone is responsible for approximately 7 million premature deaths every year. Oceans, which cover over 70% of the Earth's surface, are becoming acidic and polluted with plastic, posing a threat to marine life and the food chain. Forests, often called the lungs of the Earth, are being cut down at alarming rates for agriculture, infrastructure, and urbanization.

While international cooperation and governmental policies are crucial, the role of individuals and local communities in environmental protection cannot be underestimated. Every small step, from reducing plastic use to conserving water and energy, contributes to the larger goal of sustainability. Community-based initiatives such as urban gardening, tree planting drives, and awareness campaigns can significantly impact the health of local ecosystems. Educational institutions, non-governmental organizations, and citizen-led groups play a vital role in spreading awareness and encouraging action. Schools can install environmental values in young minds through curriculum integration and hands-on projects. Religious and cultural institutions

can also help promote environmental ethics grounded in respect for nature and all forms of life. India, being one of the most bio diverse countries in the world, has actively participated in World Environment Day celebrations over the years. In 2018, India hosted the global event with the theme "Beat Plastic Pollution." That year, the country pledged to eliminate all single-use plastic by 2022, setting an example for developing nations.

India has launched several initiatives aimed at environmental protection, including the National Clean Air Programme (NCAP), which seeks to reduce air pollution levels in major cities. The NamamiGange Mission focuses on cleaning and rejuvenating the Ganga River, while the Green India Mission aims to increase forest cover and biodiversity.

However, challenges remain. Rapid urbanization, population growth, and industrial development continue to exert pressure on natural resources. To make a meaningful difference, there must be greater implementation and monitoring of environmental laws and policies at both central and state levels. Businesses and industries are major contributors to environmental degradation, but they also have the potential to be part of the solution. The concept of corporate environmental responsibility emphasizes that companies must operate sustainably, reduce their carbon footprint, and invest in

green technologies. This includes adopting renewable energy, minimizing waste, using eco-friendly materials, and ensuring responsible supply chains.

Green innovation and sustainable business practices are now gaining momentum. Electric vehicles, solar power, biodegradable packaging, and sustainable agriculture are some areas where industries are making progress. Governments can incentivize these practices through subsidies, tax breaks, and supportive policies, thereby creating a green economy that supports both profit and the planet. Young people have emerged as passionate and vocal advocates for environmental action. From organizing climate marches to leading grassroots campaigns, the youth are increasingly at the forefront of the fight against climate change. Global figures like Greta Thunberg have inspired millions of young people to demand stronger climate policies and accountability from leaders. Technology, too, is playing a vital role in environmental protection. Satellite imagery helps monitor deforestation and climate patterns, while mobile apps encourage recycling, waste management, and energy conservation. Artificial intelligence and machine learning are being used to optimize renewable energy production and predict environmental trends, enabling smarter and more responsive policies.

The message of World Environment Day is ultimately one

of hope. Despite the daunting challenges, there is still time to restore our planet-if we act now and act together. Ecosystem restoration is not just about planting trees; it is about changing our attitudes, lifestyles, and systems that have led to environmental degradation. It requires long-term commitment and a recognition that human well-being is intricately linked to the health of the environment.

This year's observance should inspire governments, corporations, communities, and individuals to take concrete steps towards restoration. Whether it is reducing carbon emissions, protecting wildlife, adopting circular economies, or promoting environmental education, every action counts. World Environment Day is more than a celebration; it is a movement for change. It challenges us to look beyond symbolic gestures and embrace real, measurable actions that contribute to the well-being of our planet. As we observe this important day in 2025, let us remember that we are not separate from nature-we are a part of it. The future of our planet depends not only on the decisions made in boardrooms and parliaments but also on the choices we make in our homes, schools, and communities.

By restoring our earth, we restore our future. Let this World Environment Day be a turning point in our journey toward a cleaner, greener, and more sustainable world for generations to come.

