

SPEECH

Message on first Republic Day

Exactly twenty years ago from today, the people of India took a solemn pledge of complete Independence. Behind that pledge was the determination of a whole people and the strength which comes of faith in one's destiny. Although we obtained Independence on the 15th of August 1947, it was not complete in the sense of the pledge that we took. Today, by the grace of God, that pledge has been completely fulfilled.

On this auspicious occasion, it is quite natural that our thoughts should turn to the Father of the Nation under whose inspiration and guidance we took that pledge and due to whose leadership we achieved success in our mission. Unhappily, he is not amongst us, but he is watching us from above and I have no doubt his blessings and good wishes are with us on this supreme occasion in our national history.

The day on which India attains Republican status will be written in letters of gold in its history. With the disappearance of all traces of foreign rule, we become in law and in fact our own masters and it will be now for us to make or mar our future. It will, however, take time for us to recover from centuries of exploitation and bondage; considerable sacrifices will yet be necessary before sufficient quantity of fresh blood can flow in India's veins. We worked hard to achieve our freedom. We shall have to strive harder to justify it. Let us not, therefore, celebrate this occasion with any light heart. On the other hand, let us resolve to play our true and active role of responsible citizens of a free country which has yet to stand on its feet and to attain its full stature. May Divine guidance and bounty be with us all.