

FOR A PROUD, PROSPEROUS INDIA

AN AGENDA

NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC ALLIANCE

**ELECTION MANIFESTO
LOK SABHA ELECTION, 1999**

Introduction

The 1999 General Election is an unnecessary imposition. It was thrust upon the country by a motley combination that put political negativism, narrow personal interests and greed for power far above the national good. The Government led by Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee lost the vote in the Lok Sabha on April 17 by just one and that too questionable vote. In spite of promising a new government 'in five minutes' and futilely attempting widespread defections, this negative coalition by the Congress failed to come up with any alternative arrangement, forcing the dissolution of the Lok Sabha and fresh elections. A serving, performing Government was needlessly destabilised.

Hardly had the country absorbed the shock of this avoidable uncertainty, then we were faced by Pakistani armed intrusion Kargil.

The Government rose to the challenge and acted decisively. Faced by this aggression in Kargil, the response of the Government was swift, though measured.

The last of the Pakistani intruders were cleared from the Kargil Sector on 27th July.

We salute the heroism, dedication and selflessness of our armed forces. We dedicate ourselves anew to preserving the honour and territorial integrity of our motherland. We reiterate our commitment to look after the welfare of the armed forces, and of the dependents of all those that laid down their lives in service of our motherland.

The security of the nation is our paramount duty. In fulfillment of this sacred duty we will ensure that the neglect of defence preparedness by the previous governments during the last decade shall be corrected. The defence of India and the needs of our armed forces is our commitment.

This General Election allows the country a great opportunity of finally putting an end to the era of political negativism, uncertainty and dynasticism. In this hour of national challenge, when the faith of the people in democratic institutions is under test it is vital that all nationalist forces join hands. This is the moment to look ahead, to a new, resurgent India.

In Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, the country has a leader who blends tradition with modernity, a leader who understands India and the world and a statesman who is accepted by all sections of the country. In just 13 months, the Vajpayee Government set new parameters of purposeful governance. In the realms of national security, regional cooperation, economic modernization and centre-state relations, the Vajpayee Government has shown the way forward. Under Shri Vajpayee's leadership the National Democratic Alliance seeks a firm and resounding mandate to complete the unfinished agenda.

The National Agenda for Governance of the National Democratic Alliance constitutes the basis of our joint commitment for a stable Government to take India into the new millennium. On this occasion we appeal for a new political age of reconciliation and accord based on our principled commitment to:

- National Security - ensuring full combat effectiveness of our armed forces;
- National Reconstruction - an end to divisiveness and a moratorium on contentious issues;
- Dynamic diplomacy - In service of motherland to obtain for India its rightful place in the comity of nations;
- Federal harmony ensuring a partnership of the Centre and States;
- Economic Modernization - harnessing technology for rapid, equitable growth;
- Secularism - the emotional harmony of all Indians and full protection of minorities;
- Social justice - empowerment of all weaker sections and gender rights;
- Probity - transparency of decision-making and corruption-free governance;

When the whole nation was thrown into the vortex of political

instability because of the toppling of the Government headed by Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee, by the irresponsible combination of Congress, the left parties and their old and new found allies; when the whole nation felt that it was duped and deceived by their chicanery because they could not fulfill their boast of an alternative Government in 'five minutes' – even for several days; and when the whole nation was on the verge of losing faith in our democratic system was getting cynical about politics and politicians; the signatory political parties came together as an act of national commitment and founded the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), under the leadership of Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee, to set the Indian polity on a new course for the future.

The reason for creating the NDA is to lift the spirit of the nation at large, to draw its people together and, most importantly, to rebuild the bonds of common purpose that are the very roots of our democratic polity.

The NDA came into being because of an historic need and realisation amongst us that our young democracy cannot bear the fits and tremors of frequent elections which will undermine the peoples' faith in the democratic process. Therefore, with a consensus on a common cause and a common set of principles we have sunk our differences to weld ourselves into a solid phalanx of a single dominant political formation and thereby we fulfill the resolve of the Indian people to give themselves a stable, strong and progressive Government.

We are proud that the NDA is representative of both national interests and regional aspirations – after all the NDA is nothing but the mirror-image of our nation's unity in multifaceted diversity, rich pluralism and federalism.

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Our Mission

The NDA's mission in politics is to build a bond of trust between Government and people. This is the only way a democracy can flourish; but unfortunately has been ignored during the last 50 years of one-party rule.

Therefore, the NDA pledges to the people of India a Government which shares their hopes and anxieties and which will work as partner with all people irrespective of class, caste and religion – not just with a privileged few. This is our contract with the people.

The NDA is new; the NDA is the future and the NDA is a broad-based movement for progress and justice.

Our vision is one of national renewal with modern programmes of change for a resurgent India.

We reach out to the minorities and even at the cost of repetition proclaim that we will safeguard the rights as enshrined in our Constitution. NDA is the political arm of none other than the Indian people as a whole. No one will be cast aside; fairness and justice will be rendered to one and all and we assure you that there will not be any discrimination.

We appeal to our brothers and sisters of the minorities that we whole-heartedly extend our hands of friendship, in these fraternal words:

Let us hold hands and walk together to build a resurgent, modern India.

Let us throw away our old prejudices.

Let us put an end to divisiveness.

Let us have a moratorium on contentious issues.

Let us bind ourselves with bonds of trust and friendship.

We want an India which we all feel part of, in whose future we all have a stake. And we want to enter the new millennium with confidence; not with divisive feelings.

This is our call for reconciliation and it is part of our commitment to the minorities.



Agenda For Governance

A Commitment to Good Governance

1. Our first commitment to the people is to give a stable, honest, transparent, and efficient government capable of accomplishing all-round development. For this, the government shall introduce time-bound programmes of needed administrative reforms including those for the Police and other Civil Services.

Economy

2. We will continue with the reform process, give it a strong Swadeshi thrust to ensure that the national economy grows on the principle that 'India shall be built by Indians reappraise and revitalise reforms through giving primacy to removal of unemployment, and to an accelerated development of infrastructure, particularly energy and power production. We will bring GDP growth to the 7-8% bracket, and control deficits - fiscal and revenue. We will examine the possibility of enacting a Fiscal Responsibility Act. We will take all such steps as would expedite implementation of policies and programmes in accordance with our national interests; and give to the entire national development efforts a humane face with total eradication of poverty as the ultimate goal. For this 'Berozgari Hatao' - eradicate unemployment - is our call. Swadeshi is not reinventing the wheel. It means that we will facilitate the domestic industry to gain enough muscles to compete with the multinationals in the local and global markets. We want domestic companies to flourish

and acquire a Trans National status. At the same time the country cannot do without FDI because besides capital stock it brings with it technology, new market practices and most importantly employment. Our target is to achieve at least \$10 billion per year which will commensurate with our growth objectives. The old leftist approach sought complete state control of industry while the rightist approach wanted to leave everything to the market. We reject both. Government and industry must work together to achieve key objectives aimed at enhancing the dynamism of the market with effective and efficient regulatory mechanisms. In fact the issue is not about capitalism or socialism, nor is it about market or less state. It is about better society, about improving the way citizens can demand and obtain all sorts of public goods. It is about dignity for all. We firmly resolve that poverty should be relegated to history like slavery, colonialism, small pox and cholera and we should meet the challenge of mobilising resources for that by undertaking the challenge of restructuring priorities and mainstreaming these priorities into new programmes of pro-poor growth and redistribution towards poverty eradication -That is how we plan to eradicate absolute poverty within this generation - within the first decades of 21st century - and we strongly feel that it is feasible and affordable, infact, it is a moral imperative which we will not miss.

3. We will carefully analyse the effects of globalisation, calibrate its process by devising a timetable to suit our national conditions and requirements so as not to undermine but strengthen the national economy, the indigenous industrial base and the financial and services sectors.
4. We will earmark 60% of the Plan Funds for and effect public investment in agriculture, rural development, irrigation and by diverse incentives, including tax shelters, achieve a quantum leap in agricultural production so that agriculture, horticulture, forestry, food processing, fisheries and so on become the vehicles for growth resulting in an enhancement

of the purchasing power of the people. Effective crop insurance schemes will be introduced. Special efforts will be made in Animal Husbandry, Dairying, particularly in respect of Cow and its progeny. This is one of the routes to generating employment, thus eradicating hunger and poverty in rural as well as urban areas. Subsidies of all kinds will be implemented in such a manner that maximize benefits to all section of the agricultural population. Development of medium and small scale irrigation projects shall receive priority attention; emphasis for investment will be in accordance with the potential for development.

5. We will adopt a National Water Policy which provides for effective and prompt settlement of disputes and their time-bound implementation. We will examine and take time-bound steps to link Ganga-Cauvery Rivers. Sethu Samudharam Canal Project will also be undertaken.
6. We will increase the national savings to 30% of the GDP in the next five years by appropriate incentives and through motivation; encourage Foreign Direct Investment in core areas so that it usefully supplements the national efforts and discourage FDI in non-priority areas.
7. We will institute a comprehensive study of the financial, technological and social security requirements of the self-employed and unincorporated sector; also constitute a Development Bank to promote this largest segment of the national economy which, too, has great employment and self-employment potential. Further, in addition to financial support institutions we will bring into being other institutional systems for providing services, technology and marketing facilities for artisans, the small-scale, village, khadi, powerloom, handloom, handicrafts and such other industries. This and the Agriculture sectors are an untapped source with unlimited scope for generation of employment.
8. We will give a major thrust to infrastructure development, particularly energy and power, by recommending public expenditure in the sector. Towards this we will access long-term funds in the national and international markets,

remove administrative bottlenecks, reverse the slowdown in this critical area of national economy thus giving a fresh impetus to growth. Private Sector participation will be encouraged.

9. We will undertake a review of all laws and regulations relating to industry so as to free it from bureaucratic control; institute a system of voluntary compliance with laws, including tax laws; ensure speedy redressal of industrial sickness arrange for meaningful interaction between industry and government; and revive the capital market as a viable and transparent mechanism for raising capital. We will also expedite comprehensive reform of the PSUs, including restructuring, rehabilitation and divestment.

Trade & Commerce

10. We will focus on specific products in specific growth areas for exports and announce specific packages for horticulture and forticulture EoUs. We intend to strongly support attempts to build a system of trade and economic cooperation through expanded global system of trade preferences (GSTP) among developing countries. We would also assert more robustly India's national interests, especially at the forthcoming review conference of the WTO, scheduled for November 1999. A healthy commodity exchange system will be established to be managed in an autonomous way.

Labour

11. We will make labour, both organized and unorganized, an equal and proud partner in the production of the nation's wealth and in its progress. Laws relating to equal pay for equal work for men and women shall be strictly implemented.

Eradication of Unemployment

12. Recognizing the right to work of every citizen, the main thrust of the new government will be: 'Berozgaari Hatao' (Eradicate Unemployment). As against the present trend

of jobless growth, our government will measure growth generation of gainful employment. Our new investment and institutional thrust to agriculture, the self-employed, the unincorporated sector, infrastructure development and housing will act as the vehicles for massive employment creation at all levels.

13. The Alliance will embark upon a strategic pro-poor policy in terms of which those living below the poverty line are not to be pitied but treated as a net resource replete with their own ideas and experience well in tune with local conditions. Every effort will be made to provide them work locally and ensure that schemes for their welfare are competently and honestly administered. They themselves will be treated as participants and facilitators in this noble venture. The services of NGOs, well versed in this field and, preferably originating locally, will also be enlisted wherever considered necessary.

Food Security and Price Stability

14. We will ensure food security for all, create a hunger-free India in the next five years, and reform and improve the Public Distribution System so as to serve the poorest of the poor in rural and urban areas. We will also ensure price stability by all appropriate means and necessary legislation.

Health and Drinking Water

15. We will spare no efforts to ensure that potable drinking water is available to all villages in the next five years. Age old and traditional methods of water utilisation, in both rural and urban areas, will receive urgent attention.

Education for All

16. We are committed to a total eradication of illiteracy. We will formulate and implement plans to gradually increase the governmental and non-governmental spending on education upto 6% of the GDP: thus to provide education to all. We will implement the constitutional provision of

making primary education free and compulsory upto 5th standard. Our aim is to move towards equal access to and opportunity of educational standards upto the school leaving stage. We shall strive to improve the quality of education at all levels – from primary schools to our universities.

Housing for All

17. Shelter is a basic human requirement that needs to be met on a priority basis. We are, therefore, committed to evolving a National Housing and Habitat Policy in consultation with State Governments, aimed at providing Housing for all. Towards this end, we shall facilitate construction of 20 lakh additional housing units annually. As in other programmes, the emphasis will be on the benefit to the poor and the deprived.

Empowerment of Women

18. We will legislate for the reservation of 33% of the seats in Parliament and State Assemblies for women; also institute plans for providing free education for girls upto college level, including professional courses, so as to better empower women. We will also set up a Development Bank for women entrepreneurs in the small scale and tiny sectors.

Harnessing Yuva Shakti

19. The youth of our country constitute a majority of our population. They are the strength of the family, village, locality and the community, they are also the future of our nation. We will take all necessary steps to mobilise this most idealistic, inspired and energetic section of our society in the mission of nation-building. For this purpose, we shall build national consensus for the creation of a National Reconstruction Corps aimed at environmental protection ecological tasks, reclamation of waste land, including afforestation, and for spreading literacy. We will have a time bound programme for promotion of sports.

Children

20. We will present a National Charter for Children. Our aim is to ensure that no child remains illiterate, hungry, lacks medical care. We will take measures to eliminate child labour.

Population

21. We are committed to achieving population stabilization by 2010 through improved access to primary health services, universalisation of primary education, delivery of contraceptive services to Mohalla/Ward/Basti level and through betterment of educational and socio-economic position of women.
22. Schemes for providing income generating training to widows will be worked out in cooperation with the state governments.
23. India today has a much larger population of senior citizens and their numbers are expected to rise substantially. It will be our endeavour to assure them that they continue to remain esteemed and valuable members of society.

Constitutional and Legal Reforms

24. We shall appoint a Commission to review the Constitution of India not only in the light of experiences and developments since 1996 but indeed, of the entire post-independence period, and to make suitable recommendations.
25. We are convinced that there is a clear case for devolution of more financial and administrative powers and functions to the States. We will take suitable steps to ensure harmonious Centre-State relations in the light of the recommendations of the Sarkaria Commission and also effect decentralisation right upto the grass roots level by activating and involving Panchayats and local bodies. States of the Union where the percentage of population below the poverty line has increased during the last five decades shall receive special attention. A Backward Area Commission for each state of the Union to identify least

developed areas and recommend comprehensive measures for their development shall be instituted. A Committee will be set up to study the feasibility of treating all 19 languages included in Schedule 8 of the Constitution as official languages will examine problems of Border States for amelioration and take measures for ensuring a fixed term (5 years) for all elected bodies including legislatures. We will also examine replacing the present No confidence Motion with the German system of 'Constructive vote of Non-Confidence'.

26. We will introduce necessary electoral reforms on the basis of the recommendations of the Goswami Committee, the Inderjit Gupta Committee and the Law Commission Report so as to deal with the malaise of defections, corruption and criminalisation of politics, and to prevent electoral malpractices.
27. Revitalise NE Council; ensure territorial integrity of the states of the NE; special developmental, administrative and security related programmes.
28. We will set up a National judicial Commission which will recommend judicial appointments in High Courts and Supreme Court and draw up a code of ethics for the judiciary. We will enact legislation to provide an eligibility criteria that the high offices of State-legislative, executive and judicial are held only by naturally born Indian citizens. We will establish a National Register of citizens. We will also introduce a multi-purpose identity card for all citizens.
29. We will undertake all necessary legislative and administrative measures to ensure the right of franchise of the Armed Forces through proxy voting and or any other method.

Corruption

30. We will enact the Lok Pal Bill with adequate powers to deal with corruption charges against anyone, including the Prime Minister. In the administration of justice, we shall not allow discrimination between the rich and the poor, the empowered and the powerless; restore the majesty of law, and the objectivity of the state.

New States

31. We will give full statehood to Delhi and also create Uttranchal, Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh as new States.

National Security

32. In today's unipolar world it is of paramount importance that India constantly maintains and strengthens the state of preparedness, morale and combat effectiveness of our Armed forces.
33. The recently established National Security Council will advise the government in this regard and also in the establishment of a credible nuclear deterrence. These are the minimum requirements in this recently inaugurated era of global inequality and increased vulnerability. The NDA will correct the imbalance and budgetary neglect of Defence needs during the last decades by successive governments thus ensuring adequacy of budgetary allocation! We will take effective measures for eliminating all pensionary anomalies. We will revamp the entire system of welfare of ex-servicemen as a tribute to those that laid down their lives for the country.

Internal Security

34. We are committed to ensuring the safety and security of all citizens in all parts of the country. For reaching this goal we will take effective steps to create a riot-free order and a terrorism-free India.

International Relations

35. In the past 13 months the government demonstrated its capability to secure for India a place, role and position in the global arena, commensurate with its size and importance. We have also shown that our desire for peace and friendship should not be interpreted as weakness but as a firm resolve that aggression shall not be permitted to succeed. We have effectively engaged with the international community and obtained a high degree of understanding.

This engagement process shall be developed to improve India's standing in the international community.

We will promote and strengthen regional groupings on the lines of SAARC and ASEAN, and reorient our diplomacy to pursue economic, commercial goals energy security goals. We will strongly support any attempt to build a system of trade and economic cooperation through an expanded global system of trade preferences (GSTP) among developing countries. We will seek to assert more robustly India's national interests, especially at the forthcoming review conference of the WTO, scheduled for December, 1999. We are committed to making the voice of India as the voice of the developing world.

Genuine Secularism

36. We are committed to establishing a civilised, humane and just civil order; that which does not discriminate on ground – of caste, religion, class, colour, race or sex. We will truly and genuinely uphold and practise the concept of secularism consistent with the Indian tradition of 'Sarva panth samadara' (equal respect for all faiths) and on the basis of equality of all. We are committed to the economic, social and educational development of the minorities and will take effective steps in this regard.

SCs, STs and Backwards Classes

37. The interests of Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Backward Classes will be adequately safeguarded by appropriate legal, executive and societal efforts and by large scale education and empowerment. We will provide legal protection to existing percentages of reservation in government employment and educational institutions at the Centre and State level. If required, the Constitution will be amended to maintain the system of reservation. We will continue to offer all assistance to the SCs, STs and Backward Classes to ensure their speedy socio-economic development. We will remove the last vestiges of untouchability from our society. Further, we will present

a National Charter for Social Justice (Samajik Nyay) based on the principle of social harmony (Samajik Samarasata). We are committed to extending the SC/ST reservations for another 10 years. Reservation percentages, above 50%, as followed by certain states shall be sanctified through necessary legislative measures.

Environment

38. We will establish an appropriate legal framework for the protection of the environment and unveil a National Environment Policy to balance between development and ecology. A Vanvasi Fund for the benefit of Vanvasis shall be established. To discourage poaching of Wild Life a Wild Life Anti-Poaching Authority shall be established. The Ganga and Yamuna rivers' cleaning programmes shall be revamped and revitalised. Similar schemes for other water bodies shall also be initiated.

Prasar Bharti

39. We will review the Prasar Bharti Act. We will also enact a comprehensive Broadcasting Bill to regulate private broadcasting and to protect Indian interests. We will restrict foreign equity holding in private television broadcasting to 20% (and prevent cross holding to avoid emergence of monopolies in the media).

A New Norm For Governance by consensus

Science & Technology

40. For sustainable national development and the long-overdue transformation of India into a modern, prosperous and knowledge-driven nation, we will ensure integration of efforts, in the field of science and technology with development programmes in various socio-economic sectors. We will further speed up the modernization of National Laboratories, strengthen R&D and establish new as well as strengthen existing centres of excellence, so that they continue to constitute an invaluable national asset and also become totally immune to policy fluctuations

elsewhere.

Information Technology

41. A new revolution is sweeping the globe – that of Information Technology. We believe that Information Technology is an important vehicle for future development. We are committed to ensuring that India is full and equal partner in its global progress; indeed, that India can be a software super power. We will, for that purpose, unveil a National Informatics Policy with short, medium and long-term perspective.
42. Finally, we are convinced that a nation of nearly 100 crore people representing a sixth of humanity cannot be governed on the arithmetic alone of majority and minority. Governance must become unifying, not divisive, in its practice. It is this mindless manner of the domination of the majority that has led to bitterness, hostility and confrontation – and has even made the opposition and ruling parties like permanent adversaries. This destructive trend of politics of negativism and political untouchability which has distorted our body politic in the last few decades calls for an immediate corrective. We will, therefore, strive to develop national consensus on all major issues confronting the nation by involving the opposition parties and all section of society in dialogue. We will also try for a consensual mode of governance as far as practicable. This National Agenda is a sincere and solemn covenant aimed at changing the content and culture of governance of this great nation, freeing it of the triple curses of hunger (bhookh), fear (bhay) and corruption (bhrashtachar), and transforming it into a New India that is prosperous, strong, self-confident and at peace with itself and the world. we appeal for the cooperation of all parties and all sections of society in this great endeavour.

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Conclusion

This National Agenda is a sincere and solemn covenant aimed at changing the content and culture of governance of this great nation, freeing it of the triple curses of hunger (bhookh), fear (bhay) and corruption (bhrashtachar), and transforming it into a New India that is prosperous, strong, self-confident and at peace with itself and the world. We appeal for the cooperation of all parties and all sections of society in this great endeavour.



