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PREFACE

INDIA 1977-78 is the 24th edition of the Reference Annual compiled by the Research and Reference Division of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting. The Annual contains information on various aspects of our national life, collected from many official and other authentic sources. The publication is an established work of reference but it does not claim to be comprehensive or exhaustive.

The special article 'Year of Change' at the beginning of the Annual sets out the events following the announcement of general elections to Lok Sabha, the defeat of the ruling Congress Party and victory to the newly formed Janata Party. The new Government's endeavours to undo some of the excesses of the previous Government, and to restore civil liberties to citizens, freedom to the Press and dignity and power to the judiciary are highlighted in the article.

Keeping the interests of the tourists in view, three more maps—showing the main rail-links, national highways and important tourist centres and air-links have been incorporated. Besides a political map, a few more charts indicating the achievements in the fields of industry and agriculture are also added.

In the Appendices, a list containing Indian diplomats abroad and foreign diplomats in New Delhi is one of the fresh additions to this edition of the Reference Annual. 'Laws of Parliament' has been brought up to 1 October 1977 and 'Important Events' covers the developments right from January 1976 to the end of 1977.

For the convenience of readers seeking more details on specific topics, a bibliography is given at the end of the book.

The text generally covers information up to September 1977. In some cases, however, events taking place later are also covered.

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KEY TO NUMERATION

1 lakh	=	One hundred thousand
10 lakh	=	1 million
1 crore	=	10 million

YEAR OF CHANGE

Nineteen hundred and seventy-seven was indeed India's year of change. The country witnessed protentious political developments growing out of the elections to Lok Sabha held in March. On the socio-economic plane the period was marked by striking departures in approach and action. Doubts about durability of democracy in a developing country were set at rest. It came to be accepted that economic growth should not be measured merely in terms of gross national product. It should mean a relentless struggle against destitution.

Democracy
Asserts

The year began with drama when the delayed elections to the Lok Sabha were announced unexpectedly by the then Government. The electioneering, as it gathered momentum, produced an awakening not anticipated before. The fragmented opposition fused and fought the elections under a single banner—that of the newly-formed Janata Party. When the final tally was made, the Janata Party and its allies emerged victors with a convincing majority in Lok Sabha. Thirty years of uninterrupted rule at the Centre by one political party came to an end on 22 March.

The Janata Party based its election platform on two pledges : liberty and bread. Towards fulfilment of the first began the dismantling of the authoritarian set up; for the second—the larger objective—a comprehensive development strategy was worked out and incorporated in the 1978-83 Plan document.

Emergency
Revoked

With the Congress government revoking the internal emergency on 21 March, the extraordinary legal provisions lapsed. Most of the political workers detained under the Maintenance of Internal Security Act were released. The emergency powers obtaining from the Defence and Internal Security of India Act 1971 (under the external emergency declared in December 1971) were still available to the government. As a first step in a series of measures to restore democracy, the new Government ended the external emergency. With the revocation of both the emergencies, a whole set of laws and regulations restricting the free exercise of democratic rights became inoperative.

Media Freedom

Priority was given to lift curbs on the media, imposed as a corollary to the 'emergency'. Pre-censorship of the Press was done away with. The Prevention of Publications (Objectionable Matters) Act enacted during the 'emergency' which conferred sweeping executive control over freedom of expression, was revoked. The Parliamentary Proceedings (Protection of Publication) Act 1956, popularly known as Feroze Gandhi Act, which was repealed during the 'emergency', was restored. The immunity enjoyed in reporting the deliberations of Parliament was thus handed back to the Press.

In pursuance of Government's policy that All India Radio and Doordarshan should be free from Government control to ensure their functioning in a fair and objective manner, a Working Group was appointed with Shri B. G. Verghese as the Chairman to examine the

functioning of All India Radio and Doordarshan and make recommendations regarding their future set up. The Group was asked to examine *inter alia* the functional, financial and legal aspects of the proposal to give full autonomy to Akashvani and Doordarshan, consistent with accountability to Parliament. The report of the Group is now under consideration. Earlier, on 1 August, a White Paper on the misuse of mass media during the emergency based on the findings of an independent body was placed before Parliament.

Democracy
Restored

The unwinding of the emergency establishment was a complex exercise and had to be done on many fronts. The main targets of attack by the emergency regime were the political opposition, the judiciary and the Press. A month after the imposition of the 'emergency' the Constitution (39th Amendment) Bill was passed by both Houses of Parliament. Soon thereafter, another amendment of the country's basic law was effected without the press being able to disclose even the contents of the legislation and the public not being allowed to utter a word in dissent. The two Bills, after their enactment, became the 38th and 39th amendments respectively of the Constitution. The first amendment deprived the Supreme Court and the High Courts of the power to examine certain actions taken in the name of the President, such as proclamation of a state of emergency (Article 352), promulgation of ordinances (Article 123) and imposition of President's rule on the constituent states of the Indian Union (Article 356). The other amendment destroyed the concept of equality before law which is the main pillar of the republican democracy India has opted for. This amendment put the Prime Minister virtually above law, contrary to the spirit of the Constitution. Then came the abridging of the freedom of the Press. All these measures have been revoked by the new Government in the first few months in office. The arrest and detention without trial of thousands of political workers has also been undone.

Inquiry into
Excesses

The new Government has set up a number of Commissions under the Commissions of Inquiry Act to enquire into various matters agitating the public mind. The Enquiry Commissions, presided over by eminent legal personalities, are now at work. One of these, headed by Justice Shri J. C. Shah, is enquiring into the alleged excesses committed during the emergency.

Rule of Law
Upheld

Abrogation of the 42nd Amendment of the Constitution was among the priority items on the new Government's political agenda. The Amendment placed several laws in the Ninth Schedule (outside the purview of the courts) affecting the citizens' cardinal 'equality-before-law' principle. This amendment was passed by Parliament in a matter of days—the Lok Sabha passed the Bill on 2 November 1976 and nine days later (11 November) the Rajya Sabha endorsed it.

The new Government sponsored the Constitution (44th Amendment) Bill, seeking to restore to the courts their jurisdiction to consider the constitutional validity of any Central or State Law, which had been taken away during the 'emergency'. The Bill had the support of the Opposition in the Rajya Sabha where the Government fell short of the necessary two-thirds majority. This became the Constitution (43rd Amendment) Act. The more comprehensive Constitution (45th Amendment) Bill is now on the legislative anvil. The Maintenance of

Internal Security Act, which was abused during the 'emergency', has since been repealed.

At another level, recognising the importance of a constitutional opposition to the government, the leader of the Opposition was for the first time accorded the status and rank of a cabinet minister.

Broadcasts by
Opposition
Leaders

For the first time since Independence, parties outside the Government have been allowed the use of Government-controlled broadcasting media for election broadcasts. In the elections to the State Assemblies held in June 1977 and March 1978 all parties recognised by the Election Commission were allowed the facility on a basis of equality.

State Chief Ministers were invited to broadcast from the respective regional stations of AIR and Doordarshan on the completion of their one year in office. The leaders of opposition in state legislatures were also invited to broadcast.

New Vistas of
Development

Judged by the index of consumption standards, more than 200 million Indians are below the poverty line, largely because they do not have gainful employment. Thirty years of economic planning has by-passed them. The new Government has, therefore, embarked on a policy of massive employment especially in the villages under the new concept of continuous and long-term planning called the 'rolling plan'. Forty per cent of the Plan investment has been earmarked for rural development. Of the overall outlay of Rs 1,16,240 crores on the next Plan (1978-83), Rs 69,380 crores is to be in the public sector. Consistent with the Government's declared policy to give a rural bias to development programmes, about Rs 9,000 crores have been allocated to irrigate an additional 17 million hectares of land in the next five years. Schemes are also being prepared for integrated area development for full employment in 3,000 blocks in the country. The Plan envisages the creation of 49.26 million man-years of employment by 1983. A commitment has been made to wipe out illiteracy through the National Adult Education Programme. Persons in 15-35 age group numbering 100 million would be covered under this ambitious programme.

Accent on Rural
Industry

The industrial policy has also been re-oriented to reinforce rural development. The policy is aimed at promoting rapid growth of small-scale industries in the rural areas, maximising employment and raising rural income levels. As many as 800 items have been reserved for the small sector as against 180 in the past. The focal point for industrial development will be the district headquarters rather than big cities and state capitals. In short, the thrust is to remove unemployment and under-employment, increase availability of basic goods and reduce income disparities.

At the same time it is realised that allocation of resources by itself does not yield the desired result. High priority has, therefore, been accorded to decentralisation of the development effort both in planning and implementation.

A National Committee headed by Shri Asoka Mehta, former Planning Minister, is presently studying the working of the Panchayats to suggest measures for grass-root level dispersal of resources and initiative. Most of the states of the Union have already made considerable headway in promoting democratic decentralisation, referred to as Panchayati Raj. The Asoka Mehta Committee is expected to suggest

further improvements in the decentralisation of the administrative system. Proposals are also under consideration for a more balanced distribution of tax revenues between the Centre and the States.

**New Deal for
Minorities**

A Minorities Commission has been established to function as a watchdog of the interests of religious and linguistic minorities. All the important minorities are represented on the commission. One of its functions will be to act as a clearing house for information on minorities' problems in areas such as employment, housing and educational opportunities. A similar commission for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes has also been set up.

**Lokpal and
Lokayukta**

The problem of corruption, administrative high-handedness and redress of citizens' grievances had not received the urgent attention it deserved. A bill seeking to appoint a Lokpal, Indian version of Ombudsman, and a Lokayukta, was passed by Lok Sabha as early as in 1969. However, it did not find a place in the Statute Book. Another bill introduced in the fifth Lok Sabha in 1971 also did not make much headway. The Janata government acted swiftly and introduced on 28 July the Lokpal Bill seeking to create an authority to enquire into charges of corruption and misuse of power against persons in high places including the Prime Minister and Chief Ministers of States. This again is a departure from the past when the Prime Minister and the heads of Government in the States were sought to be kept out of its purview.

In short, the events of the year symbolise the new Government's efforts to effect a synthesis between democracy and development and to honour the commitment to both liberty and bread.