



JPNN| Srinagar | Dec 8, 2014 | Prime Minister Narendra Modi today invoked Atal Bihari Vajpayee's concepts of communal harmony, humanity and democracy to share the pain of Kashmiris and promised to take the state to new heights of development. "People of Kashmir have given me a lot of trust and love. I will repay this love and trust with interest in the form of development. I can die for this love and trust showered on me," he said in his first election meeting in the Valley that avoided any mention of controversial issues like abrogation of Article 370. In his 30 minutes speech, Modi used the opportunity to attack the "all pervasive" corruption under successive governments of "Congress, father-son and father-daughter"

in the last 30 years and asked the people to give him "one chance" to bring development. Wearing a traditional Kashmiri 'Pheran', Modi sought to strike a chord with the people saying, "I, as Pradhan Sevak have come to share your pain and anguish. Your sorrow is my sorrow, your pain is my pain, your problem is my problem. I have not come to take anything. "People in the army and police have died so have the innocent youths. Their loss is irreparable and no one can compensate for it but sharing can reduce the pain." Invoking Vajpayee's famous 2003 speech at the same venue, Modi said, "Vajpayee made a good beginning. I have come to carry this forward. It is my duty to carry forward and fulfil his dreams of Insaniyat, Kashmiriyat and Jamhooriyat (democracy) which are the three pillars that can turn around Kashmir in the 21st century on the path of development."

It is the first time in the last 30 years that any leader has made bold to address a meeting in the Sher-e-Kashmir stadium. Former Prime Ministers Manmohan Singh and Atal Bihari Vajpayee had addressed meetings in the adjacent ground of the stadium complex. The Prime Minister said that it is the first time that army owned up the mistake of gunning down two innocent youth in a press conference and action has been taken against those who opened fire. "This had not happened in the last 30 years. Ye Modi sarkar ka kaamal hai. Ye mere nek iradon ka saboot hai (This is the wonder of Modi Government. It is a proof of my honest intentions)," he said. He said terrorism may be over but not corruption. "I want to eliminate corruption. Unless it is eradicated, the ordinary people's lives will not become any better," he said.

Giving an example of corruption in the state, Modi said that when he met families of flood hit victims during Diwali, they said money should not be given to the state government but rather transferred directly into their accounts. "This shows they did not trust their own state Government but Modi, in whom they showed so much faith," he said. The Prime Minister said he has been visiting Kashmir ever since July and would again be coming in 2015. He also said that it is tourism and hydro-electric potential of the state which can change its face. "Tourism can give employment to even a peanut seller. We can open up new destinations for tourism so that people who have visited the state can come again. This can be achieved by small measures of infrastructure at lesser known places," he added.

He said Kashmir has the potential to light up the entire country. "Small hydro-electric plants will give employment opportunities to youth of the state and allow them to lead a life of dignity." Addressing his rally amidst unprecedented security arrangements, the Prime Minister said he learnt from the people of earthquake affected Kutch to focus on the problems faced by them instead of talking about activities of the neighbouring country. "After the 2001 earthquake, I became the Chief Minister of Gujarat and I visited the Kutch area, which is close to Pakistan and has large Muslim population.

"I asked them what you expect of me. They said at least, you don't tread that path (Pakistan bashing). If you want to serve Kutch, it will not happen by discussing Pakistan but by talking about the problems of the people. I made it my mantra," Modi said. The Prime Minister said he visited Kutch several times but never raked Pakistan. "I went to Kutch again and again to serve the earthquake affected people. We built houses, roads and hospitals. But never talked about Pakistan. The result is that today, I say it with pride, that Kutch which was flattened by the quake, is the fastest progressing district of the country," he said.

The Prime Minister said Kashmir, which was hit by floods in September this year, can also progress like Kutch. "I have come with that experience and determination. I did not celebrate Diwali with family and friends. I came amongst you, to listen to your problems. I had made a scheme for whatever you help needed. That time many families came to meet me." The Prime Minister said the state government was sleeping when floods hit Kashmir but he rushed to the valley as he understood the pain of the people caused by such tragedies. He further said that he wanted to take Kashmir to new heights of development by boosting tourism and education sectors and harness the water resources to generate electricity which could light up the entire country.

"We have to take Kashmir to the new heights of development. Tourism is fast developing and people like to visit each other's countries. The people of our country visit Singapore and Dubai on Saturday and Sundays. "The people around the globe want to come here and there is nothing like Kashmir in the country to show to the outside world," Modi said adding he wanted Dal lake to remain packed with tourists. Modi recalled his first visit to Dal lake much before he became the Chief Minister of Gujarat and when tourism was badly hit in the Valley."When I came out of the Dal Lake, I saw some tourists, who came forward to take my blessings. At that time nobody knew me, I was stunned and asked them who are they. They told me that they are Gujarati tourists.

"I felt great as during those days of difficulty, my Gujarati people used to come here to try to become partners in the lives of the people. Then I asked the state government to open an office in Gujarat so that lakhs of people from the state will visit the Valley and help people to give fillip to the local economy," he said. He said tourism is a sector which can provide livelihood to poorest of the poor with minimum investment. "It provides livelihood to roadside vendors, shikarawalas, auto-rikshaw operators, taxi driver, hoteliers and tea seller. During the past 30 years, there is no development of tourism in the Valley. I want to change this saying. The water and the youthfulness of the mountain should be used by the mountain itself. This will prove right when we use water for generating power, when small power houses are build, no youth have to leave the mountain to earn his livelihood and live in shanties," he said. Modi also touched on the education of girls saying he sanctioned a higher secondary classes in a high school at Uri when locals told him that there was no such facility in nearby areas. "Because I want the daughters of Kashmir be educated. I once saw a picture in a (news)paper. Kashmiri daughters go for education at Kota (in Rajashtan). I wondered why these girls should come here."Why cannot we have quality institutes in Kashmir so that these daughters do not have leave their homes," he added. PTI