

OPENING STATEMENT OF THE HOME MINISTER
SHRI P CHIDAMBARAM
AT THE
CONFERENCE OF CHIEF MINISTERS ON INTERNAL SECURITY
ON MONDAY, 17TH AUGUST 2009
AT
NEW DELHI

Hon'ble Prime Minister, Governor, Chief Ministers, Ministers, Lt. Governors, Administrators, senior officials of the Central Government, senior officials of the State Governments, Ladies and Gentlemen:

2. Seven months ago, I had welcomed you to a similar conference on Internal Security. That conference was held in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks in Mumbai. The whole nation was in a state of shock and grief – and, I may add, anger. The people of India looked to that conference for reassurance, for a policy of zero tolerance, and for the promise of security. We deliberated for a whole day and we concluded the conference with the pledge that we shall provide security to the people of India. We acknowledged that what lay ahead was hard work and more hard work to fulfill our pledge to the people.

3. I warmly welcome you to the second conference on Internal Security and I am deeply grateful to the Heads of the State Delegations and senior officers for their kind presence. To the Hon'ble Prime Minister, I offer a warm welcome and my profound thanks for graciously agreeing to inaugurate this conference. We have chosen this day for many reasons. Among them is my belief that we should hold this conference early in the tenure of the new UPA government, so that we can draft a work plan for the next five years. Another reason is that six months is a period long enough to take stock of what has been accomplished since the last conference. A third reason is that amidst the other emerging challenges – drought in most parts of the country, floods in some – we should remain focused on internal security.

4. In the last seven months the Central Government has, with your co-operation and support, delivered on many promises. There has been no terrorist attack after the horrific crimes committed in Mumbai last November. We were able to hold the elections to Parliament; they were orderly and peaceful, barring a few pre-meditated attacks by naxalites. The Amarnath Yatra, spread over 52 days ended without incident and 3,82,512 persons were able to complete the pilgrimage. Independence Day 2009 passed off peacefully in all the States. Yesterday, the World Badminton Championships came to an end without a hitch, proving that India has the capacity to provide full security for international sporting events.

5. Let me recall the three challenges to internal security: *firstly*, terrorism; *secondly*, insurgency in the North Eastern States; and *thirdly*, Left wing extremism or naxalism. Each one of them shares many characteristics with the other two; at the same time, each one of them is significantly different from the other two. We have one instrument to confront and defeat the three challenges, and that is the police. In the final analysis, it is the policeman and the policewoman who will help us win these battles. To that policeman and policewoman, this conference must send out a clear message that Government at every level is duty bound to provide them every kind of support – monetary, material and moral. Let us never forget that more than any other branch of government, it is the police that has paid the highest price in terms of human lives that have been lost. In the 7 ½ months of calendar 2009, 303 men and women belonging to the police and paramilitary forces have laid down their lives, and I know that you will join me in saluting their supreme sacrifice.

6. Let me briefly deal with the three challenges, and I begin with terrorism. It is a matter of satisfaction that eight months have passed since the last terrorist attack. However, I hasten to add that it does not mean that the threat of terror has vanished or receded. It is better intelligence and better

preparedness that have helped us thwart potential terror attacks. We have cracked several terror modules and made several significant arrests, but the gravity of the threat is undiminished. We cannot afford to lower our guard, and we shall not.

7. The second challenge is insurgency or militancy. The security situation in Jammu and Kashmir has shown perceptible improvement. Militancy has declined, even while agitational politics is on the rise. The Central Government has offered every support to the new State Government to maintain law and order, focus on development, and find political solutions through dialogue. In the North East, insurgency remains a grave threat. In the last few months we have refined our policy stance: the law will be applied strictly; ceasefire agreements will be enforced in letter and spirit; and we will talk to any group only if that group abjures violence, lays down its arms and offers to surrender. I regret to say that I cannot report much progress in the North Eastern States. At times, we find that some State Governments have allowed themselves to bend before insurgent groups, making the fight against insurgency that much more difficult. I propose to hold discussions with the State Governments concerned and draw up State-specific strategies to deal with the insurgent groups in the three most affected States of Assam, Nagaland and Manipur.

8. The third challenge is Left wing extremism or naxalism. On more than one occasion, the Prime Minister had rightly cautioned the nation that Left wing extremism posed the "single biggest internal security challenge" to India. In the last few months, the CPI (Maoist) has stepped up its attacks on the Indian State and on the Indian people. I would like to draw your attention to a document put out by the CPI (Maoist) on June 12, 2009 which is titled "Post-Election Situation – Our Tasks". Anyone reading that document would have no illusion about the nature and gravity of the threat. Let me make our policy stance clear: We believe in the two-pronged approach of development and police action. However, the naxalites are anti-development and have targeted the very instruments of development – school buildings, roads, telephone

towers etc. They know that development will wean the masses, especially the poor tribals, away from the grip of the naxalites. Hence, these deliberate attacks on developmental activities. Our response therefore will be police action to wrest control of territory that is now dominated by the naxalities, restoration of civil administration and undertaking developmental activities – in that order. Meanwhile, we will encourage State Governments to talk to the naxalites – both individuals and local units – on condition that they give up their misconceived “armed liberation struggle”. Let our message to the naxalities be this: we will talk; we will act; we will restore order; and we will undertake developmental activities. I am happy to report that all the naxal affected States have resolved to confront and overcome the challenge of the CPI (Maoist), and later this evening I shall hold a separate meeting with the Governor and Chief Ministers of those States.

9. When I look back on the last seven months, I find that our collective record has been a mixed one. Our best achievements have been in the reiteration of our determination to fight terror; in the sharing of intelligence; in the unanimous support for new laws and new instruments; and in acknowledging that police reforms have been neglected for too long. On the other hand, there are still critical deficiencies in budget allocations for the police, recruitment, training, procurement of equipment, introduction of technology, and personnel management.

10. I may now turn to the tasks ahead, especially the task of removing the deficiencies that I highlighted just now. While preparing for this conference, we had circulated a questionnaire to the State Governments requesting them to indicate the present status under a number of heads and on a number of issues. I regret to point out that the response from the States is far from satisfactory, and I am sure Chief Ministers would have reached more or less the same conclusion. I therefore wish to list the more important concerns so

that the Heads of Delegation may, during their interventions, address the conference on these issues.

- The situation of vacant posts in the police is quite alarming. As on January 1, 2008, 230,567 posts were vacant against the total sanctioned strength of the States' police forces, both civil and armed. It is possible that the situation has improved since. State Governments may wish to highlight the progress made in this regard.
- With the setting up of the Multi-Agency Centre (MAC) and S-MACs, intelligence sharing has improved, but there is scope for improvement in intelligence gathering. At the last conference, we had circulated a scheme for strengthening the State Special Branch (SSB). Some decisions have been taken at a meeting with representatives of State Governments on July 2, 2009. State Governments may wish to address issues like creation of a separate cadre for intelligence; filling the vacancies in the SSB; revision of special branch manual; appointment of a dedicated intelligence officer in each police station; and reactivating the beat constable system.
- While NSG hubs have been set up in four cities and Special Forces units have been located in two cities, there is a need for State Governments to raise and deploy their own special intervention units (SIUs) and quick reaction teams (QRTs) in as many cities as possible. It is also necessary to put in place a clear command structure in the case of a terrorist threat or terrorist attack. State Governments may wish to address the conference on the steps taken in this behalf.
- We had commended to the States the idea of raising a State Industrial Security Force on the pattern of the Central Industrial Security Force. There are multiple benefits in raising such a

force, and I would request State Governments to respond to the suggestion.

- There is a new focus on coastal security and border management. However, we are concerned about the slow pace of construction of coastal police stations, outposts and check posts as well as border outposts (BoPs) along the land border; constitution of State Maritime Boards, registration of vessels, issue of ID cards to fishermen, and utilisation of interceptor speed boats. State Governments may wish to share their thoughts on how the pace of implementation can be quickened and the gaps in security plugged.
- The Modernization of Police Forces (MPF) scheme is being implemented since 2000-2001. A C&AG report made in January 2009 has highlighted crucial deficiencies. I request State Governments to share with us urgently the Action Taken Report on the audit findings of the C&AG.
- Police reforms have not received the attention they deserve. The Supreme Court has issued certain directions in the case of Prakash Singh and Others Vs Union of India and has appointed the Justice Thomas Committee to monitor compliance with those directions. I regret to point out that many State Governments have not yet constituted the Police Establishment Board. Nor have they fully complied with the other directions. State Governments may wish to share with us the steps taken by them in the matter of police reforms.

11. Ladies and Gentlemen, we – the State Governments and the Central Government – share an onerous responsibility. Nothing is more important to ensure the welfare of the people than the assurance of security. And none can contribute more to this sense of security than State Governments. You have

the constitutional power and responsibility in respect of matters relating to 'public order' and 'police'. However, increasingly, jurists and the general public have emphasized the constitutional duty of the Central Government to 'protect every State against internal disturbance'. Hence the need for the Central Government and the State Governments to work together in a spirit of partnership. I sincerely hope that we can do so and not only declare at this conference our common resolve but also demonstrate that we can agree on a common approach to overcome the challenges to internal security. I shall now request the Hon'ble Prime Minister to inaugurate this conference.

Thank you
