

# ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA, SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE TO 'SWACHH BHARAT AMBASSADORS'

Rashtrapati Bhavan, New Delhi : 10.09.2015

I congratulate the Urban Development Ministry for having brought together all the ambassadors who are dedicated to the cause of Swachh Bharat. It is heartening to see such an overwhelming response for the event and your strong presence here today assures me of its success.

2. Before India achieved its independence, Mahatma Gandhi once said '*Sanitation is more important than political freedom*'. However, even after 68 years of independence, statistics on sanitation speak otherwise and even today, 12% of urban Indian households do not have access to sanitation facilities. This needs remedial action by all stakeholders of the society. In the Joint Session of the Parliament on 9<sup>th</sup> June 2014, I observed and I quote:

*"We must not tolerate the indignity of homes without toilets and public spaces littered with garbage. For ensuring hygiene, waste management and sanitation across the nation a "Swachh Bharat Mission" will be launched. This will be our tribute to Mahatma Gandhi on his 150th birth anniversary to be celebrated in the year 2019."* (Unquote)

3. On 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2014, our nation took a pledge to make our country Open Defecation Free and Clean by the 150<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi. We all are here today because we know that we can achieve this objective together and rid the shame that comes with open defecation. The time for action is here.

4. Over the past one year, significant strides have been made. However much more needs to be done. In addition to building affordable and sustainable swachh Infrastructure, the mission's success is equally, if not more, dependent on **each individual's action**. Hence, our strategy is to engage the country's icons as **Swachh Bharat Ambassador** to make it a '**Jan Andolan**'. We have to carry forward the momentum that has been built.

5. Swachh Bharat Ambassadors have a huge potential to influence public to adopt safe sanitation practices and integrate them into their daily lives. An Ambassador does not only encourage his/her followers to imbibe the spirit of a Clean India

but also motivate them to become Swachh Bharat Ambassadors themselves, making this mission a true form of 'Jan Andolan'

6. The role of Ambassadors is not only to create awareness and motivate citizens, but also to join hands on-ground and participate in mission activities. You can devote a few hours of your precious time to contribute towards community mobilization, awareness creation, promotion of Swachh practices through multiple platforms, and other philanthropic activities including community adoption. It is necessary that you are engaged not only once but continuously, because the task at hand calls for sustained effort. Until each street is clean, each citizen has access to safe sanitation and every student lives in a hygienic environment, our task remains incomplete.

7. I must once again congratulate Shri Venkaiah Naidu, Minister of Urban Development for taking this initiative to involve distinguished public figures as Swachh Bharat Mission's Brand Ambassadors. I also compliment him and the entire team of Urban Development Ministry for bringing out a Coffee Table Book on Swachh Bharat Mission. I am pleased to see the firm commitment to the mission and look forward to the involvement of all citizens of India in this essential task. I am confident that through a "clean India" we will pay a fitting tribute to Mahatma Gandhi on his 150<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary. Let us become the nation that he dreamed of.

Jai Hind.