

No new grand scheme in Modi's Red Fort address

Old schemes find fresh voice with infra plan

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In his speech from the ramparts of the Red Fort on Sunday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced a ₹100 lakh crore “Gati Shakti” infrastructure plan with great fanfare. He made no mention of the fact that the same scheme has turned up in his last two Independence Day speeches as well.

In fact, several initiatives announced on Sunday seem to be a rehash of previously launched schemes, some as old as two years ago.

“In the near future, we are going to launch the National Master Plan of Prime Minister ‘Gati Shakti’ which will be



Narendra Modi unfurling the national flag at Red Fort. ■PTI

a huge scheme and fulfil the dreams of crores of countrymen,” Mr. Modi said on Sunday.

“This scheme of more than 100 lakh crores rupees will result in new employ-

ment opportunities for lakhs of youth. Gati Shakti will be a National Infrastructure Master Plan for our country which will lay the foundation of holistic Infrastructure.”

Echoes of past

Back in 2019, similar words issued from the ramparts of Red Fort: “We have decided to invest 100 lakh crore rupees for modern infrastruc-

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ture in this time period. This will generate employment; will develop new systems and various aspirations will be met.”

In 2020, Mr. Modi had reiterated the same plan, offering more details: “The National Infrastructure Pipeline Project will play an important role in this endeavour. ₹110 lakh crore will be spent

on this project.”

It was a similar story with some other announcements on Sunday as well. The Prime Minister said he had “good news to share today” that the Sainik Schools would admit girls. The decision to make all Sainik Schools co-educational by 2021-22 was announced by the Defence Ministry back in October 2019.

“I am announcing the National Hydrogen Mission today with this Tricolour as a witness,” the Prime Minister said on Sunday. However, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman had announced this mission during her Budget speech in February.

The plan to fortify rice with iron and vitamins before distributing it in ration shops and at schools was also announced by then Food Minister Ram Vilas Paswan in 2019. The resolution to make

India energy independent before the 100th anniversary of Independence also puts a deadline on a long-time ambition.

Previous Independence Day speeches from Mr. Modi have included grander ambitions. The schemes to electrify all villages, end open defecation through Swachh Bharat, provide taps in all rural households through Jal Jeevan, put a human in space by 2022, double farmers income by 2022 and double the economy to \$5 trillion over a five-year period were all announced from the Red Fort during previous August 15 speeches.

“It has been two years since August 15, 2019. At least, the 100 lakh crore figure could have been changed,” said a tweet from Congress spokesperson Randeep Surjewala.