

20 million toilets built in two years: Indian PM

August 15 2016

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi said Monday his government had built more than 20 million toilets and brought electricity to thousands of villages as he delivered an Independence Day report card.

From the ramparts of Delhi's 17th-century Red Fort, Modi vowed that his administration was on track to meet its pledge of providing power and [toilets](#) to every household across the world's second most populous nation.

Modi drew praise in his first August 15 speech in 2014 as he tackled often taboo issues such as [sexual violence](#) and a lack of toilets, promising to build one for every household within four years.

"Today I can say that in such short time, more than 20 million toilets have been built in India's villages and more than 70,000 are free of open defecation," Modi said to loud applause.

Open defecation has long been a major health and sanitation problem in India, where almost 594 million people—nearly half the population—defecate in the open, according to UNICEF.

Modi has stressed the need to clean up India since storming to power in 2014 and has repeatedly urged every household to have a toilet to end the spread of disease and illnesses such as diarrhoea.

Last year's speech saw Modi set a 1,000-day deadline for every village in

India to get electricity, urging state governments responsible for power to ensure every community is finally linked to the national grid.

"We're nearing 70 years of independence and these poor villages were forced to live in the 18th century all this while, but we promised to make the impossible possible," Modi said, dressed in a crisp white half-sleeved kurta and traditional headgear

"Today I am proud to say that even though we haven't even completed half of those 1,000 days yet, we have already brought electricity to 10,000 of those 18,000 villages."

Government figures released last year showed more than 300 million people in India—the world's fastest-growing major economy—still had no access to electricity.

Per-capita electricity consumption is barely one third of the global average.

In a lengthy speech, Modi said he had striven to streamline India's regulatory regime, including income tax filing and passport applications, while extolling the [economic growth rate](#) since he came to power.

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