

15 initiatives President Pranab Mukherjee will always be remembered for

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President Pranab Mukherjee will demit office on Tuesday, making way for [Ram Nath Kovind](#) as the 14th incumbent on the top constitutional post. Though Mukherjee would exit Rashtrapati Bhavan, his contributions as president would be remembered for a long time to come.

Pranab Mukherjee did not just confine himself to being a copy president. He took several initiatives in several spheres of life which would go a long way to inspire several generations to come.

1. DEMOCRATISATION OF PRESIDENCY

The Rashtrapati Bhavan, on the first anniversary of Pranab Mukherjee's term, made a number of announcements in a bid to democratise the institution of presidency. It did away with the honorific 'His Excellency' used to address the president. Governors of states were also encouraged to follow the practice.

The protocol and security restrictions on guests invited to Rashtrapati Bhavan were relaxed to the maximum extent possible.

Pranab Mukherjee's predecessors would take part in several activities in different parts of the capital. But these would inconvenience the common man. To avoid this, a decision was taken to have as many functions as possible within the Rashtrapati Bhavan itself in order to avoid disruption of traffic and any inconvenience to public.

2. ORDINANCES AND MERCY PETITIONS

Pranab Mukherjee promulgated or re-promulgated 26 ordinances during his tenure. In the fifth year, he promulgated five ordinances.

In the same period, he commuted four mercy petitions and rejected 30, second only to R Venkatraman, who rejected 45 mercy pleas.

KR Narayanan and his successor Abdul Kalam came to be known for sitting on mercy petitions. Narayanan, in fact, did not act upon a single mercy petition sent to him. Kalam cleared two petitions during his tenure, commuting one and rejecting the other.

On the other hand, President Pranab Mukherjee's immediate predecessor Pratibha Patil earned the reputation of being one of India's most lenient heads of state. She commuted saw 34 pleas and rejected five.

3. TEACHER PRANAB MUKHERJEE

President Pranab Mukherjee also created a record of sorts by becoming the first head of state to teach school children. During the last two years of his presidency, he did what he used to do over 50 years ago - teach. He held classes at a school within the premises of the Rashtrapati Bhavan. Mukherjee, a Master's degree holder in history, political science and law, taught about 80 students of classes 11 and 12 at the Rajendra Prasad Sarvodaya Vidyalaya in the President's Estate. He imparted lesson to students on the history of Indian politics. He also spoke about the rising menace of terrorism in the country and outside.

4. RASHTRAPATI BHAVAN ON TWITTER

The Rashtrapati Bhavan's Twitter account was launched on July 1, 2014 to connect directly with the public and disseminate information on the President's activities. The account gained about 102,000 followers in 20 days. As President Pranab Mukherjee demits office, Rashtrapati Bhavan has 3,297,391 followers on Twitter.

5. MUSEUM

A new museum in a heritage building - the Carriage Halls and the Stables - earlier used for horses and to house buggies, has been converted into a state-of-the-art museum. It highlights landmark events starting from Delhi Durbar of 1911 to the oath taking by first President

Rajendra Prasad. The museum also displays a part of the collection of arms, some furniture fashioned by Lutyens, activities of the President's Body Guard and a rich collection of gifts offered to the President by Indian and foreign dignitaries. Another 10,000 square meter museum has been developed underground to portray the history of Rashtrapati Bhavan in a high-tech story-telling format. This is the 'speaking museum' where the Rashtrapati Bhavan narrates its story. The exhibits are supported by modern conservation laboratory, resource centre for visitors' activities and a cyber-library with information bank.

6. SMARTGRAM INITIATIVE

President Pranab Mukherjee launched 'Smartgram' initiative on July 2, 2016 with an aim to develop villages into Humane, Happy and Hi-Tech townships. Under this initiative, five villages in the districts of Gurugram and Mewat in Haryana were selected to implement various programmes based on a convergence model with the support of the Centre, Haryana government, public and private sector organisations, NGOs and individuals. A large number of programmes in the field of education, skill development, infrastructure development, agriculture, health and clean energy were implemented.

7. MODERNISING PRESIDENTIAL RETREAT AT DEHRADUN

'Rashtrapati Ashiana', the presidential retreat in Dehradun, was lying in a decrepit state. The heritage building was restored, retrofitted and renovated during President Pranab Mukherjee's tenure. Ashiana, earlier known as Commandant's Bungalow and encompassing 217.14 acres, was taken on lease by the then Viceroy's Bodyguard in 1836. In 1975, it was re-designated as Rashtrapati Ashiana. The main restored and renovated building of Ashiana was inaugurated by the President on September 27, 2016. Twelve low cost, technology demonstrative units at Ashiana have been constructed to accommodate the officers and staff of Rashtrapati Bhavan during the presidential visits to Ashiana. The Ashiana Annexe was inaugurated by President Pranab Mukherjee on July 10, 2017.

8. PUBLIC ACCESS TO RASHTRAPATI BHAVAN

In order to project Rashtrapati Bhavan as a premier tourist destination in India, three tourist circuits - Rashtrapati Bhavan, Mughal Gardens and Rashtrapati Bhavan Museum - were opened on July, 25 2016. Over 94,360 people visited the Rashtrapati Bhavan during the fifth year of the presidency. A record number of more than 6.95 lakh people visited 'Udyanotsav 2017' - the annual opening of Mughal Garden between February 5 and March 12, 2017. Over 77,323 persons visited the Rashtrapati Bhavan and more than 30,866 persons visited using the online booking system during the fifth year of the presidency.

9. WELFARE ACTIVITIES

President Pranab Mukherjee launched '4S' initiatives. 'Sanskriti' is aimed at the children of the President's Estate in the age group of 7 to 15 years and their wholesome development through organising of painting, yoga, storytelling, clay modelling and singing classes at the Pranab Mukherjee Public Library. 'Samagam', a community initiative for senior citizens residing in the President's Estate, offers an opportunity for them to get together every afternoon from Monday to

Friday. Facilities like yoga classes, community singing, counselling services, free health check-ups and board games have been made available. Under 'Sparsh', an initiative for special children, a respite centre has been opened. 'Sanskar' aims at meeting the nutritional requirements of children at the Rashtrapati Bhavan Play School.

10. COMMISSIONING OF ROOFTOP SOLAR POWER PANELS

Various initiatives were taken to make the President's Estate more energy efficient. During the fifth year, rooftop solar power panels with a capacity of approximately 508 KW were installed in association with Rural Electrification Corporation Limited and Tata Power Delhi Distribution Limited. With a view to having a proper transport system in place within the Estate and also to enhance connectivity between the important gates of the Estate and the nearby Metro stations and bus terminals, e-rickshaws have started plying. Their number would be augmented in a phased manner.

11. IN-RESIDENCE PROGRAMMES

President Pranab Mukherjee opened up the gates of the Rashtrapati Bhavan to the people in a big way. One of the landmark initiatives for achieving this was the In-Residence Programme. This programme was envisaged to encourage the creative and innovative potential of the people and opening up Rashtrapati Bhavan for greater participation and involvement of citizens in its activities. The programme gathered further momentum in the fifth year with ten innovation scholars, two writers and two artists staying at Rashtrapati Bhavan from March 4 and 18 this year. So far, 161 people have participated in such programmes. Those who stayed in the Rashtrapati Bhavan under the programmes include writer Paresh Maity and his wife, artist Jayasri Burman, well known artist and freedom fighter Shahabuddin Ahmed of Bangladesh.

12. E-GOVERNANCE

President Pranab Mukherjee took several initiatives to adopt new technologies and solutions. The 'E-Pustakalaya' project for bar coding and cataloguing of books took place. Using **e-Granthalaya software**, relating to Automated Library of President's Secretariat (ALPS), around 8310 e-books have been uploaded and over 34,117 books have been e-catalogued. These books are available under e-office platform.

Through Digital Photo Library (DPL), implemented in August, 2015, approximately 3.75 lakh negatives have been scanned. Approximately 92,105 digitised photographs from December, 1996 have been uploaded onto the DPL server. The DPL provides access to rare and historical photographs and facilitates archiving through digitisation of photographs.

Under E-Management of Visitors System (E-MVS), online monitoring of the system is done on a regular basis to ensure smooth and effective management of online requests in a time bound manner. Around 3.75 lakh visitors have visited Rashtrapati Bhavan and the Rashtrapati Bhavan Museum Complex using the online system. The E-MVS has been adopted by Raj Bhavans of Maharashtra, Uttarakhand and Tamil Nadu.

Bar-coded invitations through E-Invitations Management System (EIMS) are being extensively used for various functions such as cultural programmes, state banquets, At-Home receptions,

swearing-in ceremonies, civil investiture ceremonies, Defence investiture ceremonies, visitor's awards and the likes. So far, more than one lakh e-invitations have been sent through this system for over 425 functions. This bar-coded invitation system has also been adopted by other organisations such as Indian Council of World Affairs, National Innovation Foundation, Uttarakhand Raj Bhavan, NITI AYOOG and Consumer Affairs Ministry.

13. BUGGY

Highlighting the role of Rashtrapati Bhavan as a witness to modern Indian history and its unique feature as a heritage building, President Pranab Mukherjee revived the tradition of using the State Landau or Buggy. It was used for the Beating Retreat ceremony on January 29, 2014 for the first time after a gap of almost 30 years.

14. PRANAB MUKHERJEE PUBLIC LIBRARY

A dilapidated building due for demolition located in Schedule 'B' of the President's Estate was restored and converted into the Pranab Mukherjee Public Library for the welfare of the residents of the Estate. The restoration work was completed in a record time of five months and was inaugurated on July 25, 2013.

15. IMPROVEMENTS IN PRESIDENT'S ESTATE

President Pranab Mukherjee made efforts to comply the green building parameters laid down by the Urban Development ministry. The Narmada Residential Complex quarters for the staff of Rashtrapati Bhavan have special features. They include rain water harvesting, use of energy efficient LED lights, recycling of waste water, use of fly ash bricks in partitioning walls and solar water heating. An underground sump provides for utilisation of sewage treated water in parks and flushing system of water closets. The facade of quarters is as per Rashtrapati Bhavan architectural features like cornice, columns and chhajjas.