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Opposition Criticises Modi for Praising RSS in Speech

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NEW DELHI (August 16, 2025), Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Independence Day address has drawn sharp reactions from opposition parties after he praised the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) during his speech from the Red Fort.

The comments, delivered as part of his national address on August 15, were met with disapproval from several opposition leaders, who said such references were inappropriate for an event meant to unite the nation.

Congress General Secretary Jairam Ramesh described the speech as “bland and hypocritical,” accusing the Prime Minister of using the occasion to promote the RSS rather than focus on broader national issues. He criticized repeated mentions of slogans such as “Viksit Bharat” and “Atmanirbhar Bharat,” claiming that they lacked substantive achievements.

Ramesh further alleged that the Prime Minister’s remarks were a “desperate attempt to appease” the RSS, an organisation viewed by the Congress as politically and ideologically divisive.

The Communist Party of India (Marxist) echoed these concerns, calling the praise of the RSS “deeply regrettable.” CPI(M) leaders argued that the group’s past actions and ideological positions make it unsuitable to be held up as an example during a national celebration. They stated that Independence Day speeches should honour those who fought for the country’s freedom and avoid promoting political or ideological groups.

In defence, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) maintained that the RSS has played a significant role in shaping India’s public discourse. BJP spokespersons cited historical references, noting that even former Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru had described RSS members as patriots in the 1960s. They argued that acknowledging the RSS was consistent with recognising organisations that have contributed to national life.

The disagreement has once again highlighted the polarised nature of political debate in India, especially during high-profile national events. While the Prime Minister’s supporters view the RSS as an influential cultural and social force, critics see its mention in such speeches as politically motivated.

Independence Day addresses have historically been used by Indian leaders to outline national achievements, set future goals, and send messages of unity. This year’s controversy underscores the continuing debate over how political and ideological references should be handled in official national communications.