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PAPER CLIPPINGS

ಇಲಾಖೆ / ವಿಷಯ: DEPARTMENT / SUBJECT:

President

ಪತ್ರಿಕೆಯ ಹೆಸರು : NAME OF THE NEWS PAPER:

Deccan Herald

ದಿನಾಂಕ : DATE : 21/06/2019

# President bats for one nation, one election

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D.H.  
21/6/19

**NEW DELHI, DHNS:** A day after a big no by Opposition parties, President Ram Nath Kovind on Thursday made a fresh bid for simultaneous elections to the Lok Sabha and state Assemblies.

In an hour-long address to the joint sitting of the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha, Kovind also outlined the Modi government's agenda for the next five years for building a "New India" that included connecting villages by roads, building houses for the poor and ensuring access to medical facilities for all.

"My government wants to make people conscious, capable, well-provided and unfettered to such an extent that they do not feel the 'burden, force, or absence' of the government in their daily lives," the President said in his address in the Central Hall of Parliament, that was brimming with members from both Houses, diplomats and special invitees.

He said the people of the country had given his government a very clear and an even stronger mandate after assessing its performance in the first tenure.

"By doing so, the people of the country have given a mandate for continuing uninterrupted and at an accelerated pace the journey of development which started in 2014," Kovind said.

The President also underlined the government's resolve to remove "social evils of instant triple talaq and 'nikah halala' to ensure equal rights for women, put the campaign against black

## President's speech was insipid: Congress

Congress President Rahul Gandhi on Thursday stuck to his claims of corruption in the Rafale fighter jets contract even as President Ram Nath Kovind said the first aircraft would be delivered soon.

"My stand has been the same. There has been corruption in the Rafale jet deal," Rahul told reporters in front of the Parliament.

money on a faster track and make the zero-tolerance policy against corruption more comprehensive and effective.

Pitching for electoral reforms, he noted that frequent elections affect the pace and continuity of development programmes.

"One Nation — Simultaneous Elections' is the need of the hour, which would facilitate accelerated development, thereby benefitting our countrymen," Kovind said and urged parliamentarians to seriously ponder over the "development-oriented proposal".

"With such a system in place, all political parties, according to their political ideologies, will be able to better utilise their energy towards development and public welfare," the President said.

On Wednesday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had announced setting up a committee to examine the feasibility of holding simultaneous elections and come up with suggestions in a time-bound manner.