

ADDRESS TO PROVISIONAL PARLIAMENT—31 JANUARY 1950

Session	—	First Session
President of India	—	Dr. Rajendra Prasad
Prime Minister of India	—	Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru
Speaker, Provisional Parliament	—	Shri G.V. Mavalankar

MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT,

As I stand here today to greet you, representatives of the people of India, my mind is filled with emotion, and the recent past of India, with its travail and struggle, passes before my eyes. We meet in this sovereign Parliament of the Republic of India, and the high enterprise of serving our motherland and the millions of our countrymen has been entrusted to us, That is an immense and sacred trust and, as your President, I approach it with humility and prayer.

On this historic occasion our thoughts naturally turn to Mahatma Gandhi and our hearts pay homage to him. Let us accept our great task in the spirit of the Father of the Nation, who brought us our freedom, and let us remember always the message that he gave us, the message of unity and goodwill between all the people of India, of communal harmony, of the abolition of class distinctions and of those based on birth, caste or religion, and the evolution of a peaceful, cooperative India, which gives opportunities of progress to all her citizens.

It is the firm policy of my Government to maintain peace and friendship with all the nations of the world and to help in every way possible in the maintenance of world peace. The Republic of India inherits no enmities or traditional rivalries with other nations and my Government intend continuing a policy directed towards securing peace in the world and avoiding any alignment which leads to hostilities with any nation.

India is a sovereign democratic Republic, but she has decided to continue her association with the Commonwealth of Nations. That is a unique development, new to constitutional law and history. Thereby we do not limit our freedom in any way, but we indicate our desire for continued friendship and co-operation with the group of nations represented in the Commonwealth. My Prime Minister recently attended the Conference of Commonwealth Foreign Ministers held in Colombo. That conference was an

example of how independent nations can meet together and discuss, in a friendly way, the great problems that face the world and endeavour to find common ways of action, without in any way infringing the independence and sovereignty of one another.

Our relations with foreign powers are friendly and my Government have exchanged diplomatic representation with a very large number of countries. Treaties of friendship have been concluded with Switzerland, a country with a great tradition of democratic freedom, and with Afghanistan with whom we have been bound by cultural and historical ties since the dawn of history. Negotiations have been proceeding for treaties of friendship and commerce with Iran, Nepal and the United States of America. As you are aware, my Prime Minister visited this great country recently and his visit led to a greater understanding and respect and closer ties between India and the United States.

My Government have recently accorded *de Jure* recognition to the new Government of China and it is hoped that an exchange of diplomatic representatives will take place soon. With this great country we have had friendship and cultural contacts for more than two thousand years. I trust that those friendly contacts will be maintained and will help in preserving the peace of Asia and the world.

With the nations of Europe, America and Australasia, India is developing friendly contacts. It is natural that India should be even more interested in the mother-continent of Asia, of which she is a part, as well as in Africa. Her primary interest is in the freedom of peoples still subject and in the removal of all barriers that come in the way of the full development of nations and peoples. She is entirely opposed to the continuation of colonial rule, in any shape or form, as well as to any kind of racial discrimination. In Asia freedom is on the march; at the same time there is trouble and turmoil in some parts of it. I earnestly trust that out of this turmoil will emerge peace and freedom and co-operative relations between all the countries of Asia.

An historic event took place recently in the establishment of the free and independent United States of Indonesia. We have welcomed this more particularly because of the very close relations, both in the past and in the present, between the people of India and the people of Indonesia. It has been an honour and privilege for us to welcome the President of the United States of Indonesia in our midst and to convey to him and to his people our greetings and good wishes.

India has large numbers of her children living in countries abroad, notably in Africa, in Fiji, in the West Indies, in the island of Mauritius and elsewhere. Our advice to them has always been that they should identify themselves with the indigenous people and look upon the country of adoption as their real home.

I regret to say that our relations with our neighbour country, Pakistan, are not as good as they should be and there are several matters in dispute between us. Our history and culture; as well as the unalterable facts of geography, compel both India and Pakistan to live in friendly co-operation with each other. But the grievous wound caused by recent events will take some time to heal. It is my Government's policy to endeavour to help in every way this process of healing. In pursuance of this policy, my Government have proposed to the Government of Pakistan that both the Governments should make a solemn declaration for the avoidance of war as a method for the settlement of any disputes between them, and to resort to negotiation, mediation, arbitration or reference to some international tribunal, in order to settle such disputes. I trust that the Pakistan Government will accept this offer in the spirit in which it has been made and thus help to reduce the unfortunate tension that has existed between these two countries.

One of the principal causes of tension between India and Pakistan is the dispute over the future of Jammu and Kashmir. The matter is before the Security Council and I wish to say nothing at this stage that may prejudice the prospect of a just and peaceful settlement by the efforts of that body. My Government have repeatedly declared their intention that the people of the State should themselves decide freely whether they will remain acceded to India. That policy remains unaltered. But the conditions which will make a free declaration of the will of the people possible have not yet been established. Until that happens and a satisfactory solution to the difficult problem has been found, India will continue to discharge her obligations to protect The State and its people against aggression.

During the last two and a half years the map of India has changed greatly. Hundreds of States have disappeared or have been formed in larger units. This remarkable change has been brought about in a peaceful manner and the process of integration of over 500 States is now practically complete. Their number has been reduced to 16 units. The federal functions of the Unions and States will be taken over by the Central Government with effect from the 1st April. My Government propose to bring forward a Bill during the current session which will bring about legislative uniformity, in so far as the Central laws are concerned, between the States and the rest of India.

The economic situation in the country has been a matter of grave concern to my Government. Suffering from many generations of colonial rule, India had to face the heavy burdens of the world war. Her economy was badly shaken; there was shortage of essential materials, and inflation. It is the primary objective of my Government to raise the standard of living of the people. Owing to the great difficulties which have followed from partition and which have cast a heavy burden on our finances, the progress

we had hoped for has not been made. The burden of defence expenditure has been great, as also expenditure on the relief and rehabilitation of millions of displaced persons. The deficit in food has compelled Government to import large quantities of foodstuffs at a heavy cost to the country. My Government have aimed at stopping inflation and bringing about gradually a lowering of prices. All these additional burdens and certain upsets which have taken place from time to time in our economy, have delayed our progress in many important aspects of nation-building, among them being education and health, to which my Government attach great importance. My Government regret this delay greatly. It was essential, however, that in the difficult circumstances which the country had to face, every kind of economy should be practised, so that a sound foundation might be laid for future progress. There has been some definite progress in economy of expenditure.

Our railways, which had suffered grievously during the war and immediately after the Partition, have registered a welcome improvement in many directions. With the integration of the railways of Indian States and Unions of States with the Indian Government Railways from the first of April next, there will be practically one entirely nationalised railway system operating throughout the land.

It is my Government's intention to establish a Planning Commission so that the best use can be made of such resources as we possess for the development of the nation. Such planning will need the fullest help from statistical information. It is proposed therefore to establish a Central Statistical Organisation. It must be remembered that planning must have clear objectives and that any widespread effort can only succeed with the full co-operation of the people. It is only when governmental agencies and popular enthusiasm and co-operation are yoked together that large-scale economic and social development can take place.

My Government have also been considering for sometime past the reorganisation of the machinery of Government in order to make it more efficient and to avoid waste.

I have referred to the large expenditure on our defence forces. My Government, wedded as they are to the promotion of peace in India and outside, have had to face painful dilemmas during the past two and a half critical years. With all the desire to reduce defence expenditure, they could not take the risk of putting the country in jeopardy at a time when evil forces were endangering its security both within and from outside. The first essential of freedom is the strength to preserve it and no country can take any risk in such a vital matter. Hence the process of demobilisation, which should have taken place after the World War, Was delayed and

slowed down. I am glad to say that our defence services have acquitted themselves admirably and have gained the praise and approbation of competent experts. While the security of the country must remain the paramount obligation of any Government, they are anxious to reduce expenditure on defence, in so far as this is possible, and they propose to do so as a measure of economy as well as a gesture of peace.

Food has been a heavy item in our national expenditure and a great deal of thought and effort has been devoted to solving this problem. My Government have declared that we must make good the deficiency in food by the end of 1951. At the same time it is necessary to ensure adequate production of cotton and jute, which are essential industrial raw materials in short supply. I am glad to say that definite progress is being made in regard to food production and we are proceeding with both short-term and long-term schemes for adding to it. Food procurement is an essential part of our short-term scheme. Fortunately the harvest generally has been good though there has been lack of winter rainfall in certain areas and, in Madras, almost complete failure. The campaign for growing more food requires the full co-operation of the people and more especially the peasantry. Among the major schemes before the country are certain river valley projects. Three of these, viz. the Damodar Valley, the Bhakra Dam and Hirakud are under construction at present. Government attach great importance to these, from the point of view of irrigation and food and hydro-electric power.

I am glad that scientific research is making considerable progress in the country. It is ultimately on science and the applications of science that all progress depends. Recently two great national research laboratories have been started. One of these is the National Chemical Laboratory at Poona and the other, the National Physical Laboratory in Delhi, Both are magnificent research institutions, it is proposed to have nine more national research laboratories, of which five will be working this year, in addition to the two mentioned above. These laboratories will not only carry out research work of all kinds but will also be feeders to industry and will thus help in industrialisation.

The Well being of the country depends very largely on the welfare of labour, both urban and agricultural. In the course of the last two years the Factories Act and the Minimum Wages Act have been enacted and beginning has been made with schemes of social security by enacting the Employees' State Insurance Act of 1948 and the Coal Mines Provident Fund and Bonus Schemes Act, 1948. My Government will shortly bring before you two comprehensive Bills dealing with labour relations and trade union. An all-India agricultural labour enquiry is at present in progress and, when it is completed, it will assist Government in devising measures for improving the lot of those who are engaged in agricultural production.

The problem of rehabilitation of the large number of evacuees from Pakistan is of great importance not only for them but also for the country. My Government have devoted their earnest attention to it and achieved a measure of success, and a large number of people have been settled and rehabilitated. But it is also true that a large number still remain to be settled and have suffered great hardships. My Government are determined to proceed with the rehabilitation of these displaced persons as quickly as possible.

A statement of the estimated receipts and expenditure of the Government of India will be laid before you in due course during this session and you will be asked to approve the financial proposals of my Government.

There are twenty Bills pending before you. Some of them have passed the Committee stage and some others have already been discussed in principle. A few of them, which are still under consideration by the Committees, will be brought before you with their recommendations during the course of this session.

A few ordinances have been issued before the commencement of the present session. Such of them as require permanent legislation will be brought before you in the shape of new Bills.

Among the other legislative measures that it is intended to bring before you during this session, the following may be specially mentioned:

A Bill to amend the Indian Income Tax Act in the light of the recommendations made by the Income Tax Investigation Committee, a Bill to extend the duration of the Import and Export Control Act, a Bill to give protection to certain industries, a Bill to provide for the conservation of India's coal resources and the regulation of the coal mining industry, and a Bill to provide for the proper regulation and development of inter-State rivers and river valleys—these are the more important measures which my Government propose to place before you. They also propose, if the preliminary work could be got through in time, to introduce a comprehensive Representation of the People Bill providing for various election matters under the new Constitution.

I have given you a broad survey of the work in the legislative field. My Government will announce to you from time to time the precise form in which these and other legislative measures and important motions relating to matters of general public interest will be brought before you and will explain to you the degree of urgency in respect of them.

I shall now leave you to your labours. We live in a troubled world scarcely recovered from the consequences of the war, facing crisis after crisis and enveloped by suspicion, bitterness and fear. Nothing good can

come out of these. We have heavy and difficult tasks before us and the only way to face them is with courage, co-operation and hard work. Above all I trust we shall always remember that the foundations of our nation's progress can be well and truly laid only if they are based on right objectives and right action and on integrity of mind and purpose. Great tasks cannot be accomplished by petty means, nor can good results flow from evil methods. We have to face the great challenge of our generation. I am convinced that we can face it, if we prove true to the great ideals that the Father of the Nation placed before us.

I pray that wisdom and tolerance and the spirit of concerted effort may guide you in your deliberations.