

ADDRESS TO PROVISIONAL PARLIAMENT—14 NOVEMBER 1950

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

MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT,

We met here three and a half months ago at a special session of Parliament to consider a crisis that had arisen in international affairs. That crisis led the United Nations to face aggression in Korea and, after many trials and difficulties, the forces of aggression were checked and thrust back. But recent developments have deepened that crisis and the world, hungering for peace, appears to stand perilously on the verge of war. In our own country we have had to face unparalleled calamities. A great earthquake and subsequent floods brought disaster to our North-Eastern State of Assam. In many other States there were also mighty floods bringing destruction in their terrain; lack of rain in certain other areas ruined not only the present harvest but also gravely affected the season to come. Thus we meet today at a moment of grave trial, both external and internal, and it will require all our wisdom, courage and restraint to face these perils and dangers and work for the good of our people and the peace of humanity.

During these difficult months that have passed, my Government have laboured consistently in the international sphere for the preservation of world peace and to prevent the extension of the Korean war. Peace is recognised by all to be the paramount need of humanity, and yet fear drives nations in a direction which endangers peace. World peace can only be assured if the great nations of the world seek it and work for it; war may come even if one of them considers it unavoidable. This Parliament has expressed its will to peace on many occasions and my Government will continue to labour to that end to the best of their ability. I earnestly hope that the statesmen gathered together at Lake Success, and those who are in charge of the foreign policies of nations, will succeed in their endeavours to prevent the spread of war. While aggression has to be met and evil cannot be condoned, it has to be remembered that war itself is an evil which brings even greater evils in its train. The peace that we seek and that is worth preserving is a living peace and not the peace of the grave.

The conflict in Korea has already brought tremendous destruction to that country and its people and a like fate would befall many other countries if war spreads. I pray that the leaders of the great nations of the world, on whom rests a great responsibility will take counsel together and yet save the world.

My Government have been consistently following a policy of friendship with our great neighbour country, China. It was a matter of deep regret to us, therefore, that the Chinese Government should have undertaken military operations in Tibet, when the way of peaceful negotiations was open to them. Tibet is not only a neighbour of India but also has had close cultural and other ties with her for ages past. India must, therefore, necessarily concern herself with what happens in Tibet and hope that autonomy of this peaceful country will be preserved.

Recently, His Majesty the King of Nepal sought shelter with his family in our Embassy in Kathmandu, as certain differences had arisen between him and his Government, and expressed a desire to come to India. His Majesty has now come to Delhi and we have welcomed him as our honoured guest. Nepal is a country with the closest relations with India and a treaty of friendship was signed between India and Nepal only a few months ago. It has been and remains my Government's desire to respect the independence of, and to maintain friendly relations with, Nepal and to see her people achieve political and economic progress.

The recent natural calamities and disasters in our country have seriously affected the food situation. Ripening harvests have been destroyed by floods and in some cases even stores of foodgrains have been washed away. What is more disturbing is that even the coming harvest has been seriously affected by drought over wide areas, notably in Bihar, where a calamity of such magnitude has not occurred in living memory. This has necessitated large imports of foodgrains from foreign countries. But, even so, we are likely to experience grave difficulties during the concluding weeks of this year. It has become essential, therefore, for us to use, to the best advantage, the foodgrains that may be available in India. Private hoarding, in such circumstances, is a crime of the first magnitude. States which have some surplus foodstuffs must share them with other less fortunate areas. All of us must avoid every kind of waste and try to help those in need. The situation is grave. It does not help to minimise it; it helps still less to exaggerate it or to use the language of panic about it. We have to understand the position fully and deal with it with determination and a grim resolve to bear all necessary privations.

In spite of the disasters we have had affecting our food position and the difficulties we are experiencing today, there is no going back on our programme of self-sufficiency. We have made considerable progress in our

food production and we hope to do better next year. It must be remembered that our present food crisis is due to very extraordinary and abnormal causes and there is no reason to give up our objective of producing enough food for the normal consumption of our country by March, 1952.

To meet the situation arising out of the rise in prices, my Government have taken steps to control the supply and prices of eleven articles, to liberalise imports, and to check anti-social practices. These steps can only succeed with the full cooperation of the people themselves.

I regret to say that trade between India and Pakistan has largely been at a standstill because no decision has yet been reached about the par value of the Pakistan rupee. It was hoped that this question would be settled immediately after the recent meeting of the International Monetary Fund in Paris, but its consideration was postponed. My Government have made a proposal to the Pakistan Government for the final decision of two of the major issues between India and Pakistan. They have suggested a tribunal of the highest standing to decide the issues of evacuee property and canal waters. I trust that this proposal will be accepted and thus two serious causes of conflict between the two countries will be removed. Evacuee properties concern vast numbers of people both in India and Pakistan and an early decision in regard to them would not only bring relief to these people, but would also help in improving the relations between the two countries.

I am glad that as a result of the Indo-Pakistan Agreement of April 8th, 1950, there has been a gradual improvement of conditions and a flow back of migrants to their original homes.

It has become even more necessary than before that we should apply our limited resources to the best advantage and that we should explore all avenues, which will help in developing the country. The problems that face us cannot be solved unless there is such development. The Planning Commission has been strenuously labouring, in cooperation with the Ministries of the Central Government and the State Governments, to lay down a preliminary plan as well as to prepare a plan for a longer term. It is hoped that the short-term plan will be placed before the country before long. Meanwhile, the three great river valley projects—the Bhakra, Damodar and Hirakud—are making substantial progress. Scientific research has also made considerable progress; and a number of new national laboratories have been opened.

Progress has been made in the rehabilitation of displaced persons and some of the new townships, such as Faridabad, Nilokheri, Rajpura, Kandla and Fulia, have now taken shape and most of them are functioning. In regard to displaced persons from East Pakistan, the position has been fluid because of movements of migrants in both directions. One million and one

hundred thousand of such displaced persons have been settled under various schemes on land or in shops. There is still a camp population of 250,000 chiefly in West Bengal and also in Bihar, Orissa, Tripura and Assam. Steps are being taken to rehabilitate this camp population. Much remains to be done for the displaced persons from East Pakistan.

More accurate figures are available for the displaced persons from West Pakistan. These totalled about 5 million. Of these 600,000 families, comprising about 3 million persons, were offered allotment of land with some help for equipment. Of these, 500,000 persons, who had secured allotment of land, preferred to live in towns. The displaced persons in towns thus came to about 2,500,000. Some of these showed enterprise and made their own arrangements. Government had to provide housing and gainful employment for others. In regard to housing 2,070,000 have been given accommodation in evacuee houses, reconditioned barracks, and in newly-built houses. In addition plots have been developed for private construction and houses are being built all over the country.

In regard to providing gainful occupation, shops and business premises have been allotted to 54,000 persons and about 1,700,000 have been given assistance through loans or employment or vocational and technical training. Thus a great deal has been done in regard to housing and rehabilitation of displaced persons from West Pakistan though the standards achieved are unfortunately not high. The settlement of the evacuee property question would help considerably in the solution of this problem.

My Government have been anxious to hold the General Elections for Parliament and the State Legislatures as early as possible in accordance with the new Constitution. These elections will be on a scale which has had no parallel in any country at any time and it is estimated that the electors will number over 170 million. The preparation of electoral rolls and the delimitations of constituencies involve great labour both for the Central and State Governments. Every effort has been made to complete all preparations so as to be able to hold the elections in April-May, 1951. It is important that a firm date should be fixed and adhered to, as changes at a later stage would be exceedingly embarrassing to all concerned. The present position is that Parliament has not yet finalised many matters connected with elections and progress has thus far been made on various assumptions which may or may not be justified. This introduces an element of uncertainty. Some States have also informed us that it is not possible for them to be ready for elections by April-May, 1951. In Bihar the unprecedented deterioration of the food position has created formidable difficulties. My Government have carefully reviewed the situation in all its aspects and taken into consideration both official and non-official viewpoints. They have come to the conclusion that any date in April-May next will give rise

to serious difficulties and cannot, in the circumstances, be considered a firm date. They have therefore decided to fix definitely the date for the General Elections in the second-half of November or early December, 1951.

A supplementary statement of estimated receipts and expenditure of the Government of India will be laid before you for your approval.

There are twenty-one Bills pending before you. Some of these Bills, which are at present under consideration of your Select Committees, will be brought before you with their recommendations during the course of the session.

After the last session of Parliament, it became necessary to promulgate eight Ordinances. Out of these, four deal with matters in respect of which Bills are pending before you, and the remaining four will be placed before you in the form of new Bills.

There are other legislative measures and motions relating to matters of general public interest which will also be placed before you during the session. Of these the more important ones are: the Representation of the People (Amendment) Bill; the Income Tax (Amendment) Bill; and the Finance Commission Bill.