

ADDRESS TO PROVISIONAL PARLIAMENT—6 AUGUST 1951

Session	—	Fourth 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 are meeting here today, in the closing stages of the life of this Parliament. Within a few months, general elections will take place all over this great country in which more than 170 million voters will participate. This scale of democratic election is greater than the world has ever witnessed before; it entails a very heavy burden on those who are responsible for its organisation, and a heavy responsibility on all our people. I pray that this responsibility will be worthily discharged and that the elections will take place in a spirit of disciplined co-operation among our people and will result in the election of men and women of high principle, vision and integrity of purpose. The problems that the world and our country have to face are complex and difficult, and it will require all our wisdom and courage to help in their solution. In the world today, war and peace are in precarious balance, and the forces of peaceful constructive effort have to contend against the forces of disruption and destruction. It is my firm belief that only by adhering to principles, and not by seeking some temporary advantage at the cost of principles, shall we serve our country and the great causes we have at heart.

The unfortunate country of Korea, which has suffered during the past year death and destruction on a colossal scale, is the example today of what might happen to the world at large if fear, obstinacy and passion lead great nations to war. For some time past, a conference in Korea, has been considering the terms for a cease-fire. I earnestly hope that success will crown the efforts of this conference and that this terrible war will cease. After this first success, other steps will have to follow to settle the problems of the Far East. That settlement can only be enduring if it brings into its scope all the countries that have vital interests in the Far East and recognises their legitimate position in the world today. Proposals have been made for the conclusion of a treaty of peace with Japan. We welcome all efforts to bring peace and to give opportunities for self-development to Japan and

her people, for whom India has the friendliest feelings. I trust that this treaty of peace will be such that it brings relief from tension and leaves the door open for ever-growing cooperation between the nations of the East.

The most significant feature of the age we live in is the emergence of the countries of Asia. When the history of this period comes to be written, perhaps pride of place will be given to this awakening of Asia. That awakening has been and continues to be troubled. It has been varied and has taken different forms in different countries, but the outstanding fact is that great changes are coming over the continent of Asia; in many cases the old order has been entirely upset; in others some middle stage of democratic progress has been found. Our neighbour, Nepal, with whom our relations have always been of the closest friendship, has taken a great step towards the establishment of a democratic form of government. She is having some difficulties in this period of transition, but I feel sure that these will be overcome and independent and democratic Nepal will make rapid progress.

In Western Asia there has been an emergence of the same spirit and of the same urge for political and economic progress. This has sometimes led to trouble and tension and difficult problems have arisen. Many tragedies have occurred in this region in recent months; only some days ago His Majesty the King of Jordan was the victim of assassination.

In Iran, behind the dispute about oil, lies a great awakening. I hope that these disputes will be settled amicably so that Iran may prosper and the world may also benefit by her great resources in oil.

My Education Minister, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, recently paid goodwill visits to Turkey and Iran and carried our messages of friendship to them. I should like to express my gratitude to the Governments and peoples of these countries for the cordial welcome that they gave him. During his visit to Turkey, he signed, on behalf of India, a cultural agreement with that country which will promote even greater understanding and co-operation between the two countries. India has also signed treaties of peace and friendship with Iran, Indonesia and Burma. These treaties will greatly strengthen the ancient ties and long-standing friendship India has had with these countries.

I regret that the Government of the Union of South Africa has rejected the resolution passed by the General Assembly of the United Nations in regard to Indians in South Africa. This question does not affect India only. It is vital and affects the future of the world, because on a right solution of it depends peace or conflict between great races. Only on the basis of equality and equal treatment of different races and peoples can there be peace in this world. The Government of the Union of South Africa, however, unfortunately continues its racial policies, which can only bring unhappiness and conflict in the world.

While our relations with all our neighbour countries are cordial and co-operative, I deeply regret that there has been continuing friction between India and Pakistan and many major questions have remained unsolved. It has been and is our earnest desire to solve these questions by peaceful methods and to develop co-operative relations with Pakistan. Our past history and culture, our common interests and the intimate relations we had till misfortune overtook us, dictate that we should live in peace with each other. Yet circumstances beyond our control have affected these relations, and in Pakistan the cry of war against India is being raised. Because of possible dangers to our security, my Government was compelled to revise our defensive dispositions. But all such steps as my Government took were meant to ensure peace and to avoid war. We are determined to avoid war, unless it is thrust upon us. I earnestly trust that the present tension between India and Pakistan will pass away and a more favourable atmosphere be created for the consideration of our problems.

Eighteen months ago a serious situation arose in East Pakistan and West Bengal and Assam, when large migrations took place. An agreement between my Prime Minister and the Prime Minister of Pakistan stopped this dangerous drift and the situation improved. I have noticed with anxiety that there has been deterioration and another exodus is taking place from East Pakistan to West Bengal. This is a matter involving many millions of people who live in East Pakistan and I trust that earnest and effective steps will be taken to bring about conditions to stop the exodus.

The important work of rehabilitation has made considerable progress and a very large majority of displaced persons have had some provision made for them. But there are still many who lack this provision. In so far as displaced persons from West Pakistan are concerned, we are justified in thinking that the problem has come under control and will be adequately dealt with in the near future; but fresh problems have arisen owing to the new developments in Bengal which have resulted in large numbers of migrants seeking help and succour.

The Governor of the Punjab submitted a report to me on the 17th of June this year stating that his Ministry had resigned and that he had satisfied himself that it was not possible to form a Council of Ministers and carry on the Government of the State in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution. I, accordingly, issued a proclamation on the 20th June, 1951, under Article 356, assuming to myself, as President of India, all the functions of the Government of the Punjab and all powers exercisable by the Governor, and declaring that the powers of the Legislature of the State shall be exercisable by and under the authority of Parliament. I issued an Order directing that the Government of the State shall be carried on by His Excellency the Governor of the Punjab subject to my superintendence, direction and control. A resolution will be placed before this House asking

for approval of this proclamation. A Bill will also be introduced for suitable and necessary delegation of the authority of Parliament as the Legislature for the Punjab.

I much regret that it should have been necessary to issue this proclamation and hope that it will not be very long before normal constitutional arrangements are re-introduced in the Punjab.

The Planning Commission appointed by my Government last year has recently concluded the first stage of its work and presented an outline of a Five-Year Plan. This will be placed before you for your consideration. The Plan is based on a careful assessment of the resources available for development and has been evolved in consultation with the Central and State Governments as well as with representatives of Industries and Labour and of leading organisations engaged in different fields. These recommendations are at present tentative and the Commission hopes to finalise them after Parliament has expressed its views in regard to the Plan, and suggestions have been received from the Central Ministries and State Governments as well as from others.

In the multitude of problems that face us, nothing is more important than for us to plan for our economic progress, so that a better life may come to millions of our people who have suffered hardship for generations. Inevitably, the Plan gives primary importance to agricultural production which is the very basis of our existence. Next in importance come the great multipurpose river valley development schemes and certain basic industries which are essential for a nation's growth. It is these projects that give us hope for the future. The Plan also emphasises the importance of cottage and small scale industries, with a view to adding to production, giving employment and raising the standards of life in the villages. I trust that when this Plan has been finalised, it will become the basis for national activity in all its various forms and will enlist the widest association and co-operation of the people. Effective steps will have to be taken to implement it with speed and efficiency. Meanwhile, I hope that our present development schemes will be proceeded with, keeping in mind the proposals made in the draft Five-Year Plan. In order to review the working of the Plan from time to time and to promote common economic policies in all vital spheres, my Government propose shortly to constitute a National Development Council which will include the Prime Minister of India and the Chief Ministers of States.

The food situation in the country has been a matter of the gravest concern to my Government and, for many months, the threat of famine hovered over large areas of the country, more especially over Bihar. I am glad to say that there has been appreciable improvement and that threat has receded into the background. But dangers remain and constant and co-operative effort is needed to overcome them. I should like to express my

gratitude to the friendly nations who came forward with help in shipping foodgrains. In particular, I should like to express my gratitude to the United States of America for the loan of two million tons of foodgrains.

Though enough foodgrains have come to us to meet our present needs, another difficulty faces the people in the affected areas. Owing to various calamities and long continued drought in some parts of the country, the purchasing power of certain classes of the community in those areas has diminished considerably and, even when food is available, many have not the capacity to buy it. It has, therefore, become necessary to increase this purchasing power by public works, and also to help those in the greatest need by free distribution of foodgrains.

Our people have suffered considerably from the shortage in the supply of cloth and yarn. Last year production was relatively low and there was also the need to maintain exports at a level high enough to balance our imports. This year our cotton harvest has been better, and we are also doing our utmost to secure cotton from abroad. Certain restrictions have been placed on textile mills in regard to export, which has been strictly limited, and stress has been laid on the manufacture of *dhotis* and *saris* which have been specially in short supply. There has been already a marked improvement in this matter of cloth and yarn, and it is hoped that this improvement will continue during the next few months.

It is important for us to help in every way the handloom industry in India which is of considerable dimensions and gives employment to a very large number of people. This depends chiefly on the supply of yarn and efforts are being made to increase this supply progressively.

The rise in prices in recent months, as judged from the wholesale price index, has been the cause of anxious concern to my Government. This rise has been due partly to decontrol of jute but largely to developments in the international situation, over which we have no control, following the outbreak of hostilities in Korea. My Government's policy throughout this anxious period has been to hold prices as far as possible. The main item in the cost of living for the bulk of the population is food. An increase in the price of foodgrains could not be wholly avoided owing to insufficient production at home, which necessitated import from abroad at higher prices. The landed cost of these foodgrains was made even higher by the steep rise in freight rates. My Government have, however, endeavoured to keep down the increase to the minimum by more than doubling the food subsidy to the States from Rs. 22.3 crore to Rs. 46.73 crore, and by modifying the basis of the subsidy so as to give increased relief to industrial towns to keep down the cost of industrial products. The policy of my Government to hold prices of essential commodities, which affect the cost of living of the common man, to the maximum extent possible within the available resources, will be continued.

A re-assuring feature in the economic position of the country is that the level of industrial production has been well maintained in recent months. Schemes for expanding food production are progressing well, while the production of jute and cotton is also expected to increase in the coming season. Unless there are unforeseen developments, we can confidently look forward to an all-round improvement in our economic situation.

One such development, which is certain to retard this improvement, is the threatened strike on Railways, if it takes place. My Government is fully conscious of the difficulties experienced by railwaymen as well as other workers and by the public generally because of the rise in prices. Government has sought, to the best of its ability, to mitigate these difficulties of low-paid employees, and my Government is always prepared for friendly consultations with industrial or other workers with a view to removing their difficulties within available resources and with due regard to the various factors of our national economy. It is my earnest hope and the hope of my Government that railway workers will give up the idea of a strike and that nothing will be done to dislocate railway transport whose efficient functioning is essential to the adequate distribution of foodgrains in the present difficult and troubled situation. Any such dislocation will also inevitably check the movement of the wheels of industry and production, and will worsen the very position which the railway workers desire to improve. My Government is resolved to prevent any such dislocation.

There have been frequent demands for an increase in dearness allowance to compensate for the rise in prices. The recommendations of the Pay Commission, which are usually referred to in this connection, were made in a different context and provided a scheme for a reduction in the dearness allowance in the expectation of a fall in prices rather than for an increase. Unfortunately, prices have been continually rising since that recommendation was made and to follow the same basis for increasing the dearness allowance is obviously beyond the financial resources of the country and would create a dangerous spiral of inflation, which would make the benefits illusory and might lead to economic chaos. My Government hope that the measures of taxation in this year's budget and the sale of wheat obtained from abroad, will encourage anti-inflationary tendencies and have a mitigating influence on the general level of prices.

The all-India agricultural labour enquiry undertaken by the Ministry of Labour, in a large number of selected villages, has made considerable progress. The two stages of the enquiry, namely the general survey of villages and the general family survey, have already been completed, while the third stage, an intensive family survey, is still in progress.

My Government is deeply interested in fostering and developing the study of statistics and the use of statistical methods in administration and industry. Proper statistical data are essential for any system of planning. For this purpose a Central Statistical Organization has been set up.

Coal production during 1950 reached the peak figure of 31.99 million tons. Coal supplies to Pakistan, which were suspended in December, 1949, were resumed in March, 1951, and 334,081 tons of coal and coke were supplied till May 31st, 1951. It is further proposed to supply 1,520,000 tons of coal and coke to Pakistan, during the period July 1951 to June 1952, in exchange for imports. The year 1951 promises well for coal exports. The total exports during the first 4 months of the year have been 352,090 tons, excluding despatches to Pakistan, as compared to 233,902 tons in 1950 and 297,716 tons in 1949. The overall shipping scarcity has interfered considerably with our coal export programme.

The large fertilizer factory, which has been in process of construction at Sindri, is rapidly nearing completion. A part of the factory is already working, and it is hoped that the production of ammonium sulphate will begin soon. Production at the full installed capacity of 350,000 tons per annum is hoped to be reached about the middle of 1952. This large scale production of fertilizers will help greatly in increasing food and other crops, thus adding to the income of the agriculturists.

During the last session of Parliament certain Articles of the Constitution were amended. The amendments chiefly related to the legislation for the abolition of the Zamindari system and to Article 19(2) of the Constitution. My Government is anxious that the abolition of the big Zamindari System should be completed as soon as possible all over India, as this is an essential preliminary step towards further land reform. Criticism was raised about the amendment relating to Article 19(2) because this was said to limit the freedom of expression which is guaranteed by the Constitution. It was not and is not my Government's intention to limit the freedom of expression of opinion in any way, except when freedom becomes licence and threatens the security of the State or encourages communal discord. My Government has always attached great value to communal unity which is the foundation of our State policy. It hopes to bring forward a Bill during this session which will remove those provisions from the statute book which are out-of-date and no longer necessary. Amending legislation will cover not only some laws affecting the press but also certain sections of the Indian Penal Code, and the Code of Criminal Procedure, such as Sections 124(A) and 153(A), which relate to freedom of speech and expression.

My Government also hope to submit a Bill in the current session of Parliament dealing with Part-C States. It is their policy to remove progressively the differences which exist in regard to constitutional development between different classes of States. Part-C States differ from one another greatly and some of them have special problems to face. Their cases, therefore, have to be considered, to some extent, separately.

In accordance with Article 338 of the Constitution I appointed a Commissioner for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in November 1950. The Commissioner has undertaken extensive tours in various parts of India

where there are large numbers of these castes and tribes, and has presented valuable reports to me. The welfare of these Scheduled Castes and Tribes as well as of other backward classes, is a special concern of my Government as well as of the Governments of the States.

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

After the last session of Parliament it became necessary to promulgate some Ordinances. These will be brought before you in the form of new Bills and you will be asked to consider and pass them during the course of this session.

There are a large number of Bills pending before Parliament, some of them having been referred to Select Committees. It may not be possible for this session of Parliament to consider all these Bills, but a number of them are important and should be passed in this session. I have already referred to an amended press law and a Bill dealing with Part C States. A Bill, which has long been before Parliament for some years, is the Hindu Code Bill. My Government hope that this will be passed during this session. Among the other more important Bills are: The Industries (Development and Control) Bill; The Tariff Commission Bill; The State Financial Corporations Bill, 1950; and some bills dealing with displaced persons.

I shall now leave you to your labours which are of vital importance to our people. I pray that they will be conducted in a spirit of friendly co-operation, which is essential for the successful functioning of democracy, keeping always in view the larger good of the nation, and the high principles that the Father of the Nation placed before us. May wisdom and tolerance of spirit guide you in your deliberations.