

to defray the charges which will come in course of payment during the year ending the 31st day of March, 1976, in respect of 'Defence Services—Air Force'."

**DEMAND No. 22—DEFENCE SERVICES—
PENSIONS**

"That a sum not exceeding Rs. 94,16,67,000 on Revenue Account be granted to the President to complete the sum necessary to defray the charges which will come in course of payment during the year ending the 31st day of March, 1976, in respect of 'Defence Services—Pensions'."

**DEMAND No. 23—CAPITAL OUTLAY ON
DEFENCE SERVICES**

"That a sum not exceeding Rs. 197,88,52,000 on Capital Account be granted to the President to complete the sum necessary to defray the charges which will come in course of payment during the year ending the 31st day of March, 1976, in respect of 'Capital Outlay on Defence Services'."

17.21 hrs.

**PERSONAL EXPLANATION BY
MEMBER**

SHRI MORARJI DESAI (Surat) :
Mr. Speaker, Sir, I appreciate the opportunity given to me to make this statement in the House. Ordinarily, I would not have done so as I had not formally informed the House of my decision to undertake an indefinite fast. I am constrained to do so, however, because the Prime Minister in her statement on the 15th of this month had thought it fit to make certain observations which give a somewhat misleading view of what made it necessary for me to undertake a fast of this nature. The Prime Minister is fully entitled to give expression to her view that 'fasts of this nature are unjustified and constitute an irrational form of political pressure'. But, she is not entitled to support her view by stating that 'Shri Morarj Desai was himself forthright in expressing similar view in the past' when that is in fact not the case.

The Prime Minister was perhaps referring to what I had said in my autobiography. Let me quote the relevant portion :

"It is my belief that the fast unto death should not be undertaken in order to get something from somebody or to pressurise somebody to take some definite action. But, my fast was neither directed against any individual nor was undertaken in order to make somebody do something particularly. The aim of my fast was only to wean away the citizens from violent action."

These remarks of mine were made with reference to riots which had broken out during the Maha Gujarat movement in Ahmedabad. Similarly, on this occasion too, the object of the fast was to wean away the Government of India from the path of continuous and sustained pursuit of policies and actions which were against the spirit and even against the letter of the Constitution and denied the people the rights assured to them in the Constitution.

No one undertakes a fast lightly more so when it is an indefinite one. At my age, it was bound to be a more solemn decision. I would, therefore, like to assure the House that I would not have undertaken the fast unless I was fully convinced of the rightness of my stand. The consideration that weighed with me finally was that an individual's life did not matter when certain vital issues were at stake. I referred specifically in the letters which I addressed to the Prime Minister to these issues—(1) the people must have their representative Government without avoidable delay. There was a clear failure to hold elections in Gujarat before it became necessary to extend the President's Rule even though on Government's own showing nothing stood in the way of holding them. Secondly, the elections cannot be arranged and fixed according to the political convenience of the ruling party, in utter disregard of the constitutional obligations. Thirdly, the relief to the drought affected people could be effectively organised only by their chosen representatives. Fourthly, there was no justifiable reason to continue the state of Emergency which had been ushered in on the break-out of war with Pakistan in December 1971. In this connection, the misuse of MISA was uppermost in my mind.

There was thus no conflict between what I had said earlier and my reasons for going on a fast for indefinite period this time. It was undertaken both then and on this

[Shri Morarji Desai]

occasion in public interest—then, to wean away the people from the path of violence and now, to wean away a Government equipped with virtually absolute power which the massive majority in Parliament gave to it from anti-democratic path.

It is a travesty of facts to say that the fast was undertaken only to get Gujarat elections advanced by a few months. What was at stake was the people's right to be governed by their own representatives that is given to them by the Constitution. The delimitation work had been completed by December 1974 and the election machinery too had been organised and in position. Scarcity relief work was not even talked about as an acute issue of any immediacy. It cannot also be lost sight of that a number of Central Ministers had given repeated assurances that elections would be held soon after the revision of electoral rolls and delimitation of constituencies had been completed. Yet not only no elections were ordered to be held in January—February as should have been done, but the president's rule was totally, unwarrantedly continued for another six months with the certainty, as it is clear now, of yet another extension of a like period or at any rate for a period of not less than two months. The extension of President's rule in March last had, therefore, completely destroyed the credibility of the Government in this regard. If Government's words are broken in this manner, I think the course left open to a person like me cannot be a soft one.

The Prime Minister is unwilling to lift the Emergency on the ground that to do so in today's circumstances would seriously affect national security. Even if it is accepted that the external threats are very real and the people have to be on the alert, it does not necessarily follow that the nation should live as if the emergency was actually there and acquiesce in the suspension of some of the most vital freedoms guaranteed to it. It would take very little time to proclaim a state of Emergency afresh as soon as the dangers that loom at present on the horizon show any signs of becoming a reality. There really is no case for continuing the state of Emergency any longer.

In regard to the Maintenance of Internal Security Act, while nobody can object to the Government being strengthened for dealing effectively with anti-social ele-

ments in the society and with economic offences of an intractable nature, there surely can be no justification for it using such powers for political purposes. It is gratifying that the Prime Minister has clarified that the objective of the Act is not to curtail legitimate political activity and that her own Government and the State Governments would be prepared to go into any complaints of failures to comply with this spirit underlying the Act.

In short, I have reason for satisfaction in that Government has seen the error of its ways even if it does not admit it. I have little doubt that if the people continue to show as they had done during the period of the fast, an active and vigilant awareness of the issues of public interest at stake, no Government will be able to remain unresponsive to their legitimate demands.

All this notwithstanding, if the Prime Minister was not able to appreciate the rationale of my fast, I have no complaint against her, for this is not her field. Finally, if in the opinion of the Prime Minister, my fast did not involve any question of principle and meant an irrational pressure and was not justified, I think the best course for her was not to take any note of it and allow me to pass away.

With your permission, I would also take this opportunity to express my thanks to the hon. members of Parliament and other countrymen and leaders and members of various political parties who cutting across party lines had expressed their sympathy and solidarity with my fast.

17.30 hrs.

STATEMENT RE. SUCCESSFUL
LAUNCHING OF THE FIRST
INDIAN SATELLITE

THE PRIME MINISTER, MINISTER OF ATOMIC ENERGY, MINISTER OF ELECTRONICS, MINISTER OF SPACE, MINISTER OF PLANNING AND MINISTER OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (SHRIMATI INDIRA GANDHI) : Mr. Speaker, Sir, the House has taken note of the successful launching of the first Indian Satellite at 1300 hours (IST) on April 19, 1975. The satellite was wholly designed and fabricated in India and was launched from the Soviet Union with the help of a Soviet Rocket Carrier.