

ADDRESS TO PARLIAMENT—14 FEBRUARY 1966

Lok Sabha	—	Third Lok Sabha
Session	—	First Session of the Year
President of India	—	Dr. S. Radhakrishnan
Vice-President of India	—	Dr. Zakir Husain
Prime Minister of India	—	Smt. Indira Gandhi
Speaker, Lok Sabha	—	Sardar Hukam Singh

MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT,

Once again, I welcome you to a new session. A month ago the nation lost its Prime Minister, Lal Bahadur Shastri. He was truly a man of the people who never lost the common touch. He combined firmness of purpose with flexibility of approach. He was a man of deep humility, gentle in his ways, soft of speech and devoted to peace. In hours of crisis, he was calm, courageous and unflinching.

While deeply distressed by the turn of events which forced us into an armed conflict with Pakistan, he gave an inspiring lead to the nation. Our brave and gallant armed forces have written a new chapter of glory in our history. We honour our heroes, comfort the bereaved and lament the loss of precious lives. The people of India have once again demonstrated their unity and solidarity. Communal harmony was preserved throughout the country. Labour showed an exemplary spirit.

When the fighting ceased, Lal Bahadur Shastri bent his energies towards the establishment of good neighbourly relations with Pakistan. Before his sudden untimely death, he had the satisfaction of signing the Tashkent Declaration with President Ayub Khan of Pakistan in the presence of Mr. Kosygin, Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the U.S.S.R., whose good offices and friendly approach, more than anything else, made the agreement possible. It was Lal Bahadur Shastri's hope and belief that the Tashkent Declaration would lay the foundation for an enduring peace and friendship between India and Pakistan. More even than the letter, it is the spirit of the Tashkent Declaration that is important. Both sides have to fulfil it with faith and vision.

We are fortunate in having very friendly relations with almost all countries in the world. We are particularly happy that the friendly ties and understanding with our neighbours have been further strengthened. Unfortunately, our relations with the People's Republic of China still continue to be strained. The country has to be vigilant and strong.

Our Government will continue to work for peace in the world. Peace is essential for our own development and progress and for the well-being of all peoples. To this end, we shall strive to strengthen international co-operation, based on the principles of peaceful co-existence, non-interference in the internal affairs of others, non-alignment which implies freedom to judge issues on their merits and, above all, the abandonment of the use of force to settle disputes. If the resources of prosperous nations which are now spent on armaments, could be diverted to the service of mankind, the people living in poverty and ignorance would have a new hope of achievement in their life time.

One by one, countries in Africa and Asia, which were under colonial domination, have achieved independence and taken their rightful place in the comity of nations. It is unfortunate that some countries are still under Portuguese domination and we sympathise with those who are fighting for their independence. In South Africa, we support the struggle against apartheid.

One of the most unwelcome developments which has taken place is the Unilateral Declaration of Independence by Rhodesia and the seizing of power by a racial minority which is seeking to establish its domination over the people of Rhodesia. We have cut off all relations with Rhodesia, diplomatic and economic, and will continue to give our full support to the people of Rhodesia in setting up a truly democratic Government.

We are deeply concerned about the present situation in Vietnam. Any effort to resolve this conflict by peaceful methods will receive our support.

Last year, I visited Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, Rumania and Ethiopia. In all these countries, I was warmly received and I found evidence of deep friendship and goodwill towards India and her people. The Vice-President visited Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Turkey and Greece, where he was received with great cordiality and friendliness. The same friendliness was displayed by the Governments and peoples of Nepal, the Soviet Union, the United Arab Republic, Canada, Great Britain, Yugoslavia and Burma* during the visits which the late Prime Minister Shastri paid to those countries. We have also had the pleasure of welcoming to our country the King and Queen of Nepal, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, the Prime Ministers of Afghanistan, Czechoslovakia, Laos and Uganda and many other high dignitaries from all over the world. Many Heads of Governments and other high personages came to Delhi last month to pay their homage to Lal Bahadur Shastri and we were greatly touched by their presence.

* Now known as Myanmar.

The year 1965-66 is the last year of our Third Five Year Plan. The growth of national income, which was slow in the first two years of the Plan, was speeded up with the rise of 4.5 per cent in the third year and 7.3 per cent in the fourth year. Ordinarily, it should have been possible to maintain a comparable rate of growth during the current year. Unfortunately, a number of adverse factors have slowed down production. The unprecedented drought which we experienced, the armed conflict in which the country was involved and the suspension of promised economic aid from outside have reduced the rate of growth.

On account of the failure of monsoons, the production of foodgrains in 1965-66 is likely to be only 76 to 77 million tonnes, as against 88 million tonnes in the previous year. The shortfall in the availability of foodgrains, as well as, of fodder and water, has created serious scarcity conditions in many States, particularly in Maharashtra, Gujarat, Mysore*, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Andhra Pradesh. The State Governments and the Centre have already taken steps to provide relief to the people affected by the scarcity. We take this opportunity to acknowledge the assistance readily given by international organisations and the Governments and people of various friendly countries. In particular, we would like to thank the President of the United States and his administration for their generous help at this time of need.

Measures have to be taken to ensure equitable distribution of the available supplies between State and State and man and man. Statutory rationing has been introduced in Calcutta[@], Madras[§], Coimbatore and Delhi. It will be introduced in a number of other cities in the coming months.

The Government is aware of the distress caused in Kerala where the availability of rice now admits of a daily ration of 140 grams only per head. This is supplemented by an equal quantity of wheat. There has been considerable discontent and agitation on account of the reduced availability of rice. Steps are being taken to increase the supply of rice by imports from abroad and by additional procurement internally. We trust that States with a surplus will co-operate fully in making more rice available for the people of Kerala.

The present difficulties only re-emphasize the need to concert and implement measures to increase the production of foodgrains in the shortest possible time. Only by the application of modern science and technology can agricultural production increase in an adequate measure. In the new agricultural strategy of our Government, the greatest emphasis has been placed on the use of improved varieties of seeds which are particularly

* Now known as Karnataka.

@ Now known as Kolkata.

§ Now known as Chennai.

responsive to the application of fertilizers. These new varieties should cover 4.5 million acres of land in 1966-67, and over 32 million acres by the end of the Fourth Plan.

The internal production of fertilizers is being stepped up. The Trombay fertilizer plant has already been commissioned. Neyvelli is expected to go into production in the near future. In 1967, four plants will be commissioned at Namrup, Gorakhpur, Baroda and Visakhapatnam. Recently certain decisions have been taken to attract private capital also, both foreign and indigenous, for investment in this field. Till such time as domestic production is adequate, the Government proposes to import the requisite quantities of fertilizers for the agricultural programme.

Irrigation projects are being speeded up. It is expected that through major and medium irrigation projects, water for an additional 3 million acres will become available during the coming financial year. Minor irrigation projects are also receiving attention. About 7 lakh pumping sets are expected to be energised during the Fourth Plan. Considerable emphasis will be laid on rural electrification.

Finance will be required by the farmer to make greater use of fertilizers and of the water from our irrigation projects. Steps are being taken to ensure that credit is made available to the farmer quickly and at relatively low rates of interest.

The high priority we are giving to agriculture is necessary not merely to ensure self-sufficiency in foodgrains, but also to enable us to increase our exports of agricultural and industrial products. Exports showed a marked increase during the first three years of the Third Five Year Plan. In the last two years, however, they have remained relatively stagnant. There has been an impressive rise in our exports to East European countries in general and to the U.S.S.R. in particular. However, our balance of payments position with the rest of the world has continued to be under strain. While external assistance has been making a welcome contribution to the country's development and while we must thank the many countries and international institutions from whom we receive aid, we must intensify our efforts to increase export and to make the country self-reliant as quickly as possible.

A number of public sector plants have started production in the recent past. Fresh capacity has been added in the machine building sector, in oil refineries and in the production of alloy steels. Adequate provision will be made in the Fourth Plan for the expansion of industries in the public sector. Special mention has to be made in this context of the steel plant to be set up at Bokaro with Soviet collaboration and of the enterprises intended to put atomic energy to peaceful, constructive uses. The Atomic Energy Commission and indeed the world of science has suffered an irreparable loss in the tragic death of Dr. H.J. Bhabha. The work which he had started must continue with unabated vigour.

The investment which we make in the public sector has to give adequate returns. Our Government proposes to pay special attention to the efficient management of public sector enterprises.

Industries in the private sector have also to expand their output and capacity. While certain curbs and controls are inevitable in a planned economy and in the context of scarcity, conditions have to be created in which private initiative and private savings can be harnessed to make the maximum possible contribution to growth and development within the framework of the Fourth Five Year Plan.

The success we have achieved in improving the health of our people and raising the average expectation of life gives us cause for satisfaction. The number of doctors available is now nearly 90,000 as against 70,000 in 1960-61. Hospital beds have increased by nearly a third over the same period. Mortality due to malaria has practically been eradicated over the last decade. Side by side with the fall in the death rate, we must bring about a reduction in the birth rate. If our population goes on increasing at the rate of about a million a month, it will be difficult to raise our standards of living and to end our chronic dependence on imports to feed our people. Family planning programmes have to be intensified and brought within the reach of all.

The number of school-going children at the primary stage has gone up from a little above 40 per cent at the commencement of our First Plan to nearly 80 per cent this year. The percentage at higher levels has nearly trebled over the same period. The annual out-turn from our Technical Training Institutions has doubled during the Third Plan.

Prices continued to rise during the year, although the rate of increase was not as high as in the previous year. In view of the set back in agricultural production this year, steps have to be taken to keep inflationary pressures in check. Curtailment of public expenditure has an important role in this.

Our Government is trying to prune non-Plan expenditure and to concentrate our resources on development. There are, however, certain areas where higher expenditure is unavoidable. We have to provide for the rehabilitation of people affected by the recent conflict. We have to undertake relief measures in the drought stricken areas. With the increase in recent months of tension on our northern borders, we can not but provide for a higher outlay on defence. In the circumstances obtaining, a higher financial discipline, internal and external, is unavoidable.

Monetary and financial curbs, however, necessary they may be in the short run, do not provide an answer to the basic problems of our economy. To fight poverty, we must have higher production. Towards this end, both the public sector and the private sector have important tasks ahead of them.

The preparation of the Fourth Plan has unfortunately been delayed, due to certain unforeseen developments. The Plan for the year 1966-67 is ready. The State Governments are mobilising resources to implement it. Although the total outlay on the 1966-67 Plan will be lower than what we had earlier hoped for, every effort will be made to make good the shortfall in the remaining years of the Fourth Five Year Plan.

Members of Parliament, a new Government has come into power, led by one you all know and who belongs to the younger generation of freedom fighters. The reorganisation of Departments and Ministries reflects the priorities to which I have just referred.

Thirty-eight Bills are already before you for your consideration. Amongst the new Bills which the Government proposes to introduce are:

- (1) Rice Milling Industry (Regulation) Amendment Bill 1966;
- (2) The Crop Insurance Bill 1966;
- (3) The Indian Tariff (Amendment) Bill to replace the Ordinance;
- (4) The Essential Commodities (Amendment) Bill 1966;
- (5) The Contract Labour (Regulation and Abolition) Bill 1966;
- (6) The Forward Contracts (Regulation) Amendment Bill 1966;
- (7) The Armed Forces (Special Powers Continuance) Bill 1966; and
- (8) The Import and Export Control (Amendment) Bill 1966.

A statement of the estimated receipts and expenditure of the Government of India for the financial year 1966-67 will be laid before you.

Members of Parliament, I wish you success in your labours. Our objectives are known and our goals are clear. We have to strive for a better life for our people at home and to assist in promoting peace and co-operation in the world. Towards these objectives, you have to guide the nation with courage and wisdom and a spirit of co-operative endeavour.