

ADDRESS TO PARLIAMENT—16 MAY 1952

Lok Sabha	—	First Lok Sabha
Session	—	First Session after the 1st General Election
President of India	—	Dr. Rajendra Prasad
Vice-President of India	—	Dr. S. Radhakrishnan
Prime Minister of India	—	Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru
Speaker, Lok Sabha	—	Shri G.V. Mavalankar

MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT,

I welcome you here today as Members of the first Parliament of the Republic of India, elected under our Constitution. We have now given full effect to the provisions of the Constitution relating to the composition of the Legislatures and the leadership of the State, and thus completed one stage of our journey. Even as we complete that stage, we start on another. There is no resting place for a nation or a people on their onward march. You, Members of Parliament, newly elected by over 170 million of our people, are the pilgrims who have to march forward in their company. On you rests a unique privilege and a heavy responsibility.

As I speak to you on this historic occasion, I have a feeling of the high destiny of our ancient land and the vast numbers of men and women who live in it. Destiny beckons us and it is for us to respond to its call. That call is for the service of this great land of India, which has passed through good fortune and ill-fortune alike since its story began many thousands of years ago, at the dawn of history. During these many years, greatness has come to our land and tragedy has also been our fate. Now that we stand on the threshold of another phase of India's long story, we have to determine afresh how best to serve her. You and I have taken the oath of service to this country of ours. May we be true to that pledge and dedicate our highest endeavour to its fulfilment.

India has, after a long period of subjection, gained her freedom and independence. That freedom has to be maintained, defended and enlarged at all cost, for it is on the basis of that freedom alone that any structure of progress can be built. But freedom by itself is not enough—it must also bring a measure of happiness to our people and a lessening of the burdens

they suffer from. It has, therefore, become of vital importance for us to labour for the rapid economic advancement of our people and to endeavour to realise the noble ideals of equality and social and economic justice which have been laid down in our Constitution.

India has represented throughout her history certain other urges of the human spirit. That has, perhaps, been the distinguishing mark of India, and even in recent years we saw a noble example of that ancient spirit and urge of India in the form of Mahatma Gandhi, who led us to freedom. To him political freedom was a vital step, but only a step to the larger freedom of the human spirit. He taught us the way of peace and non-violence, but not the peace of the grave or the non-violence of the timid. And he taught us, in line with the teachings of India's ancient sages and great men, that it is not through hatred and violence that great ends are achieved, that right ends must be pursued and achieved only through right methods. That is a basic lesson not only for us of India but if I may venture to say so also for people throughout the world.

I earnestly trust that, in the great tasks that face us you will remember this ancient and ever-new message of India and will work in a spirit of co-operative endeavour, placing the cause of the nation and of humanity above all lesser objective. We have to build up the unity of India, the unity of a free people working for the realisation of the high destiny that awaits them. We have, therefore, to put an end to all tendencies that weaken that unity and raise barriers between us, the barriers of communalism, provincialism and casteism. Opinions will and must differ in regard to many political and economic matters, but if the good of India and her people is our dominant urge and we realise, as we must, that this good can only be achieved through the methods of peaceful co-operation and democratic processes, then these differences can only add to the richness of our public life.

It is with this outlook that I beg of you to face your problems here in this country and to face the world with friendly eyes and without fear. Fear today, fear of some approaching disaster, darkens the world. It is not through fear that the individual or the nation grows, but through fearlessness *abhaya*, as our ancient books told us.

We have consistently pursued a policy of friendship with all the countries of the world and that policy, though sometimes misunderstood, has been progressively appreciated, by others and is yielding fruit. I trust that we shall firmly continue that policy and thus try to lessen somewhat the tension that exists in many parts of the world. My Government has not sought to interfere with other countries just as it does not invite any interference from others in our own country. We have tried the method of co-operation wherever possible and our good offices are always available to further the cause of peace. We have no desire to thrust them on anyone.

We realise, however, that in the world today no country can remain isolated, that it is inevitable that international co-operation should grow till, at some distant date, all the nations of the world join together in a great co-operative endeavour for the advancement of humanity.

For nearly a year now, efforts have been made in Korea to find some way to a truce which might lead to a peaceful settlement of the many problems that afflict the far-east of Asia. I have expressed the hope on several occasions that success will crown these efforts and peace be established again. It is the greatest of tragedies that, despite assertions of goodwill for the Korean people, this ancient country has been reduced by war, hunger and pestilence to utter ruin. It has become a sign and a warning to the world of what war means, whatever immediate justification might be advanced for it. War does not solve problems, it creates them. In Korea now it appears that most of the obstacles to a truce have been overcome and only one major hurdle, the exchange of prisoners, remains. It should not be beyond the wit of statesmen to overcome this last obstacle. Not to do so will be to confess the failure not only of wisdom but also of common humanity. The world hungers for peace and the statesmen who bring peace will remove a heavy and fearful burden that now oppresses the minds of hundreds of millions of people throughout the world.

I have referred on previous occasions to the great nationalist upsurge in various parts of Asia and Africa which are still denied freedom. In particular, I have made reference to recent events in Tunisia and expressed our sympathy for the people of that land in their desire for freedom. I regret greatly that, in spite of the desire of a large number of countries in Asia and Africa, even a discussion of this subject was not allowed in the United Nations. The United Nations Organisation was meant to represent the world community inclusive of all, and its primary aim was the preservation of peace. Gradually, the noble aims of the founders of the United Nations and the Charter that they framed appear to be getting blurred. The wide vision gives place to a more limited outlook. The conception of universality changes into something far narrower and the urge to peace weakens. The United Nations Organisation came into existence to fulfil a deeply felt want of humanity. If it fails to fulfil that want and becomes an ineffective organ for the maintenance of peace and the advancement of freedom, that, indeed, will be a tragedy. I earnestly trust that this great organisation, on which the hopes of the world have been built up, will return to its old mooring and become, as it was meant to be, a pillar of peace and freedom.

My Government has sent a Cultural Delegation to our great neighbour, China. That Delegation has carried the greeting and goodwill of our people to the people of China. I should like to express my gratitude for the cordial welcome that it has received from the Government and people of China.

I regret greatly that the racial policy of the Government of the Union of South Africa has continued and has led to serious developments. Our people have been intimately concerned over this policy because there are many people of Indian origin who live in South Africa. But this question is no longer merely one of Indians in South Africa; it has already assumed a greater and wider significance. It is a question of racial domination and racial intolerance. It is a question of the future of Africans even more than that of Indians in South Africa. Delay in settling this and like questions is fraught with peril for humanity. I am glad that there has been a growth of friendly relations of all over Africa between the Africans and the Indians resident there. It is our desire not to interfere in any way with the growth of the peoples of Africa, but to help them to the best of our ability.

I regret also that a large number of Indians, long resident in Ceylon*, have been deprived of their voting rights. They claim to be as much Ceylonese citizens as other inhabitants of that country. Our ties with Ceylon* go back to thousands of years and our relations with Ceylon* and her people have been most friendly. We welcomed her independence and we hoped that her people would advance in every way as an independent people. But true progress will not come by depriving a large number of citizens of their natural rights. This will lead, as it has already led, to serious problems and complications.

We have for many years past suffered a shortage of food and large quantities of foodgrains have had to be imported. In this we were helped greatly by the United States of America, and we must be grateful to that great country for the generous help that it gave. For the first time in recent history, we have large stocks of foodgrains (except for rice), and are building up a substantial reserve which will help us in the future in case of need. This is to be welcomed. But the failure of the rains over large parts of our country has created a difficult situation for the people there. For five successive seasons, Rayalaseema has suffered the misfortune of a drought and its greatest need today is water. Our Army is doing valuable work to help the civil population by deepening wells and carrying water and in other ways. In these large areas of drought and scarcity, many minor projects have been undertaken to provide work and cheap grain shops have been opened. Wherever necessary, free food is given.

Owing to the high cost of imported foodgrains, their price has gone up. The contraction of the food subsidy has contributed in some measure to those high prices, and has caused some distress and discontent in rationed areas. To some extent this is partly counter-balanced by a general fall in prices. The limitation of food subsidies has induced Governments in various States to make a more realistic appraisal of their need for import of foodgrains, and this has led to a reduction of the demand from various States for foodgrains, with its consequent result on their import. This is undoubtedly an advantage in the present and for the future. The amount

* Now known as Sri Lanka.

saved from the food subsidies has been diverted to financing minor irrigation schemes which will yield more foodgrains in future and thus help in solving our food problem. My Government is giving the most careful attention to these matters. It has to balance immediate with future advantages. At the same time it is anxious that no distress should be caused and it will do all in its power to prevent this from happening.

The Planning Commission is now finalising its report on the Five Year Plan. A very vital addition to this Plan has been made by the proposal to start fifty-five Community Projects throughout the country. This has been possible because of aid from the United States of America through their Technical Cooperation Plan. These Community Projects are intended not only to increase our food production but also, what is even more important, to raise the whole level of community living. It is hoped that this programme will grow and cover a considerable part of India. But it can only grow if it has the full co-operation of the people and I earnestly trust that in this matter, as in implementing the other proposals of the Planning Commission, their co-operation will be forthcoming in full measure.

The integrated programme for agricultural production has made satisfactory progress. Jute production has increased considerably from 16.6 lakh bales in 1947-48 to 46.8 lakh bales in 1951-52. Cotton production has gone up during the same period from 24 lakh bales to over 33 lakh bales. Production of foodgrains has increased by 14 lakh tons, though this has been offset by drought in certain areas. Sugar production increased from 10.75 lakh tons in 1947-48 to 13.5 lakh tons in 1951-52. There has also been an increase in the production of steel, coal, cement and salt. India is now self-sufficient in salt and is able to export her surplus. A Central Salt Research Station is being established in Saurashtra.

The general economic situation in the country has been kept under continuous observation by my Government. In my last address to Parliament I referred to a slight fall in wholesale prices. This trend was sharply accentuated in the months of February and March. Partly this was due to a general readjustment of prices all over the world, a process which started in 1950 but received a set-back owing to the outbreak of the Korean War. With the prospect of an armistice in Korea in sight, this process of readjustment gathered strength. This has been assisted by an increased production of goods in the country coupled with increasing consumer resistance to high prices. The monetary and credit policy of my Government, initiated with a view to checking inflation, has also contributed to the fall in prices. This sharp fall in the price level has caused difficulties to those engaged in business and industry, more especially in the textile industry. This is also leading to a fall in our export earnings. My Government are closely watching the situation to ensure that production and employment are not affected. It is their intention to take such action as might be necessary to assist in the stabilisation of prices at a reasonable level.

I am glad that a new Ministry of Production has been created. Production by State-owned industries is of vital importance and the creation of a new Ministry for this purpose indicates that special attention is going to be paid to it.

An assurance was given by Government last year to Parliament that a Press Commission would be appointed to consider various matters connected with the Press. My Government hope to appoint such a Commission in the near future. It is also proposed to place before Parliament a bill arising out of the recommendations of the Press Laws Enquiry Committee.

This session of Parliament will be mainly concerned with the Budget and there will probably not be much time for other legislation. A statement of the estimated receipts and expenditure of the Government of India for the financial year 1952-53 will be laid before you. The members of the House of the People will be required to consider and pass the Demands for Grants.

After the last session of the provisional Parliament, it became necessary to promulgate an Ordinance relating to the repealing of the Saurashtra (Abolition of Local Sea Customs Duties And imposition of) Port Development Levy. This Ordinance will be brought before you in the form of a new bill and you will be asked to consider and pass it. Another Ordinance was issued for the purpose of extending the Displaced Persons (Claims) Act, 1950. A bill to replace this ordinance will also be placed before you.

A number of bills which were introduced in the provisional Parliament have now lapsed. Some of these will be placed before you in so far as time permits. It is also proposed to place before Parliament a bill dealing with Preventive Detention.

One of the legislative measures which was discussed at considerable length in the provisional Parliament was the Hindu Code Bill. This couldn't be passed and, in common with other pending bills, has lapsed. It is the intention of my Government to introduce afresh legislation on this subject. It is proposed, however, to divide up the bill into certain parts and to place each part separately before Parliament, so as to facilitate its discussion and passage.

I have endeavoured to indicate to you some of the work that will be placed before this session of Parliament. I trust that your labours will bear fruit for the good of our people and that this new Parliament of the Democratic Republic of India will set an example of friendly co-operation and efficient working. Your success will depend on the spirit of tolerance that governs your activities and the wisdom that inspires your efforts. I earnestly trust therefore that this wisdom and tolerance of spirit will always be with you.