

ADDRESS TO PARLIAMENT—15 FEBRUARY 1954

Lok Sabha	—	First Lok Sabha
Session	—	First Session of the Year
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 have come here, after a full year, to welcome you to the new session of Parliament. During this past year, you have had to consider many difficult problems and to shoulder heavy burdens. Many of those problems still remain with us, but I think that you may well look back on this year as one of considerable achievement. As a symbol of the indomitable spirit of man conquering almost insurmountable obstacles and difficulties, came the final conquest of Everest. With this single achievement was associated one of our own brave countrymen. In the international sphere, the old tensions and fears continue. But efforts are being continually made to find some settlement and I earnestly trust that these efforts will lead to an easing of these tensions and will point the way to some future settlement both in the West and in the Far East.

India has continued to pursue a policy of peace and friendship with all the countries of the world and has not hesitated to undertake responsibilities where, it was hoped, this might enable her to perform some service in the cause of peace. In Korea, my Government accepted the Chairmanship of the Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission and sent a Custodial Force to take charge of the prisoners of war, pending a final decision about their future. Unfortunately, the process laid down in the Armistice Agreement could not be carried through, as intended, and a difficult situation arose. The Commission will conclude its labours within a few days and the Custodial Force is gradually returning to India. The major matters of dispute in Korea have not been settled yet. I earnestly hope that an early attempt will be made in the United Nations General Assembly, or otherwise, to give full consideration to these outstanding issues. I should like to express, on your behalf and mine, our high appreciation of the work of our representatives

in the Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission in Korea and of our officers and men of the Custodial Force, who discharged their difficult and delicate tasks with ability and impartiality.

India's relations with other countries continue to be friendly, even though sometimes some misunderstandings arise. My Government's representatives are at present discussing with the Government of the People's Republic of China various issues of common concern in regard to Tibet. I have every hope that these discussions will lead to a settlement of outstanding issues. Trade agreements have been made with the Soviet Union and several other countries. In the course of the past year, meetings took place between my Prime Minister and the Prime Minister of Pakistan. These meetings were friendly and led to some understandings about various matters which have long been in dispute between the two countries. While some progress was made in this respect, unfortunately some other developments have at present come in the way of further progress. I am glad to find that an agreement has been arrived at between my Government and the Government of Ceylon* over the long standing issue of the people of Indian descent in Ceylon*. This agreement does not finally solve this problem but is a first step and an earnest attempt to that end and I welcome it as such. It has always been my Government's endeavour to develop close and friendly relations with our neighbour countries, Ceylon* and Burma** with whom India has not only geographical but cultural affinities of long standing.

With the countries of Western Asia and Egypt, our relations have been of close cooperation and friendship. I am glad that the services of our Chief Election Commissioner as Chairman of the Electoral Commission for the Sudan were appreciated and successful elections were held. I welcome the emergence of self-government in Sudan both in itself and as a symbol of future progress in the Continent of Africa, which has suffered so much in the past, and is now undergoing a severe ordeal.

Since I addressed you on the last occasion, a new State in the Indian Union has come into existence, the State of Andhra. I welcome this addition to our fraternity of States and wish it success. In view of the demands for further reorganisation of the States in India, my Government have appointed a Commission for this purpose consisting of eminent and experienced members. This is a task of high and historic importance, which has to be dealt with in an objective and dispassionate manner so as to promote the welfare of the people of the areas concerned as well as of the nation as a whole. I earnestly trust that the work of this Commission will be assisted by all concerned in a spirit of harmony and understanding.

In two of our States, namely Travancore-Cochin, and Patiala and East Punjab States Union, general elections are taking place. In the latter State, the Constitution could not function properly and I had to take over charge till such time as fresh elections could take place.

* Now known as Sri Lanka.

** Now known as Myanmar.

Half the period of the first Five Year Plan is over. In some matters progress has not been as rapid as had been hoped, in others there has been significant progress. In particular, the Community Projects show promise and the National Extension Service, which was inaugurated in October 1953, is making satisfactory progress. The contribution of the people has been most encouraging. This is a particularly happy feature. Although there has been marked progress in industrial production and in other respects, my Government have been concerned at the existence of a considerable volume of unemployment. The Planning Commission have undertaken a revision of the first Five Year Plan, particularly to provide more employment.

There has been a continued improvement in the general economic situation. The output of foodgrains in 1952-53 was fifty lakh tons over the output of the previous year and this year's prospects are good. The improvement in the food situation has been highly satisfactory and the country is making rapid approach to the goal of self-sufficiency. Industrial production has continued at a high level, more particularly in cotton textiles, paper, chemicals, bicycles, cement, salt and most of the engineering industries. The index of industrial production rose to 134 in 1953 from 129 in 1952. This was the highest level of industrial production since the war. Plans for the expansion of steel production and for the establishment of a new iron and steel plant are now being finalised. The jute and tea industries, which were facing serious difficulties are now again doing well.

My Government attach special importance to the development of cottage industries. I regret, however, that progress in this respect has not been very satisfactory. It is hoped that the efforts of the All-India Khadi and Village Industries Board as well as the All-India Handloom Board and the All-India Handicrafts Board will yield substantial results in the near future.

Satisfactory progress has been made in the great River Valley Schemes and some of the projects have already been completed and are yielding results. Five new projects, namely the Kosi, the Koyna, the Krishna, the Rihand and the Chambal have been included in the Five Year Plan. Steps are being taken to expedite certain preliminary arrangements in regard to them, and, in the case of the Kosi, to have discussions with the Government of Nepal, with a view to starting work on these new projects during the next financial year.

The Air Services of India have now been reorganised and two State Corporations, one dealing with internal airlines and the other with external services, have been formed. It is proposed to extend the external services to the Far East.

In the course of the past year, two landmarks have been celebrated, namely the centenaries of the beginning of the Railway System and the Telegraphs in India. There has been steady progress on the railways and

special attention is being paid to the manufacture of locomotives and rolling stock. Some major projects of rail construction will be taken up shortly. Postal and telegraph facilities have expanded, especially in the rural and backward areas.

My Government attach importance to the problem of housing. A total expenditure of Rs. 72 crore has been incurred on housing for displaced persons since the Partition and loans and subsidies have been given for the construction of houses for industrial workers. With a view to encouraging the building of inexpensive and attractive houses, an International Exhibition on Low Cost Housing has recently been held and has attracted much attention.

A statement of the estimated receipts and expenditure of the Government of India for the financial year 1954-55 will be laid before you.

After the last session of Parliament, it became necessary to promulgate seven Ordinances. Of these, two deal with matters in respect of which Bills are pending before you. You will be asked to consider and pass such of these as require permanent legislation.

There are 28 Bills pending before you. Some of these have been considered by Select Committees; some others, which are still under the consideration of Select Committees, will be brought before you with their recommendations. Among these are the Bills dealing with reform of the Hindu Law to which my Government attach considerable importance. There are other legislative measures relating to matters of general public interest, which will be brought before you during the course of this session. My Government are anxious to proceed with certain reforms relating to judicial procedure with a view to expediting these processes and lessening the expenditure involved in them.

Early in this month a tragedy took place at the Kumbh Mela in Allahabad where a vast and unprecedented gathering of pilgrims had collected. The Uttar Pradesh Government had taken great pains to make satisfactory arrangements for this great concourse of human beings. But on the *Amavas* day an accidental mishap led to a large number of persons being crushed to death by the uncontrollable passage of others over them. This grievous tragedy, which marred a happy occasion, has brought sorrow to many and, on your behalf and mine, I extend my deep sympathy to the relatives of those who have suffered.

The new year begins with hope and fear evenly balanced. There is promise of achievement and of progress towards peace. There is also apprehension at the trials we and the rest of the world might have to face. In this crisis of human destiny, we can serve both our own country and the larger causes of the world only by adhering to the principles that have guided us in the past and by remembering the message of peace, tolerance and self-reliance of the Father of the Nation. I trust that, that message will guide you in your deliberations.