

[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 county men 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.

This outstanding achievement, the first by a developing country, marks yet another milestone in our efforts to harness the benefits of modern science and technology for national development. Apart from their purely scientific objectives, research and technology involving the peaceful uses of outer space, can contribute significantly to the solution of economic and social problems.

The satellite and the entire ground system needed for launching and maintenance were built within a short period of less than three years. I should like to place on record my own and the Govt's deep appreciation of the dedicated and conscientious work of our scientists and engineers in the Indian Space Research Organisation under the leadership of Prof. Satish Dhawan and all the others who collaborated. I should also like to take this opportunity to convey our thanks to the Soviet Union for their help during the project and for making available the launch facilities.

17.32 hrs.

DEMANDS FOR GRANTS,

1975-76* -Contd.

MINISTRY OF COMMERCE

MR. SPEAKER : The House will now take up discussion and voting on the demands for grants under the control of the Ministry of Commerce.

SHRI PILOO MODY (Godhra) : Mr. Speaker, before you move on to the next item, since the Prime Minister said that on her own behalf and on behalf of the Government. I want to make...

MR. SPEAKER : What is this practice I am standing and you also get up.

SHRI PILOO MODY : The question of standing or sitting... (Interruptions) Before you move on to the next item, I want to make one submission.

MR. SPEAKER : I am not at all willing to listen to you, unless you first sit down

*Introduced with the recommendation of the President.

I had already congratulated the scientists on behalf of the House and myself and I have also informed them that the hon. Prime Minister would be making a statement.

SHRI PILOO MODY : Just because I did not say : point of order.

MR. SPEAKER : The House will now take up discussion and voting on the Demands for grants Nos. 11 and 12 under the control of the Ministry of Commerce for which six hours had been allotted. Hon. Members present in the House and desirous of moving their cut motions may send slips to the Table within 15 minutes indicating the serial number of the cut motions they would like to move.

DEMAND NO. 11—MINISTRY OF COMMERCE

MR. SPEAKER : Motion moved :

"That a sum not exceeding Rs. 73,20,000 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 'Ministry of Commerce'."

DEMAND NO. 12—FOREIGN TRADE AND EXPORT PRODUCTION

MR. SPEAKER : Motion moved :

"That a sum not exceeding Rs. 1,66,43,08,000 on Revenue Account and not exceeding Rs. 2,38,96,93,000 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 'Foreign Trade and Export Production'."

SHRI MANORANJAN HAZRA (Arambagh) : Mr. Speaker, the country's economy and prosperity can be judged only by the performance of trade and Commerce.

17.33 hrs.

[SHRI VASANT SATHI in the Chair] I am sorry to say that in our country, the performance of the Government of India in regard to these things is neither satisfactory nor hopeful.

Since our independence, long 17 years have elapsed but the Government of India had not taken any lesson from the major