

We are today celebrating the thirty second anniversary of our Independence. It was through the sacrifice and endeavour of Mahatma Gandhi and other leaders that the country won its Independence after 200 years of British rule. On this occasion, it is proper that we pay our homage to the Father of the Nation and other colleagues. However, just paying homage will not be enough.

The recent change in the Central Government was brought about in a peaceful and democratic manner. A variety of things are said by people in this regard. They say this is an SVD Government and ask how will it run? But I would like to tell you that the Janata Government also was an SVD Government. It had one label and yet it was an SVD Government with many constituents. I would not go into details but would only mention that some persons tried to discard the ladder with the help of which they had stepped up to the seat of power. I had publicly expressed my disagreement with my closest ally, Shri Raj Narain, on 24th of June. But the events that took place after that forced me and my colleagues to leave that SVD Government. Today, the Congress, the Janata (S) and our friends in the Socialist Party, the Peasants and Workers Party of Maharashtra and the Communist Party members, who had expressed themselves in favour of this Government in the last week of July, together have a strength of 200 and more; call it SVD or what you like. The day, the other people or the parties or leaders are able to form a larger party and challenge us and the moment we feel that we are in a minority, we will not hesitate even for a minute to step down.

I and my colleagues do not want a mid-term poll which is very expensive and creates lot of problems. But I think, no party wants a mid-term poll. If, however, we have to go in for one, we will come to you to seek your vote and confidence. I have every hope that in that event, the Congress, the Janata(S) and other partners, I have mentioned, will be able to form a united party which will be able to secure majority throughout the country.

Among the number of problems facing this country, the most serious

is poverty. Of the 125 nations of the world, our position is 111th which means that there are 110 countries which are more affluent than us. Three years ago, our position was 104th and during this period we have slid down to the 111th position. This speaks of the level of our poverty.

The second problem is of unemployment. From the time the Janata Party took up the reins of power, 25 lakh more young unemployed have registered their names with the Employment Exchanges. Unemployment thus is on the increase. In the rural areas, both the educated and uneducated are unemployed. In the cities too, the educated unemployed are on the streets. Therefore, we have to eradicate unemployment.

The third problem, we face in the economic field is the growing disparity between the poor and the affluent. This disparity existed even at the time of the British. In a small measure, this disparity exists everywhere and it will be impossible to erase it completely. But that Government alone will be considered good which minimises this disparity instead of letting it increase further. Since Independence, in our country the gap between the rich and the poor has increased and economic power is getting concentrated in the hands of a few people.

Besides, social tensions also persist. I would not like to go into the reasons for this. But the poor, the Harijans and the weaker sections are not feeling secure. The minorities, that is the followers of religions other than Hindu, have also begun to sense similar tension. The reasons may be historic and need not be elaborated just now. It will be the endeavour of this Government to eliminate the root causes of these continuing tensions and establish peace and prosperity in the country. We will be deemed to have succeeded only if no communal riots are reported for one year or for the tenure of this Government.

Friends, one immediate problem before us is price rise. In the last two Five Year Plans, investment for cement, coal and power production was meagre and in the last six months of the Janata Government, that is from January to June 1979, these sectors were handled indifferently. Coal, power, rail movement are critical sectors which have an impact on the total

economy. In addition, there have been strikes and ships held-up at ports unloaded for as long as one month and even 45 days. The result of all this has been the rise in price level. This Government and my colleagues in the Departments will make every effort to see that production increases. They will not be confining themselves to Delhi, they will go to the power plants and to the coal mines.

As long as production does not increase and the prices keep going up, this country will never be able to progress.

Another thing to be noted is that the prices of even such commodities as foodgrains etc., which are not in short supply are also increasing. In this connection I would appeal to the retail and wholesale traders that they should desist from being greedy and earning profits which will only hurt our people and our country. We are determined not to allow black-marketing and profiteering that has continued so far; we will not permit it to continue further.

Friends, all of us know which sections of our people deserve Government help most. But before I go into that, I would like to tell that despite the rise in prices of certain commodities, we are not short of food grains; our warehouses are full and for that, we should be grateful to the farmers. The farmers will continue to work hard, even if the rainfall is scanty or there is no rain. Therefore, so far as foodgrains are concerned, the country will not face any shortage. Another silver lining is that we have no shortage of foreign exchange and this can help us import things needed by the country.

I was referring to the sections which deserve greater attention from the Government—the harijans, the tribals, the landless, the unemployed or underemployed and 50 percent of our farmers who have got an hectare or less of land. These poorer sections have so far been neglected and the Government will pay special attention to them. According to the latest estimates of the Planning Commission, 48 percent of those living below the poverty line are in the villages and 41 percent in the towns. These are the ones, who do not get even frugal meals to feed themselves. You can ask a

question as to why there is hunger when our silos are full of foodgrains. The reason is that they do not have the purchasing power. Even if there is plenty of food around, a man will remain hungry if he does not have the money to buy it. Therefore, the Government will pay the utmost attention to the poor and the hungry, 41 percent of whom live behind the big palaces and bungalows in the cities and 48 percent of whom live in the villages. If we can not give them the attention they deserve, the Government will not be fit to remain in power.

It will be our endeavour that everyone in the country finds employment. For this, we have to pay special attention for increasing agricultural production and establishing cottage and village industries. When the Britishers came here first, 25 percent of our population was engaged in such industries. Today, despite big plants and factories, only 9 percent of the population is engaged in industries. Therefore, despite lakhs of cars and large number of skyscrapers in Bombay and Delhi and the number of people who have televisions and radio sets, I feel that we are today, poorer and weaker than the time of Jahangir and Aurangzeb.

To my friends in the cities, I would say that I am not inclined to answer the criticism appearing in the newspapers or the comments that various people make. I would like to say only that trade, transport and industries can develop only when there is purchasing power with the people. If the villagers, the unemployed and the poor do not have the purchasing power, our industries will not be able to develop and the country will not be able to attain affluence. Only that country is considered affluent which has a larger percentage of people engaged in non-agricultural occupations. In our country, however, only 10 percent of the population was engaged in industries in 1951 and this percentage remained static in 1961 and again in 1971. Industry cannot grow unless agriculture also develops. There is no other way. We will, therefore, attempt to encourage cottage and village industries in the rural areas.

Our womenfolk today break stones on the roads. What were their forefathers engaged in? They were independently engaged in small

industries or were craftsmen. These crafts were lost during the time of British and we too continue to be indifferent in this respect. Our emphasis, therefore, will be to establish cottage industries in the villages. We will also strive to increase farm production. It will also be our endeavour to assist the rural people to diversify to other occupations because prosperity cannot be achieved if majority of our people continue to depend on land.

I would like to draw your attention as well as the attention of my colleagues and public workers to the teachings of Mahatma Gandhi. Mahatmaji used to say that "ends don't justify means". It is as though you can adopt any means to achieve your objectives, howsoever noble. To be able to achieve noble objectives, your means should also be equally noble. You, and especially the public workers and all of us should keep in mind this advice; otherwise we will not be able to root out corruption. Corruption knows no bounds. A country where people are corrupt, will never be able to progress whosoever may be the leader of the party or whatever be the sound programme he might follow.

Mahatmaji also used to say that for a public worker, there is no private life different from his public life. To him, life is one and there is no compartmentalisation. If man's public life is not clean, you can well imagine, his private life cannot be any better either and he cannot truly serve the country.

The third thing, Gandhiji always emphasised and which we have tended to forget, is that "rights flow out of duties well performed". All around, you will find people asserting their rights, their demands to secure better wages and allowances. This is all right. It is necessary that people should have their rights but their rights emerge from their duties and responsibilities. How do we get our rights if we do not carry out our duties? There is need for hard work and enterprise. If you want to be prosperous, you will have to put in hard work. You will pardon me, if I say that we are not prepared to put in hard work. If you look at the other countries, you will go that people start working in their factories, schools and offices at 8 in the morning till 5 in the evening, getting a break of 40 minutes in between.

There are very few strikes. The emphasis there on demands is much less. In Japan, if a worker is annoyed, he only bears a black band on his arm and does not think in terms of striking work.

If other countries have become prosperous, it is because they have shown greater endeavour and enterprise. We want to earn more, have all the comforts and enjoy life without having to pay the price for it, without which nothing really in this world can be obtained, either by a person or by a nation. If the West today is more affluent, if Japan and Israel where the cows living in arid land, still give the world's best milk yield, are prosperous, it is because of the hard work and enterprise of these countries. If our country is to progress, we will have to put in hard work and show enterprise and when I say that, I include myself and my ministers. Only through our ceaseless hard work will this country be able to advance.

Coming to the foreign policy, we continue to adhere to the old policy of not aligning ourselves with any particular bloc. This will continue to be our policy because we consider it to be beneficial to the country— we will not be particularly inclined towards any country however big it might be. We believe that in the world peace can be achieved and people can find happiness only by following the preachings of Mahatma Gandhi. If not today, the world will reach same conclusion the day after tomorrow.

So far as the countries of South Asia are concerned, our relations with them have improved, barring some cases, where too, we hope, there will be improvement in our relations.

In this connection I would like to mention our neighbour, Pakistan whose people, till the other day, were part of us. Our information is that Pakistan is trying to manufacture nuclear bomb. Against whom are they making this bomb? They are friends with China; and with Russia they have no disputes. As for Afghanistan, it is a small country and Pakistan has no disputes with it either. If, therefore, I and my colleagues as also my countrymen reach the conclusion that this bomb is aimed at us, is aimed at India, then our conclusion will not be far from the truth.

It has been our decision and it remains our decision so far that we do

not want to manufacture nuclear bombs, or join the race for nuclear weapons. However, if Pakistan sticks to its decision and continues in its efforts to manufacture the bomb or stockpiling of these bombs, I and my colleagues will probably be forced to reconsider the entire question.

With these words, I would like to appeal all those democratic forces, who believe in secularism, to cast aside their petty differences, and come forward to help me and my colleagues and my Government.