

After a few years I have again the privilege to unfurl our dear national flag from this historic place.

This should have been an occasion for rejoicing, but my heart is full of sorrow. The incident which has taken place in Moradabad, not very far from here, has inflicted an injury to our country. Our sympathies are with the families of all those who have died or have been injured or have suffered in some way. On behalf of all of you I offer my sympathies to them. I should like to say that whoever has played mischief or is guilty, whether he is an official or a non-official, will be very severely punished. At the same time, I urge upon you that we should not allow the feeling of communalism, casteism or of revenge to spread.

It is the duty of everyone, in every city or village, to use all our energy to maintain peace and law and order. The poison of communalism has been there in our society for many years. We had thought that the martyrdom of Gandhiji had eliminated this poison but we see how easily it bursts out again.

You know that from my childhood I have been taught that special attention should be given to the weaker sections in our country- whether they are weak because of their numbers or because of poverty and backwardness. Our first duty is to protect them, help them and to raise them up, because only then can there be peace in our society. We have all to get on to this task. We have to think why these things, which had been controlled or were in check, have again emerged, particularly during the last three years. Besides communalism, casteism has surfaced in a powerful manner. There must be some conspiracy and some kind of effort that on every issue there is some agitation or some clash or violence, so that no work is done.

Violence and lawlessness have spread all over the country. If we do not succeed in putting a stop to it, we shall not be able to accomplish anything. It is like a river which breaks its banks and overflows in every direction. Its water then can be of little use or beneficence. It can only cause harm to the people. Such is the present state of affairs. Such groups

were encouraged and a climate was created in the country so that no could grab anything they could get.

We know that in a poor and backward country everybody has demands to make. Some of these can be just demands, the people need those things. But the question is how the demands should be put forward. Can agitations, which impose burdens on others, take our country forward? And if the country cannot march forward, then how can the demands be satisfied?

We have to stop this lawlessness. We have to remove the weaknesses that have crept in at every level, not only among the youth, but in the entire society and in the administration.

We find that the discipline, the spirit of working together, the spirit of marching together, the spirit of sacrifice and the spirit of service which were there earlier have disappeared now. People say that so many months have gone by but nothing has been done, but when water is spilt, can it again be collected easily? I assure you that it is my earnest endeavour to bring about improvement in the administration so that it may accomplish its tasks with dedication, patriotism, courage and speed.

Corruption has gone up and I am amazed at the extent of its increase at every level. We must root it out, whether it is in bureaucracy or in politics, whether it is in high places or low. Whoever it may be, we have to check this vigorously so that the instruments for implementing our policies are sharpened and take our programmes forward.

One of our main tasks is to see how to strengthen the services, whose duty it is to protect society. They should be enabled to do their work better and win the confidence and friendship of the people.

We are not unaware of the difficulties which we are facing today. There is the problem of Assam, where a powerful agitation has been going on.

I regard the children and students of Assam as my own children. I have sympathy for them. It is our earnest effort to remove their difficulties

which are genuine and have substance. But I would also tell them that it is not correct to hold the country to ransom and cause suffering to the nation. I believe that there are some sections, small in number but determined to do mischief, who want to take undue advantage of this agitation or for that matter any agitation anywhere else.

At some places, anti-social elements come to the surface; at others, anti-national elements raise their heads. If this evil, this poison, however small, is not combated it can spread and cause great damage. I have no doubt that the people of Assam and other parts of the country will not allow this poison to spread and will bravely fight the evil forces, agitation or no agitation.

Prices have risen and I know fully well the agonies of our people, particularly the difficulties and burdens on housewives and on women. But you also know the reasons why prices have gone up.

The prices of some commodities like oil, diesel and fertilizers are not wholly in our hands. But there are other commodities the prices of which should be under check. But how can the prices come down if there are agitations, if so much of money has to be spent on maintaining law and order and on fulfilling the demands of some sections of the people?

I appeal to you all, to the entire society, to sisters and brothers, to old and young, to realize that they also have some responsibility in the matter. Of course, it is the responsibility of the traders at this time not to take advantage of the difficulties and the helplessness of the people. It is also the responsibility of the people not to buy non-essential goods. Each in his own way should see what he can do in this direction.

If something improper is being done, if the ration shop is not being run properly, or if the traders are raising prices without reason, people should see what they can do. I can assure them that the government will fully co-operate with them in this task. But unless there is full backing of the people, this rampant evil cannot be easily curbed.

At the same time there is no problem which we cannot solve if you

help and co-operate. If we had recorded some achievements earlier, it was not because of any outside support, but because of the support and co-operation you gave us. We were able to consolidate the nation's power and did not allow it to be frittered away. You and we were thus able to achieve some remarkable things.

If agricultural production or industrial production increased, it was because of the sweat and labour of the Indian people. Today, we have again to revive the spirit of working hard.

The farmers of India are our very backbone. The country cannot survive without them, nor can we achieve self-reliance.

Cultivators are today in distress because of rising prices and the shortage of some inputs. We are trying our best to help them in every possible way.

After the terrible drought of last year, the rains have been fairly good so far this year. This has brought some relief. But many people have suffered because of floods. I offer my sympathies to the flood-affected people.

We have to increase the agriculture production in all possible ways so that our needs are met and foodgrains and other essential commodities are taken to the people in remote areas, whether they live in mountains, in forests or in deserts.

Similarly, industrial workers constitute the foundation of a modern nation. We can help our agriculture and strengthen the country only if our factories are kept running and industrial production goes up.

Our problems are many. But India is not the only country which faces an economic crisis. It is a world-wide phenomenon. Even the bigger nations are facing all the problems that we face. But this is no excuse for us.

No single country or a group of countries can help us. We have got to stand on our own feet and march towards the goal of self-reliance. And I think that one of the major causes of the lack of discipline and selfishness that we see around us is that we have given up the tried and tested path

during the last three years. Our basic policies and objectives and our ideals which had inspired us to march forward were repudiated and new ways were sought out. We would have understood if they did find a new way, but they went in different directions. This was the reason why all those who had come together broke up and our speed slowed down.

Wherever there is poverty and backwardness, internal danger is always present; but, today there is external danger also. You are not unaware of the state of affairs around our country, of the massive arms build-up that is going on. Earlier, the danger came only from one or two directions; but today the vast ocean is also full of all kinds of military concentrations. So the peril to us has further aggravated.

Our policy has always been that of friendship and it will continue to be so. We extend our hand of friendship, especially towards our neighbouring countries. The Government and the people of India know very well that nothing comes out of confrontation. It is only through co-operation and friendship that everyone can solve problems and help each other.

Whosoever tries to weaken us, puts pressure on us or is hostile to us, we shall face them unitedly, not through weapons, not through war, but on the basis of our strength, our stability, our unity and our ideals.

It has been our desire to show to the world that the countries of the entire sub-continent and those outside can live together and work together. But again, there is confrontation between countries. As I said earlier, no one can help a country as large as India. We have to stand on our own feet. Any help can at best be marginal. If we fall, nobody can lift us. We have to rise ourselves.

Our country can ensure its security on its own. It cannot depend on others. This is why we lean neither towards this country nor that, neither towards this bloc nor that bloc.

We are Indians and India is our concern. The building up of India is our endeavour. Whatever is our policy, whatever is our direction and whatever steps or programmes we undertake, they are all designed only to

make the people of India strong and to raise them above poverty and backwardness. This is our only objective.

I wish to assure our neighbouring countries that our people desire friendship with them. We do not want war. We know that there cannot be agreement on everything. There are bound to be differences among nations as among individuals. But wherever there is similarity of views, we should help each other, work together and co-operate with each other. If we are prepared to do that, much of our expenditure could be cut down and we can become stronger. But if anybody threatens us, we are prepared for it.

Present here amidst us today are the brave jawans of our three Services. No praise is too high for them. They are constantly engaged in the service of people, whether in war or peace. We, the citizens of India, are also soldiers of a kind, whether we put on a uniform or not. It is our duty to further strengthen our defence forces through unity among ourselves.

I see before me a large number of children, the hope and promise of India. What kind of future do we want to build for them? We have to work today for that future. If our young men, our farmers and workers, our middle-class and housewives and people of other professions get lost in the worries of the day and cannot come out of the present day crisis, how shall we march forward and complete the journey?

More than 28 crore people of our country were born after Independence. They have no conception of the appalling poverty that existed in India before Independence, the insults and indignities which were inflicted upon Indian citizens, our religion and our culture. Almost a miraculous change has taken place during these years.

All our problems have not been solved but, one by one, many problems have also been set right. If your co-operation is forthcoming, many more will be solved.

When our Government was formed, I had said, "Let us forget what happened in the past. Let us again be united." We may have different

policies and cannot adopt identical programmes. At the same time, no obstacles should be created in the way of building up of the nation.

Democracy can function only when the Government and the Opposition parties accept each other and try to work in harmony. This does not mean that the Opposition has no right to oppose. That right is inherent in a democracy. But no attempt should be made to stop the functioning of the Government.

Who suffers—the Government or the people—when work stops? And when the people suffer, the worst hit are the poor, particularly the women. Who will suffer if the schools and colleges are closed? Certainly the children whose years of education are wasted. We should consider all this.

We are at a turning point in the life of our country. Either we gain all or we lose all. Of course, it is the responsibility of the Government to implement programmes but it is equally up to the Opposition parties and also to you who are citizens of India. We should understand these problems.

During our freedom struggle, we marched forward unitedly and in a disciplined fashion. We had then no thought of our own selves, nor of our demands. Were there no demands then? Was there no agony or suffering when we were fighting for independence? There were few employment opportunities in those days. Availability of goods was meagre, people were pushed around and there was discrimination against us in our own railways. But Gandhiji turned all the suppressed and illiterate people into a strong force which shook the entire world. That power is still within us. Only a fraction of that power is represented at the Red Fort today and the rest—the vast masses of the people are spread in the four corners of the country.

We are a powerful force, a force for culture, a force for wisdom of the kind hardly seen in any other country. Shall we fritter away this asset? We have a precious heritage. Shall we throw it away? We have to consider all this.

Our goal is to make India great. We want to make India strong. We

do not ask for anything from the world. All we seek is peace. All we seek is to strengthen our freedom. All we want is to establish true democracy in our country— democracy not for the few but for the poorest of the poor, so that their problems are solved, so that they can have two full meals a day and be usefully employed and preserve their self-respect.

It is these things we want for our country. Only when we are able to provide these things can we say that the vow which our leaders had taken, the pledge Jawaharlal Nehru took for the first time at this spot under this flag, has been fulfilled.

Independence, the dream which Gandhiji shared with us and said we should do or die to reach it, has been realized. But we have to go ahead. If we stand together, there is no task which we cannot accomplish, no problem that we cannot solve and no danger that we cannot face.

I call upon you once again to rise and march ahead. We have fallen down sometimes, we may fall down again, but we shall rise and move forward and reach our destination.

Brothers and sisters, I appeal to you again to look to the future and not to the present. The future of India, your future, is bright and shining. Sometimes its very glitter can dazzle our vision, but we have to move forward to that glorious future and raise our country to a much higher plane.