

SPEECH BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA, SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE TO THE KARNATAKA LEGISLATURE

BELGAUM, KARNATAKA: 11-10-2012

It is an honour and a privilege to address this august body of the Karnataka legislature.

The erstwhile rulers of Mysore heralded the dawn of Representative Assembly as early as 1881. The Maharajas of Mysore were known for their benevolence and people oriented welfare measures. Gandhiji was impressed by the work of the Wodeyars and hailed the province as “Model Mysore”, worthy of emulation by other principalities.

The present Legislative Assembly and Legislative Council carry on the tradition of the Representative Assembly. The Karnataka Legislature has set a tradition of high standards by introducing various progressive legislations. It is to the credit of this august body that legislations enacted here like the Land Reforms Act, Abolition of Manual Scavenging, Reservation in Education and Employment to the Backward

Classes etc., have been acclaimed and emulated by many States as well as the National Government.

Elected Parliaments and legislature are the most critical ingredient of any true democracy. In our political system, Legislators are representatives of the people. They are entrusted with the responsibility for enacting legislations, discussing issues of governance and public interest, acting as a voice of the people and redressing their grievances through the legislative forum.

The responsibility of ensuring that actions of the Government are in harmony with the wishes and interests of the people rests with elected representatives. It is through the effective discharge of their duties that the Rule of Law becomes a living reality of our society. Legislators must always remember that they act as Trustees of the public and that they need to be exemplary models of good conduct and responsible behaviour.

Part VI Chapter 3, Articles 168 to 177 of the Constitution of India deals with the general provisions governing the State Legislatures. While there is some

uniformity in the composition and functioning of the State Legislatures, there does exist distinction between the bigger States and the smaller States. Since the beginning, some of the bigger States enjoyed bicameral legislatures consisting of both Legislative Assemblies and Legislative Councils but in course of time, some of the States opted for unicameral legislatures like West Bengal. In the case of Andhra Pradesh, it started with a bicameral legislature but in mid-eighties, it switched over to unicameral legislature and again recently they have reverted to bicameral legislature. Karnataka has bicameral legislature right from the beginning. In fact, even during the days of Maharajas, Karnataka had both Assembly and Council. Currently, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Karnataka Uttar Pradesh and Jammu & Kashmir have bicameral legislatures.

The primary responsibility of State Legislature is to enact laws required for good governance and administration of the State. The List-2 of the Seventh Schedule consists of 66 items for State administration and legislation. Now-a-days, with heightened complexity of administration both in governance and legislations, the legislators must be careful

in passing the legislations. It is a time consuming process both at the Committee stage and during discussions on the floor of the House. The trend being noticed now, which is not good for democracy, is that the time devoted by legislators towards legislation has gradually been declining. Legislators must always remember that as representatives of the people and custodians of public interests and rights, they have to be extremely careful in matters of legislation, money and finance. Elected representatives of the people, particularly in Legislative Assemblies, have exclusive control over money and finance. No expenditure can be incurred by the Executive without approval of Legislature, no tax can be levied except by a law passed by the Legislature and no money can be withdrawn from the Consolidated Fund of the State without the approval of the Legislature. Legislature exercises this authority through Budget and other Money Bills. As per the Constitution, Money Bill can be certified only by the Speaker as per the provisions laid down in the Constitution (*Article 110 for Parliament, Article 198 and 199(3)&(4) for the Assembly*) and can be introduced and passed only in the Legislative Assembly.

Legislature, particularly the Legislative Assembly, is the master of the Executive in the sense that the Chief Minister along with his Council of Ministers is accountable collectively and severally to the Legislative Assembly. The Executive can be unseated at any time by passing a resolution of No Confidence in the State Legislative Assembly by a simple majority. Most of the instruments of governance are executed through appropriate laws passed by Legislatures. Therefore, Executive's dependence on Legislature is total. Legislatures must be responsible and responsive to this huge task entrusted on it by the Constitution to keep the wheels of our democratic functioning moving smoothly.

To discharge this responsibility, Legislature must meet frequently. The work which can be done through Committees should be done at that stage and the core business of Legislature should be accomplished through regular sittings. Therefore, sittings of Legislature should be more frequent and they should meet at least for 20 to 25 weeks in a year. It is a sad commentary, going by the recent trends which we are noticing, that the legitimate functioning of the Legislative bodies is jeopardized by fewer number of days in session.

Another disturbing trend noticed now-a-days is the frequent disruptions in the proceedings of the House. There may be occasions when normal business of the House is suspended to take up an urgent issue on which a large number of Members are agitated. But such occasions should be few and far between. In the rules of procedure of every Legislature, there are adequate provisions to raise issues of urgent public importance on the floor of the House in an orderly manner. Members can utilize those provisions to raise those issues in which they are interested but disruption of proceedings by frequent adjournments cannot be justified. Cardinal principle of effective functioning of Parliamentary system is majority will rule and minority will oppose, expose and if possible, depose. But this should be done within the framework of rules framed by Legislatures themselves. Disruption should never be allowed to be used as an effective Parliamentary intervention.

Our Governance mechanisms must become citizen friendly, quick and accountable. I am happy to note that the “Sakala” programme implemented in accordance with

the Guarantee of Citizens' Services Act by the Karnataka Government has been a success.

I am happy to note that Karnataka is the first State in the country to unveil a "Vision-2020" for comprehensive development. Such long term planning is critical to ensure that the state makes steady progress and is fully prepared to meet the challenges of the future. Karnataka also stands first in the country with 31 registrations out of 172 on All India basis in the category of Geographical Indications of Products (GIP) like Mysore Silk, Mysore Jasmine, Mysore Sandal Oil, Nanjangud Banana, Channapattana Toys, Bidriware, Ilkal and Molakalmur Sarees etc.

Karnataka's strides in the area of e-Governance, empowerment of Panchayati Raj Institutions and Rural Development have been acclaimed nationally. It is a State where intellectual prowess co-exists with rich cultural heritage. Higher Institutions of Learning and Research like the Indian Institute of Science, ISRO, DRDO, HAL, CSIR Laboratories, Indian Institute of Information Technology and a number of Scientific, Health and Educational Institutions have over the years produced a vast pool of

talented and skilled workforce. From the time of Sir M. Vishweshariah, Karnataka has a strong industrial base. It is today also known across the world as home to India's vibrant IT industry. People of Karnataka have proven themselves as excellent entrepreneurs and also attracted to the State the best of talent from across the country and the world.

The State of Karnataka is heir to remarkable natural and human resources. It is therefore incumbent on the leadership of the State to ensure that its full potential is exploited. All stakeholders of the State must develop a consensus on a long term vision and back it up with suitable strategies so that the development dreams of its people can become a reality. A vibrant and prosperous Karnataka is a goal which can be achieved in the near term and it is the legislature more than any other institution which can ensure rapid progress towards this objective.

There is nothing that stands in the way of development of this State if all join together and fulfill their duties and responsibilities towards the people and engage themselves

in the cause of building a peaceful and prosperous
Karnataka.

Thank you, JAI HIND.