

Indeed a privilege and an honour to inaugurate this 83rd conference of All India Presiding Officers' in the Pink City after a decade.

में आशावान हूँ की इस महत्वपूर्ण सम्मेलन में मंथन और विचार विमर्शों से अमृत निकलेगा जो अवश्य ही हमारे देश और संसदीय व्यवस्था को अमृतकाल में नई ऊर्जा देगा।

Presiding officers hold august offices. In this capacity we are not stakeholders in politics.

Primary concern is optimisation of the contribution of the elected representatives in Parliament and Legislature for welfare of the people.

People in the Executive, Legislature and holding senior political positions must take care that high constitutional offices are kept away from their political stance.

India is privileged to be heading G20 at a critical time. It is an "opportunity to showcase India's capability to the world".

With such a sizable nation, the mother of democracy, such diversity, and such potential, India has the chance to introduce itself to the world and demonstrate its prowess. This is going to be a milestone development.

This Conference is being held in the context of rising global profile of India. Today we are in the Amrit Kaal of our Independence on way to laying firm foundations of what Bharat will be in 2047, at the centenary of its independence.

We need to rise above partisan stance, take pride in being Indians and be proud of our historic achievements.

These achievements are due to collective efforts and genius of our people coupled with governmental initiatives and affirmative policies.

Bharat is on the rise as never before. The world has acclaimed our Covid handling. Some of the recent milestones make us hold our head high.

In October 2022 India surpassed the United Kingdom, to become the 5th largest economy of the world. By turn of the decade we'll be the third largest global economy.

According to the most recent industry figures, India overtook Japan in auto sales in 2022, moving to the third place for the first time.

India has edged past China to add most number of new unicorns-startups, valued at \$1 billion or more - another accomplishment to be proud of.

Our rich human resource, skilled workforce and affirmative governance policies guided by the principle of more governance and less government contributed to the growth trajectory.

Bharat today is a favoured destination of investment, innovation and opportunity in the post- pandemic world.

The country has shown resilience and Aatma Nirbharta in the wake of Covid. The world is surprised that we provided 230 crore vaccine doses largely free.

Our vaccination certificates are digitally available. Not even the most developed nations in the world have so achieved.

India delivered around 16.29 crore doses of vaccines to 96 countries. Of these, 1.43 crore were gifted.

Through our Vaccine- Maitri mission we have shown that we are a responsible partner in global welfare and growth.

It is with this spirit of global cooperation that India as the largest democracy, assumes the leadership of G 20.

Inspired by our age- old ethos- वसुधैव कुटुम्बकम् - Vasudhaiv Kutumbakam, we have given New Mantra for sustainable development and inclusive prosperity of the world, "One Earth, One Family, One Future."

Essence of Democracy is prevalence of the mandate of the people and securing their welfare.

ये हम सबका सौभाग्य है की भारत विश्व में लोकतान्त्रिक विस्तार का प्रतीक भी है। हमें विश्व का सबसे बड़ा लोकतंत्र होने का गौरव हासिल है।

Current scenario in Parliament and Legislatures is indeed a cause of concern. Time for us to address the wide spread disillusionment and disgust of the people at lack of decorum in the Parliament and Legislatures.

लोकतंत्र के इन मंदिरों की विषम दशा से हम सब भली भांति परिचित ही हैं। समय आ गया है कि इस निराशाजनक स्थिति का उचित समाधान अविलंब निकाला जाय। संसद और विधान सभाओं में अशोभनीय घटनाओं और व्यवहार पर जनता में व्याप्त रोष का निदान खोजा जाय।

Be in no doubt, the anguish and disappointment of the people at lack of decorum and discipline in proceedings in Parliament and Legislatures is severe. There is continual diminishing of respect in public for Parliament and Legislatures and their representatives. There could not be more urgency for being in correctional mode.

How can representatives- MLAs, MLCs and MPs swear by constitution and law and blatantly flout rules and throw decorum to winds?

Your role in containing and curbing this downslide is all important. Am sure this degenerating scenario will receive full focus and attention.

ये समझ से परे है कैसे MPs MLAs and MLCs जो संविधान और कानून की शपथ लेते हैं, विधायिका में नियमों और अनुशासन का उल्लंघन करें! ऐसी स्थिति पर नियंत्रण करने, उस पर अंकुश लगाने में आपकी भूमिका सबसे महत्वपूर्ण है। मुझे विश्वास है इस विषय पर पूरा ध्यान दिया जाएगा।

Can disruptions and outrage of rules in Parliament and Legislatures be allowed to be a political strategy? Surely Not.

क्या व्यवधानों और नियमों के उल्लंघन को, एक राजनैतिक रणनीति बनने दिया जा सकता है? कदापी नहीं!

The Constituent Assembly during its 11 Sessions spread over almost 3 years addressed some of the most critical and sensitive issues. There was not a single instance of disruption or disturbance.

Dialogue, discussion and debates were key to decisions in the Constituent Assembly. There were many animated debates with divergent points of views. Always there was effort to evolve a national consensus on the Constitutional provisions.

संविधान सभा एक अनुकरणीय उदाहरण प्रस्तुत करती है। संविधान सभा में विमर्श में सौहार्द, भाषा में शिष्टता और विचारों में निष्ठा थी। वो लोग विद्वान थे, बड़े उद्देश्य के प्रति समर्पित थे। उनके सामने एक लक्ष्य था, तत्कालीन विषम स्थितियों के प्रति सजग थे और उन परिस्थितियों में अपनी जिम्मेदारी के प्रति जागरूक थे।

संसद और विधायिका में आज अनुभव, योग्यता और प्रतिभा भरपूर है। जरा सोचिए, आज वो पुराने मूल्य और आदर्श क्यों और कहाँ खो गए हैं!

Time for us all to reflect on the caution in the final Constituent Assembly address of Dr Ambedkar. He reflected "however good a Constitution may be, it is sure to turn out bad because those who are called to work it, happen to be bad lot."

I am sure as Presiding officers you will bestow full attention and take lead in evolution of ecosystem where these temples of democracy become centres of excellence for decorum and sublime parliamentary practices. Members of Parliament and the legislatures exhibit conduct that exemplifies virtuosity and sublimity worth emulating.

Surely you will give serious thought to the need for harmonious relations between the legislature and the judiciary in accordance with the spirit enshrined in the Constitution. Meaningful discussion on this burning topic can act as a guide.

Every Constitutional institution, must heed Dr Ambedkar's observations "The Constitution can only provide the organs of the State such as the Legislature, the Executive and the Judiciary. The factors on which the working of those organs of the State depends are the people and the political parties..."

Democracy sustains and blossoms when the Legislature, the Judiciary and the Executive act in tandem and togetherness to fructify constitutional goals and realise aspirations of the people. Judiciary cannot legislate in as much Legislature cannot script a judicial verdict.

All these constitutional entities need to conform to their domain. Public posturing or oneupmanship that is being frequently witnessed is not wholesome. Those at the helm of these institutions need to reflect.

Dr. Rajendra Prasad in his valedictory address constituent assembly too cautioned "If the people who are elected are capable and men of character, they would be able to make best even of a defective Constitution. If they are lacking in these, the Constitution cannot help the country. After all a Constitution like a machine is a lifeless thing..."

In democratic society, 'the basic' of any 'basic structure' has to be the supremacy of mandate of people. Thus the primacy and sovereignty of Parliament and legislature is inviolable.

All constitutional institutions the Judiciary, the Executive and the legislature are required to confine to their respective domains and conform to the highest standard of propriety and decorum. The current scenario on this count calls for serious attention by all concerned particularly those at the helm of these institutions.

Power of the Parliament to amend the constitution and deal with legislation is not subject to any other authority. This is life line of democracy. I am sure this will engage your thoughtful consideration.

It was in 1973, in the Kesavananda Bharati case, the Supreme Court evolved for the first time, the right of the courts to strike down constitutional amendments that violated what it called the “Basic Structure”, or the fundamental architecture of the Constitution.

In subsequent years, the highest court delivered significant rulings on matters that it held pivotal to this “Basic Structure” and in the process parliamentary sovereignty was compromised.

Most recent and prominent judicial manifestation of the “basic structure doctrine” was on 16th October, 2015, when the highest court of the land in a 4-1 majority verdict, held both the 99th Constitution Amendment Act, 2014, and the National Judicial Appointments Commission (NJAC) Act, 2014, unconstitutional on the premise of being in violation of the basic structure.

History of sorts was created in the Parliament with respect to the NJAC. There was complete unanimity in the Lok Sabha. There was not a single dissenting voice. The House of the People voted in unison in favour of this Constitutional Amendment. In Rajya Sabha, there was unanimity but there was one abstention.

Sixteen State Legislatures ratified it -Rajasthan Assembly being the first one.

This exercise crystallised into constitutional prescription with the Hon’ble President assent under Article 111 of the Constitution.

This was undone by Judiciary. Such kind of a scenario is perhaps unparalleled in the democratic history of the world.

The executive is ordained to be in compliance of the constitutional prescription emanating from the Parliament. It was obligated to adhere to the NJAC. Judicial verdict cannot run it down.

Parliamentary sovereignty and autonomy cannot be permitted to be qualified or compromised as it is the primacy and sovereignty of Parliament and legislature is inviolable.

quintessential to survival of democracy.

No institution can wield power or authority to neutralise the mandate of the people.

It is the obligation of Parliament and Legislatures to protect sovereignty of the people.

Parliamentary sovereignty cannot be permitted to be diluted or compromised by the Executive or the Judiciary.

All such aspects need to be deliberated as Parliament and Legislatures are enjoined with the objectives to preserve and protect sovereignty of the people.

Parliament and legislatures are eminently suited to effect congeniality between the Legislature, the Executive and the Judiciary. This needs to be the priority concern given the frequent public stance by these institutions that generate a worrisome ecosystem.

In my valedictory remarks at the end of recent 258th Session of Rajya Sabha, I had urged the House to realise that "This theatre of democracy is under the gaze of over a billion people in the country as also those beyond. They all cherish, hope and expect that we will work towards realising their aspirations and fructify their dreams."

In so asserting, I was only echoing the concern of Dr BR Ambedkar who had cautioned "Unless we, in Parliament, realise our responsibilities and shoulder the task of looking after the welfare and good of the people....I have not the slightest doubt in my mind that this Parliament will be treated by public outside with utter contempt." While we work our Constitution, we must be very alive to these prophetic concerns and cautions of the founding fathers of our republic.

In this Amrit Kaal, this Conference is an occasion to assess, analyse and calibrate our performance against the concerns of our founding fathers and expectations of our electorate and unfold our journey trajectory when India in 2047 celebrates centenary of its independence.

The deliberations and conclusions in the conference will be milestone ensuring strengthening and enhancing confidence of the people in Parliament and Legislatures. Wishing this Conference every success.

Jai Hind