

Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru

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Reference on Pondicherry

Separate Identity of Pondicherry¹

I have made it clear on many occasions that we do not propose to merge Pondicherry in any of the neighbouring States and that it will maintain its separate identity. I said this only a few days ago when I was in the South. This was partly in relation to Goa also. What I have stressed is that it is entirely for the people of Pondicherry in future to decide about this matter. When occasion arises, I shall again make this clear. The Chief Commissioner² can do so on his own part, both informally and formally, on suitable occasions.

2. Today's newspaper says something about a Committee of the French Chamber not accepting our draft Treaty on the ground that the French nationals have not been adequately protected.³ All this delay is unfortunate, but I do not know what we can do about it.

¹ Note to Secretary General, Foreign Secretary and Azim Husain, Joint Secretary, New Delhi, 3 March 1957 JN Collection

² M.K. Kirpalani

³ The French Union Assembly, an advisory body of elected representatives from France and her overseas territories, voted against ratification of the Indo-French treaty of 28 May 1956 on the cession of the French settlements of Pondicherry, Karaikal, Mahe and Yanam to India by 88 votes to 44 on 1 March 1957 on grounds of inadequate safeguards and guarantees to French subjects and interests.

3. I agree that the question of fines referred to in paragraph 10 should be dealt with greater expedition.⁴ Whatever the French law may be on the subject, I do not see any difficulty in stopping immediately the levy of any outstanding fine. Further, surely even refunds can be granted by executive action.

4. I think, it is important that officers sent to Pondicherry should learn French. Also, we need not confine our recruitment to Madras State.

⁴ A note by M.K. Kirpalani to Azim Husain, Joint Secretary, MEA, mentioned that fines imposed in political cases continued to be collected because under the French law there was no provision for writing them off. Kirpalani had advised suspension of further collection of fines in cases where no violence was committed. He also wrote that some way had to be found to write off the fines in consultation with the French authorities