

MARCH 9, 1973

Hon'ble Mr. Speaker and Members of the Legislative Assembly,

We are meeting here at a moment when world events appear to have taken an auspicious turn bringing peace to Viet Nam after twenty years of war. This New Year gift at the conclusion of one year after the emergence of Bangla Desh as a free nation makes the chances for a generation of peace in this part of the world, a distinct possibility.

Let all of us try to convert this prospect of peace into an asset for full development of the human personality, within a society which offers the conditions necessary for economic and social progress and ensures to every man, woman and child in our country the minimum necessities for a healthy and happy life. For this, programmes and policies have to be worked out keeping constantly in view the twin objectives of our Planning, viz., economic growth and social justice. My Government is engaged in this onerous task within the limitations of a State Government in the Indian context.

It is an undeniable fact that even after 25 years of independence we have not been able to eradicate poverty from this land. It has been estimated that about 40% of the population in our country is below the poverty-line. The proportion of people in this category in Kerala may not be much different. Our primary task therefore is to put forth our utmost effort in implementing programmes and policies which are calculated to bring about a radical change in the situation within the shortest possible time.

The strategy that has to be adopted for achieving this objective is to work for such changes in the economic system as will reduce inequalities in income and wealth on the one hand, while on the other hand, increase the social consumption of the poorest strata of society. Simultaneously the production of consumer goods necessary for the common people must be stepped up very considerably. Necessarily, policies will have to be so devised as to encourage production all round, in agriculture as well as industry.

My Government has adopted several measures during the course of the last two years to achieve the above objective. I shall be referring to the most important of them in the course of my address.

Land reforms is one of the most important programmes which helps to bring about reduction in inequalities and creation of employment opportunities in the rural area. In this respect we can legitimately claim that our achievements are sizeable. Still, we are not satisfied and we cannot rest on our oars. Therefore, the Land Reforms Act has been further amended with a view to decentralise the work of determining surplus lands and taking them over, to Taluk level. Taluk Land Boards and Village Level Committees with popular representation are going to be set up shortly. Taluk Land Board have also been vested with magisterial powers to punish persons who fail to furnish returns with respect to their lands or who deliberately conceal or give, incorrect information.

Even after full implementation of Land Reforms and distribution of surplus land there will be a large population of landless people in our State amounting to as much as 40%. Land reform by itself cannot therefore be expected to improve the conditions of living of the agricultural labourers and marginal farmers in our State. My Government however, is ensuring to them minimum wages for the various kinds of agricultural operations. Moreover, as you are aware, a new Bill for bettering the conditions of agricultural labourers is now pending before a Select Committee of the Legislature. In areas where minimum wages could not be enforced because of legal difficulties, my Government has not hesitated even to use the Defence of India Rules to see that agricultural labourers get reasonable wages from their landlords. However, enforcement of minimum wages alone will not be sufficient to solve the problems of agricultural labourers. What they need above all is assured and steady employment. Implementation of land

development and other programmes which will assure increased opportunities of employment to the rural population are the only solution. My Government are implementing several programmes for this purpose. The crash programme of rural employment which was begun in 1971 is being implemented vigorously. This gives work to about 10,000 people for 10 months in a year and adds permanent assets in the shape of minor irrigation, soil conservation and rural roads. The biggest programme for providing work to agricultural labourers that my Government is going to take up is the Kuttanad Development Scheme with an investment of Rs. 24 crores, the major portion of which will be met by way of loan by the Agricultural Refinance Corporation. The project is being implemented by the Kerala Land Development Corporation, which has already been registered and has started functioning in Alleppey. We propose to start another project of the same type for Trichur Kole lands also. The employment potential in the Kuttanad Development Project is 9.44 lakhs man days during 1973-74 itself. About 5,000 persons will get work for 200 days during the year.

Another important programme intended to provide employment on a large scale to families of agricultural labourers and marginal farmers is the Poultry Development Programme, which is going to be implemented in 1973-74. Under this one thousand new poultry units will be set up in each district. The programme contemplates loan assistance from banks to the extent of about Rs. 2.65 crores. To begin with the scheme will be started in two districts and will be extended to other districts in a phased manner.

Action has been initiated, during 1972-73 to introduce cocoa cultivation in an area of 10,000 acres in a phased manner. 2,000 acres will be covered in 1973-74 with cocoa. This will help to increase the income of small land-holders who can supplement their income from coconut gardens by inter-planting coconut trees with cocoa trees. There is also a sizeable employment potential in processing cocoa seeds for the market.

The programme of cashew cultivation in the laterite land given to landless people in Cannanore District is making good progress. 3,000 acres have already been covered and it is proposed to expand the cultivation to another 12,000 acres.

Under the emergency food production programme launched with Central assistance, schemes costing over Rs. 325 lakhs have been taken up this year for implementation of Minor Irrigation programmes, supply of pumpsets to Panchayats, energisation of pumpsets and for undertaking prophylactic plant protection measures. Government took up cultivation in three Kayal blocks of Kuttanad, left fallow by the landlords. This attempt which was unique in the history of our State ended in great success with 2.5 lakhs man-days of work generated and production of 2,000 tonnes of paddy.

Work in connection with the establishment of a collective farm at Illithode in Ernakulam District is progressing. The families of landless labour who are to be settled in the farm are being selected. The second farm is to be established in Koothaly in Kozhikode District. It is hoped the third also will come into being in 1973-74 itself.

In spite of drought conditions in the whole of India and consequent scarcity of foodgrains it was possible for my Government to keep the public distribution system running fairly efficiently. Though the price of foodgrains has shown an upward trend, by the earnest efforts made by the Government it was possible to check and keep it within reasonable limits. In order to correct the tendency to black-marketing and hoarding, the Pulses Control Order has been issued to enforce ceiling on stock. Arrangements have been made for the distribution of controlled cloth through the Departmental stores and Consumer Co-operatives. Wheat products have been brought under control and arrangements have been made to distribute the available stock equitably among institutions like bakeries, hotels, etc.

A massive cross breeding scheme taken up under the Special Employment Programme for 1972-73 aims at increasing the per capita availability of milk by 1980, viz., annual increase being augmented from the present 4.20 lakh tonnes per year to 23.00 lakh tonnes. The scheme will be implemented on Panchayat basis, about a million local cows of breedable age in 720 selected Panchayats would be impregnated using semen from exotic bulls of high production potential. Employment will be provided for about 1000 persons with S.S.L.C. qualification as Cattle Improvement Assistants. An indirect benefit will be for unskilled labour to obtain one lakh man-days of work and also subsidiary occupation and additional income to 6 lakhs of farmers. The selection of the Panchayats and of candidates for training as Cattle Improvement Assistants are over and the training is going on at present in 11 Training Centres. The scheme will be continued during the year 1973-74, actual insemination of cattle commencing by May/June 1973.

The One Lakh Housing Scheme has attracted wide attention not only within the State but also outside the State. It is the first attempt of its kind ever since independence. It is an attempt to make the lowest strata of our society, viz., the landless and the houseless feel that they are not the unwanted dregs of society but the proud citizens of free India. The work of acquisition of land and distribution of house sites to about 96,000 landless people is almost complete. 50% of the beneficiaries are Harijans. About 10,000 houses have been completed and are being handed over to the beneficiaries. It is hoped to complete the entire programme in 1973-74.

During a year when most of the States in India have had to suffer significant power-cuts, it is a matter of gratification that we have been able to manage without severe difficulty. In fact, as a matter of goodwill, we have agreed to supply some power to the neighbouring State of Tamilnadu even though this may entail a small power-cut in our own State. We are fortunate in that we have considerable hydel resources still to be developed. I am happy that sanction has been accorded to the Silent Valley Project and I hope that the Government of India will permit us to proceed with the other schemes like Edamalar, Lower Periyar, Idukki stage II & III, and Kakkad which we have already proposed. Even though we are at present, entirely dependent upon hydel power and have no thermal or nuclear stations to support the system, it is essential for the Southern Region as a whole that the hydel resources of our State are harnessed as quickly as possible. With the completion of the Idukki Scheme, much needed stability in our own system and surplus power which could be fed into the Southern Regional Grid will make Kerala a desirable location for new industries.

Even though in the short run additional employment can be created more easily in the agricultural sector, we cannot ignore the supreme necessity for diversification of the economy and development of modern industry in the long run. My Government has taken several steps to create a favourable climate for industrialisation. The most important of these, is the creation of capacity for power generation on a big scale. Next comes the creation of better industrial relations. While the workers cannot be denied the right to strike, loss of production through continuous strikes, lock-outs or other forms of dispute will not be beneficial even to the working class. It is for this reason that my Government is doing its utmost to solve all disputes without resort to strikes and lock-outs. Although conditions cannot be said to be ideal, some measure of success has been achieved in this field also, with the result that there is a favourable climate for investment in the State. New units such as Excel Glass Factory, Premier Breweries and Steel Complex Limited, in the private sector are coming up. The public sector enterprises like the Travancore Titanium Products Limited, Travancore-Cochin Chemicals Limited, and Traco Cable Factory are implementing big schemes for development. The Transformers and Electricals Limited also will be going in for big expansion in the near future. The Kerala State Textile Corporation has already taken over four sick mills and is assisting ten mills. The State Farming Corporation has started sugar-cane cultivation in about 5000 acres of land this year. It will be expanded and proposals are being made for the establishment of more sugar factories in the State. Co-operative Sugars Limited, Chittur has gone ahead with a distillery project which will be commissioned shortly.

With our educated population and the skill of our young men and women there is great scope for Electronics Industry in the State. The Kerala State Electronic Development Corporation Limited has been registered as a subsidiary Company of the Kerala State Industrial Development Corporation and will be starting work soon.

It is hoped that work on the Public Sector Newsprint Project under the aegis of the Government of India will start this year itself. With a view to streamlining the working of a number of Government companies like Kundara Ceramics, Kerala Soaps and Oils, Travancore Rubber Works, etc., a Holding Company under the name of the Kerala State Industrial Enterprises Limited had been formed. The object is to take over, co-ordinate and improve the efficiency of these above mentioned Government companies.

Liberal incentives have been given for the Small Scale Industries in the State. Concessional finance from the Kerala Financial Corporation, exemption from Stamp Duty on loans from the Kerala Finance Corporation and interest-free loan for an amount equal to the sales-tax assessed to small scale units for the first five years, etc., have been provided.

Alleppey District has been declared as the most backward district for the purpose of availing concessional finance for development of industry. Cannanore and Malappuram also have been included in this category. Trivandrum and Trichur Districts also qualify as backward districts and are eligible for concessions though not on the same scale as the most backward districts. Two more rural industries projects, one in Trivandrum and another in Malappuram have also been sanctioned.

While developing modern industry, we cannot afford to neglect the traditional industries like cashew, coir and handloom. In the cashew industry, the emergence of the Cashew Development Corporation which has at present 25 factories under it has brought about a certain degree of stability and order in the industry. It is proposed to take over 15 more cashew factories in 1973. The sharp increase in the prices of yarn has brought about great distress among the handloom weavers of the State. Government of India have promised to take immediate measures to control the price of yarn and to ration it and make it available to all States on the basis of the number of installed and working looms in each State.

The slow progress of our Major Irrigation works has been a matter of concern for us for a long time. I am glad to announce that Government of India have proposed that three projects viz., Pamba Periyar Valley and Kallada may be taken up on a priority basis even during the last year of the Fourth Five Year Plan so that results can be achieved in the very first years of the Fifth Plan. Kuttiadi has already been commissioned. Government have now taken a decision to construct at Government cost field botiaies upto an area of 25 acres of land. This will enable irrigation facilities to be utilised more fully by the cultivators than is being done now.

Under the health services, there has been a steady increase in the number of medical institutions and bed strength besides expansion of facilities for treatment. A new scheme of starting 200 dispensaries in the rural areas has commenced, 189 dispensaries having been started and 178 Doctors and 527 para medical personal having been employed. The objective is to have at least one medical institution in every Panchayat. With the establishment of the 200 dispensaries, there will remain only another 250 Panchayats to be covered. It is proposed to open 250 dispensaries (100 Allopathic, 100 Ayurveda and 50 Homeo) during the year 1973-74 under the Special Employment programme, on completion of which there will be no Panchayat left without a Government dispensary. A scheme for building Pay Wards attached to all the District Hospitals and Medical College Hospitals with loans from nationalised banks will be implemented in the year 1973-74.

Significant progress has been made in the field of Urban and Rural Water Supply. The Water Supply Schemes in all the Municipal Towns of the State are fast progressing. Sixty-six Rural Water supply Schemes have been completed, 169 are nearing completion and it is expected that by the end of the Fourth Five Year Plan 505 Rural Water Supply Schemes covering 35% of the population would be completed.

The Rural Development Board which is responsible for the implementation of Rural Water Supply Schemes is doing commendable work in the matter of implementing remunerative works also. Schemes costing about Rs. 55 lakhs have been sanctioned for this purpose. The Board has a programme to take up schemes costing about 150 lakhs in the coming year.

During the year the scheme of direct payment of salaries to the staff of private Arts and Science Colleges, Polytechnics and Engineering Colleges has been implemented following the agreement reached with the Private College managements by the Government. This has brought about a certain degree of orderliness in the affairs of private colleges, in the matter of appointment of teachers and the admission of students in these colleges. Besides being a measure of security for the staff of private Colleges it has also resulted in a considerable reduction of fees paid by students of the Colleges. A scheme for providing scholarships irrespective of caste or community to all those students who pass in the qualifying examination with first class and want to go for higher studies has been sanctioned. Now that some of the longstanding grievances of the teachers as well as of the student community have been settled I would make an earnest appeal to all concerned to co-operate with the Government in the matter of maintaining peace in the academic field so that our younger generation may be enabled to concentrate their energies on their studies and become good and useful citizens.

The first stage of Vizhinjam Fishing Harbour has almost been completed. It is hoped that the work in respect of the remaining two stages could be taken up during 1973-74. It is expected that the major part of the Trawler Wharf in Cochin with other infrastructural facilities would be completed during 1973-74. The Project report for intermediate fishing harbour at Beypore has been prepared and forwarded to Government of India. On receipt of administrative sanction, work will be taken up.

The development of fisheries with the assistance of Agricultural Refinance Corporation has made much headway, in Pudiappaputhiyangadi and Vypeen and it is proposed to have another scheme during 1973-74 at Anjengo.

The Marine fish production will be considerably increased with the acquisition of five more trawlers by the Kerala Fisheries Corporation, during the course of 1973-74.

Government of India have sanctioned the project for the development of Beypore Port under the Centrally-sponsored scheme at a total cost of Rs. 111.96 lakhs. Preliminary works for the development of Beypore Port have been undertaken by the Port Department.

Apart from the continuing schemes for the welfare of scheduled castes and tribes my Government have now launched a new venture in the shape of Harijan Welfare Corporation which will draw up schemes for housing, setting up of small-scale and cottage industries, dairying, poultry farming, etc. in order to help Harijan families to make a living. The scheme for special recruitment of Harijans to Gazetted posts in various departments has made considerable progress.

With a view to conserve our forest resources and develop them further to cater to the new industries that are coming up in our State, Government propose to set up an Industrial Plantation Corporation for raising softwood and other quick growing varieties.

The most acute problem facing the State of Kerala is no doubt the problem of unemployment especially among the educated youth. It has assumed almost explosive proportions. My Government has been concentrating its attention on this problem and trying its best to increase opportunities of employment. Through the special employment programmes sanctioned by the Government of India, about 2000 educated people will be provided with jobs in the year 1972-73. This is besides 2700 persons who have been employed as teachers under Central scheme. However, it has been realised that the attempts hitherto made to solve this problem have been far from adequate. Investment on a massive scale will be necessary for this. The Central Government has now come forward with a plan to provide 5,00,000 jobs for the educated unemployed during 1973-74, for which Rs. 100 crores have been set apart in the Central Budget. The State Government has now proposed a number of schemes costing about Rs. 15 crores to the Central Government which, if accepted, and implemented will provide employment to about 25,000 educated young men during the course of the year. It is hoped the Central Government will find its way to accept all the schemes in view of the intensity of the problem of educated unemployment in our State.

My Government has been trying to re-fashion the Police as an instrument of service and as a protector of the people against anti-social elements. The task of the Police force in our State is far from enviable. They have been put to very great strain especially during the course of the last several months during which one agitation after another has been mounted against the Government in which there were frequent occasions where rival groups of agitators came into open clash. I am happy to say that the Police force have risen to the occasion and have handled the most difficult and trying situations competently. They have dealt with law and order situations with firmness, while at the same time behaving with utmost courtesy and tact.

Lastly, I wish to say a word about the Government employees, a section of whom were on strike during the past few weeks. My Government have been sympathetic to the problems of the Government employees and have come forward to increase the dearness allowance periodically in step with the dearness allowance rise given to the Central Government employees. Of course it has not been possible to satisfy the Government employees fully. They have many difficulties in the context of increasing cost of living. But we must also recognise the limitations of the resources of our State. Faced with recurring deficits

and continuing overdrafts, the State is finding it very difficult to implement even some of the most necessary developmental works for which people are pressing insistently. It is in this context that my Government has been forced to deny some of the demands put forward by a section of the employees who have gone on strike. But I am happy to note that the strike has now been withdrawn. I want to assure them that my Government will never deal with them in a spirit of vindictiveness, but would take all steps to normalise the situation in all Government offices without delay.

The following are some of the important Bills that will come up for consideration during the course of the year:—

1. The Calicut University Bill, 1972.
2. The Kerala University Bill, 1972.
3. The Kerala Irrigation Bill, 1972.
4. The Kerala Medical Practitioners Bill, 1972.
5. The Kerala Agricultural Workers Bill, 1972.

Honourable Members: This is the seventh time that I have had the opportunity of addressing your August assembly. This is also the last time, as I shall be leaving Kerala shortly. During my long tenure of office of Governor of Kerala, I have already received your unstinted co-operation and assistance. Perhaps I may claim that I have also received from you a measure of your affection and regard. For all your kindness I am extremely grateful and I now take leave of you with a somewhat heavy heart. I pray that in the years to come your labours will be unswervingly devoted to promoting the welfare of the people of Kerala, of India and indeed of mankind as a whole. I pray also that your endeavours in this direction will always bear fruit.

GOD BLESS YOU ALL