



**ADDRESS
TO
THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
KERALA**

15TH FEBRUARY, 2001

BY

SHRI SUKHDEV SINGH KANG
GOVERNOR OF KERALA

Hon'ble Speaker and Hon'ble Members,

1 welcome you to this session of the Assembly. This is the Sixteenth and final session of the Tenth Kerala Legislative Assembly.

2. This session is being held at a time when the country is in the grip of one of the greatest tragedies in Independent India. The tragic earthquake on 26th January this year claimed the lives of thousands of persons and lakhs of people were injured in several parts of Gujarat. It also caused colossal damages to buildings and industrial establishments entailing loss of several thousand crores of rupees. The entire people of Kerala expressed their sympathy to the unfortunate people of Gujarat who have lost their dear ones, lost their property, lost everything rendering their lives extremely miserable. At this juncture of tragedy the nation stood united extending all out support to Gujarat. Kerala also has come forward to support the suffering people of that State consequent on the devastating earthquake.

3. During the past nearly five years, my Government has implemented many programmes for improving the economy of the State and the quality of life of the people. Maintenance of law and order is a pre-requisite for

any development. Kerala has remained an island of peace during the last five years even while there were disturbance in many other parts of the country. Rajiv Gandhi Institute for Contemporary Studies, New Delhi in a recent study has ranked Kerala as the first in the country as far as law and order is concerned. Decentralisation of power and the People's Plan Campaign have created a new atmosphere of development in the State. Power sector has shown tremendous progress making the State self sufficient in power generation. Having put Kerala on a path of progress and prosperity, my government will undoubtedly complete its present tenure on a triumphant note.

4. The country is passing through a critical period in its history. The economic situation has worsened. Indiscriminate import of agricultural commodities has led to steep fall in prices of agricultural products making the farmers' lives miserable. Similarly import of industrial goods has dealt a severe blow to the industrial sectors in the country.

5. The onslaughts in the agrarian and industrial sectors as well as the unprecedented hike in the prices of LPG, kerosene, petrol and diesel has made the common man's life miserable. While several million tonnes of foodgrains are stocked in the Food Corporation of India godowns, price of rice, wheat etc. distributed through the Public Distribution System are beyond the reach of the common man. While several States are suffering due to the severe drought and

flood and people are starving, tonnes of foodgrains are being wasted in the Food Corporation of India godowns as a result of the ill-advised food policy of the Central Government.

6. The policy of globalisation, liberalisation and privatisation has only led the country falling into the trap set up by multinationals and world organisations with imperialist intentions. The result has been the continued miserable condition of the poor people, growing inflation rate and darkened future. People of Kerala are the most affected victims of this anti-people policy. The major agricultural products of the State are facing steep fall in prices. Coconut, arecanut, rubber, tea, coffee, pepper, cardamom and most of agricultural products of the State are adversely affected. The economy of the State is facing serious challenges due to fall in prices of agricultural products and this situation is due to the new economic policy being implemented by the Central Government. We have to overcome the problems and threats posed by this development and my Government all along these last five years has been taking steps in this direction.

7. The country is facing a serious financial crisis. The burden of this crisis, to a very great extent is being shifted to the States. There is not a single State in the country which is not facing financial difficulties due to the policies being pursued at the national level. The award of the Eleventh Finance Commission is extremely disadvantageous to the State. Kerala stands to lose about Rs. 3,600 crore on the

basis of this award. Even in the case of discretionary grants under Article 275 of the Constitution, Kerala's share has been reduced by about 50 per cent. The liberal import policy being followed by the Central Government has severe impact on our economy, particularly in the agricultural sector. The continuing recession in agriculture has resulted in a shortfall in the tax revenue. In spite of these serious handicaps the Government has been able to manage the finance well and to ensure that the development process is not in any way affected. While during the period 1991-96 there had been many occasions when the treasury had to be closed, my Government has ensured that there had been no occasion for closing down the treasury on any day.

8. Concern has been expressed from various quarters about the attempts now being made to bring about basic changes in our Constitution. The need of the hour is to strengthen our parliamentary democracy. The President himself in his address to the nation on the eve of the Republic Day had cautioned about the dangers in tinkering with the Constitution. The nation has to take this caution coming from the head of the State seriously and nothing should be done to weaken our parliamentary democratic system.

9. My Government has paid keen attention in the educational and health sectors. The State has achieved total literacy and has the prominent position in various disciplines

of education. We have the first place in family planning and our achievement in the health sector has been better than in any other State. But the approach of the Planning Commission in extending financial allocation to these sectors has been negative and totally discouraging. I would also like to mention that the Public Distribution System in the State has been very effective which could control the prices of essential commodities.

10. I am proud and happy to say that my Government has been able to maintain communal harmony in the State. While many other parts of the country witnessed incidents of communal riots in which hundreds of people including women and children got killed, my Government could prevent them, opening new dimensions of peace and unity among various communities and religious sects in the State. During the five years before my Government came into office, nearly forty people were killed in communal riots.

11. The rampant corruption and criminalisation of society in the country is a matter of serious concern. My Government has been taking an uncompromising stand against these evils afflicting the society. The Vigilance and Anti-corruption Bureau of the State was strengthened and stringent action has been taken in all cases of corruption. Many serious and sensational cases could be brought before the court after investigation and the accused were punished.

12. The overall economic growth of the State during the last few years has been such as to fulfil the expectations of the planners and the people at large. As per the provisional accounts on State income, Kerala could achieve a growth of 5% in 1997-98, 5.6% each in 1998-99 and 1999-2000 in the State Domestic Product (SDP). 'Hand Book of Statistics on Indian Economy, 1999', published by the Reserve Bank of India, shows that the Net Domestic Product of Kerala registered a growth of 45.1% during the period 1991-92 to 1997-98. This is higher than that of Tamilnadu, Karnataka and several other States.

13. A major policy decision of my Government was to introduce decentralised planning with people's participation. Accordingly, during the Ninth Plan period Rs. 6000 crore was set apart as plan grant to Local Self Governments for various developmental schemes at the local level. This amounts to 37.27% of the total outlay of the Ninth Plan. The total outlay proposed for Local Self Governments in the Annual Plan 2001-2002 is Rs. 1310.94 crore, consisting of Rs. 1065 crore as plan grant and Rs. 245.94 crore by way of share of State sponsored schemes. The Local Self Governments have displayed a new vigour and vitality in their activities. Newly elected members of the local governments have assumed their responsibilities after a peaceful election. My Government sees the situation as a promising one, which can lead to a quantum improvement in the functioning of local governments by

building on the enthusiasm of the new members. Every elected member has already been given a basic training to equip him to handle his responsibilities.

14. During the last three years, the local bodies have, among other things, brought under cultivation an additional area of 1.26 lakh ha. of land, distributed seeds, fertilizers and pesticides to 35.72 lakh beneficiaries, constructed 3.06 lakh houses and 4.13 lakh latrines and renovated 1.18 lakh houses. Besides, 32,000 water taps were installed and 87,000 wells were constructed. 17,188 kms of roads, 1,725 bridges, 4,010 culverts were completed. Large numbers of schools, hospitals, office buildings and marketing centres have also been constructed. Total Housing Scheme for all categories of people is under implementation in Thiruvananthapuram and Kollam Districts. Total housing for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes has been taken up by almost all Grama Panchayats in the State. The target is to provide houses to all houseless people within the next three years. Action plan for providing potable water to all is under implementation in Thiruvananthapuram and Thrissur districts. Special emphasis has been given to the development of weaker sections, including Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and women in People's Plan Programme. Ten per cent of the total plan grant to Local Self Government is earmarked for schemes benefiting women. More than 31,000 neighbourhood groups (Ayalkootams) have been formed in the State as part of the initiative for the empowerment of women and for poverty reduction.

15. The local governments have achieved commendable success in the provision of minimum needs. Through focus on resource-based planning with watershed as basic unit, it is hoped that local production possibilities would be fully exploited. In the social sector, the effort would be to make development at the local level gender sensitive. Greater attention will be paid to the problems of the weaker sections like the tribals and the traditional fishermen. The activities of the Kudumbashree project have been extended to as many as 261 Grama Panchayats during the current year. My Government would expand the scope of Kudumbashree in the coming year with special efforts to set up micro enterprises in green field areas, with a view to enable large numbers of poor women to reap the benefits of new opportunities. I am happy to announce that the Kudumbashree project has won the prestigious Gold Award in the International Innovations Award 2000, instituted by the Commonwealth Association for Public Administration and Management, and thereby earned international recognition. I am glad to mention that the radical decentralization programme of the State has attracted international attention and donor agencies have come forward to support the programme without preconditions. The World Bank has extended assistance to the tune of US \$ 89.8 million for the Rural Water Supply Scheme to be implemented by Village Panchayats. The Asian Development Bank and the Dutch Government have also shown interest in assisting development initiatives at the local level.

16. The Second Finance Commission has submitted its first report, dealing with the devolution of funds to local governments. This report is under consideration of the Government. It is expected that the second report of the Commission would contain recommendations for stabilizing financial management in local governments.

17. My Government is giving priority to implement suitable measures to dispose of urban solid waste through Local Self Governments, in accordance with the directions of the Supreme Court. Accordingly, solid waste processing plants, have been set up at Vilappilsala in Thiruvananthapuram and Njeliyanparambil in Kozhikode. Sanction has already been given to start similar schemes in Kochi, Thrissur and Kollam Corporations and Palakkad Municipality. Under 'Goshree Project', which is envisaged for the overall development of Goshree Islands, the implementation of Rs. 84 crore Vaipeen Bridges Scheme has already been started. Mattanchery bridge, the first bridge in Kerala which is being built as per BOT specifications, will be inaugurated during this year.

18. Information Technology holds significant promise for the economic development of Kerala, as the State possesses the right kind of human resources required for the industry. My Government had declared a progressive and forward looking IT policy three years ago. The policy articulated a three fold strategy, comprising establishment of a strong and vibrant IT industry in the State, upgradation of the quality of human resources through IT, and IT induction in Government for greater

efficiency. The announcements of initiatives to create a favourable policy environment for the development of the IT industry have been well-received, and IT investments in the State have shown encouraging growth in recent months. Creation of requisite infrastructure for the IT Industry holds the key to sustained IT growth in future. Towards this end, it is proposed to set up an IT park at Kochi. The park, which is planned as a state-of-the-art hi-tech facility, will be developed as hub for software and IT enabled services, particularly in view of the high bandwidth availability. Expansion of the Technopark campus at Thiruvananthapuram is underway. As part of my Government's efforts to modernise and reform the administration, a project for comprehensive IT induction in critical sectors of Government has been undertaken. 'Janasevana Kendrams', where integrated services are provided and the computerisation of the Registration and Treasury Departments have gone a long way to reduce the difficulties of the common man. My Government intend to launch a major project entitled 'IT @ school' to provide IT education to six million school children in the State. To increase the number of IT and computer graduates in the State for meeting the growing requirements of the industry, the IIETM-K, which was launched in the last year, has become functional.

19. Kerala is considered as a model State as far as the Public Distribution System is concerned. My Government has extended the benefit of the Targeted Public Distribution System to all the identified poor families, by meeting the additional expenditure from the State exchequer, against a ceiling of 25.43% fixed by Central Government. Rice is supplied at Rs. 10 per kg. even to

the APL card holders of the State. An amount of Rs. 150 crore has been set apart in the State Budget for these purposes. As the allotment of sugar from the Central Government is insufficient, sugar is being purchased from the open market to be distributed through the ration shops. The setting up of an analytical laboratory to assess the quality of foodgrains released from the FCI, the constitution of Kerala Ration Dealers Welfare Fund, the computerisation of Civil Supplies Department and the introduction of Citizen's Charter are some of the noteworthy achievements of my Government in the recent past.

20. My Government has opened 93 new Maveli Stores during the current year and intends to open 8 Medical Stores and 30 LPG outlets in the coming year. The functioning of the Consumer Courts in the State will be strengthened. Steps will be taken for the implementation of the ANNAPURNA and ANTYODAYA ANNA YOJANA schemes. In view of the policy statement of Government of India to do away with ration to the APL families and to stop public distribution of sugar, my Government will explore other possibilities including negotiated purchase from the surplus States, to retain the present PDS system.

21. My Government has achieved major landmarks in the social welfare sector during the last four years. The ICDS Programme will be universalised by starting 43 new projects with World Bank assistance. A special distress relief fund will be constituted with a corpus of Rs. one crore for the benefit of the aged. A victim rehabilitation scheme, envisaged for the rehabilitation of the victims of criminal offences will be launched

during next financial year. The modified form of Adolescent Scheme for Girls, viz. 'Kishori Sakthi Yojana' will be implemented in all the 83 Non-World Bank ICDS projects and 12,696 Anganwadi centres. The activities of the State Commission for the Disabled will be strengthened and identity cards will be issued to all disabled persons in the State.

22. My Government has sanctioned for the first time 7% DA on the pension given to freedom fighters and their dependents. The financial assistance for meeting the expenses in connection with the funeral ceremony of freedom fighters has been enhanced from Rs. 1,000/- to Rs. 3,000/-. Freedom fighters pension has been enhanced from Rs. 2,000/- to 3,000/-.

23. My Government has prioritised education, housing and economic development as thrust areas for the welfare of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. As the Government ensured sufficient resources for the welfare schemes meant for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, the set targets could be achieved well before the stipulated time. In four years my Government could provide houses to 1.17 lakh SC/ST families. During the past four years my Government has started sixteen Model Residential Schools and two more Ashramam Schools for Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribe students. Educational concession to Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe students has been enhanced by 70% during this period. 1000 Scheduled Tribe youths were appointed as social activists to help the tribal population in solving their problems. 1049 Scheduled Caste co-ordinators have also been appointed during the current year to help the Scheduled Caste population in their developmental

activities. Under the agricultural land purchase scheme, Government will provide subsidy of Rs. 50,000 to landless agricultural labourers, belonging to SC/ST communities, for the purchase of a minimum of 50 cents of land. A separate department for the welfare of Backward Communities will start functioning during the current year. An amount of Rs. 75 crores has been disbursed by my Government as self employment assistance to 19,319 beneficiaries through Kerala State Backward Classes Development Corporation. Electrification of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes habitats will be taken up on a priority basis during the next year. Rehabilitation of tribal families in remote forest areas will also get more attention. Tribal Health Projects at Attapady and Idukki will be completed.

24. When my Government assumed office in 1996, Kerala was facing acute shortage of power and there were about 70% power cut and also half an hour cyclic load shedding. By making earnest efforts, my Government could achieve self-sufficiency in the power sector. In 1996, the installed capacity of hydro electric power in the State was 1505.5 MW. By the relentless efforts put in during the last five years, the State could add 957.1 MW of power to the grid, making the total capacity 2462.6 MW by March 2000. During the current year 105.5 MW will be added to the grid by commissioning Kuttiadi Extension Scheme; fourth stage of BSES Kochi and Kasaragod Power Corporation Limited. My Government could completely withdraw power cut and load shedding, the two curses that existed in Kerala for several years.

25. 3.16 lakh new electric connections have been given during this year and spot billing has been extended to all sections in the State. In consonance with the declared power policy, steps have been taken for the restructure of the KSEB as Generation, Transmission and Distribution Profit Centres. During the current financial year the Board has introduced 2 prestigious and public-oriented insurance schemes, for extending financial help to the victims of electrical accidents.

26. It is a matter of pride that Kerala has set a model to the rest of the country in child-centred curriculum. In order to sustain the new initiatives and changes that are already under way in the field of education, my Government will set up a State Institute of Education Management and Training which will provide overall guidance and perspective for the educational reform process in the State. It is a matter of satisfaction that the de-linking of the Pre-Degree from colleges and the introduction of the higher secondary stream of education have been completed during the current academic year.

27. My Government will implement effective measures to bring about sustainable and meaningful qualitative improvement in the higher education sector. Colleges in the State will be equipped to get quality accreditation with national bodies and centres of excellence will be set up in the higher education sector. New Engineering Colleges will be started by the IHRD and the LBS Centre as well as in the co-operative sector. MCA/MBA courses will be started in selected Engineering Colleges. The Engineering Colleges at Thiruvananthapuram and Thrissur will be upgraded as Centres of Excellence in Information Technology.

28. The Kerala Sports Bill was passed by this Assembly in December 2000. It envisages promotion and development of sports and games in the State and will also ensure co-ordinated development of Sports right from the panchayat level. The Government has also announced the State Youth Policy based on the recognition of the contributions that young people can make to the community at large. This policy envisages the all round development of the young people and seeks to ensure better co-ordination of various departments and agencies in the field.

29. My Government could give a new impetus to tourism and make the industry a growth engine capable of giving a push to Kerala's economy. The *National Geographic Traveler* has extolled Kerala, the nature-rich land as a "*Paradise Found*" among the "*50 must-see*" destinations of the world. Kerala has also been chosen as a partner State by the World Travel & Tourism Council. The foreign tourist arrivals have crossed the figure of 2 lakhs in 2000, showing a growth of more than 102% during the last five years. The domestic tourist arrivals have crossed 50 lakhs in 2000, showing a growth of more than 300%. My Government have been acting as a facilitator and catalyst in promoting private investment in the tourism sector and accelerating destination promotion, basic infrastructure development and development of new and backward destinations. It is a matter of pride that Kerala won the award for the best performing State for tourism instituted by the Government of India, for two

successive years, 1998-99 and 1999-2000. The first eco-tourism destination of India has been commissioned at Thenmala in Kollam district recently. The emphasis now will be on development of infrastructure of world class at tourism destinations: Simultaneously, my Government intends to implement projects for the development of backwater infrastructure, connecting the north and the south of the State. The Tourism Department will develop high value water sports in the Vembanad and Ashtamudi backwaters. Vagamon will be developed as a new hill resort of international standards.

30. Over the last four years, my Government has been extending all possible help to the farmers of the State. As a result of this, the agriculture sector of Kerala has been showing definite signs of progress as far as production and productivity are concerned. But, when the price of coconut, rubber, pepper, tea, coffee and arecanut started falling steeply owing to the policies adopted by the Government of India, my Government focused its attention on formulation and implementation of schemes which would mitigate the difficulties of the farmers. When the Central Government delayed the declaration of the support price for copra inordinately, my Government took initiative to start procuring copra in March 2000 itself and so far 77,228 metric tones of copra has been procured from the State. A massive rubber procuring campaign has been initiated to help the rubber cultivators of the State and till December 2000, 51,202 metric tones of rubber has been procured.

31. My Government will continue with the array of schemes to provide financial assistance and technical help to the farmers of Kerala, so that they can cope up with the situation precipitated by the fall in price of their products. Simultaneously, efforts to enhance agricultural productivity will be continued. Kerala Horticultural Development Programme, implemented with the active participation of farmers, proved beyond all doubt that industrious farmers can reap high returns from horticultural farming. My Government will continue to render all necessary help to farmers in the horticulture and floriculture sectors and the formation of Kerala Vegetable and Fruit Promotion Council can be viewed as a testimony to this commitment.

32. My Government will continue the efforts to increase productivity in the dairy sector through strengthening the cross breeding facilities and improving the efficiency of the services. The pilot projects in the use of mobile artificial insemination units as well as milking machines will be developed and extended further for massive adoption.

33. My Government, by adopting effective measures could transform the co-operative front into a self-reliant and vibrant sector. Implementation of self help group concept throughout the State has rejuvenated the agricultural sector of the State. Introduction of Kissan Credit Cards and establishment of 'Neethi' and 'Neethi Medical Stores' are noteworthy achievements. Integrated Co-operative

Development Project (ICDP) introduced with the technical and financial support of NCDC has already been implemented in 13 Districts of the State and the Project will be extended to Thiruvananthapuram District too. Establishment of the Co-operative Academy of Professional Education, and the Co-operative Insurance Society are other landmarks achieved recently. Another important development was the enactment of the Kerala Co-operative Societies (Amendment) Act, 1999. The working of the Women's Co-operatives in the State will be revamped. The prestigious 'GOSHREE' Project will be financed by a consortium of Co-operative Banks. A 'Co-operative for Development of Infrastructure Facilities' will be organised for the infrastructure development of the Co-operative Medical College, Kochi and other similar institutions.

34. My Government has taken several innovative and imaginative steps in the industrial sector, laying the foundation for a quantum jump in investment. The single window clearance system was introduced, facilitating time bound and hassle free issue of licences, clearances and certificates required by investors. My Government has laid special stress on the development of high quality infrastructure for industries. The facilities created include the Apparel Park in Thiruvananthapuram, the Food Processing Park in Malappuram, the Rubber Park in Ernakulam, the Marine Park in Aroor, the Film Video Park in Thiruvananthapuram and the multisector industrial parks in various parts of the State.

A news hitech park for biotechnology and information technology is to be set up by KINFRA in 200 acres of land in Kalamassery. An additional area of one million square feet would be built up in Technopark, Thiruvananthapuram for the IT industry. KSIDC and KFC have promoted a venture Capital Fund for the hitech industries with a corpus of Rs. 20 crores.

35. Since the assumption of office by my Government, 90,293 new SSI units have been set up in the State, providing direct employment to 3.3 lakh persons. Under the PMRY scheme, about 70,000 beneficiaries have been assisted for setting up self employment ventures. Assistance under this scheme will be extended to 23,000 persons during the current year. My Government could disburse an amount of Rs. 45.04 crore under Consortium Bank Credit Schemes of the Khadi and Village Industries Board, providing employment for 1.93 lakh persons. My Government has also been able to attract considerable investment in the large and medium sectors. KSIDC assisted projects have generated employment opportunities for 15,000 persons.

36. My Government has given special consideration for the traditional sector, improving productivity and introducing new technology, resulting in higher production and better wage levels. Majority of the rebate and MDA claims of about Rs. 75 crore pending in the handloom sector since 1993-94 have been settled. An amount of Rs. 175 crore

has been spent in the handloom sector and 15,000 more jobs created. My Government has planned a controlled development of the powerloom sector with processing and garment making. An integrated powerloom-handloom-garment unit has been set up in Wayanad, providing employment to about 1,500 persons, of which 80% are tribal women. My Government is implementing a modernisation programme for the public sector and co-operative textile mills. An amount of Rs. 127 crore has been spent for the coir sector, resulting in a production increase of 40% and additional employment of 25,000. Further, pension and other benefits were extended to the coir workers by providing Rs. 16 crore. My Government is proud to have provided 230 days' employment in one year to the workers of the Kerala State Cashew Development Corporation.

37. My Government strongly believes that the strengthening of the public sector industries is vital for the development of the economy of the State. The Kerala Industrial Revitalisation Fund was set up for assisting comprehensive long term packages including financial restructuring, manpower rationalisation, technology upgradation etc., and also for providing short term funds for working capital. 35 PSUs have been provided with a total assistance of over Rs. 450 crore in the last four years. A large number of undertakings including Keltron, TCC, Traco Cables, Kerala Automobiles and Salicylates have shown definite signs of turnaround. Keltron is being developed to play a major role in the IT sector. KMML will be implementing expansion

projects of about Rs. 800 crore, including a 3 lakh tonne mineral separation plant. TTP would be implementing a project for pollution control, fulfilling a long felt need of the people of the area. The company would also enhance its production capacity. Malabar Cements would add 30% to its capacity with the completion of the grinding unit at Alappuzha. TCC has proposals to implement a 30,000 tonne synthetic rutile plant. TCC would also be commencing work on a hydel power project at Barapole in Kannur District.

38. A major objective of my Government has been to provide adequate housing for all houseless families of the State. The shortage in this sector was estimated at 9.15 lakh units when the Government assumed office. My Government set for itself a target of construction of 5 lakh housing units and it is a matter of satisfaction that 5.15 lakh units could be achieved thereby exceeding the target set. My Government has been giving special attention to the economically weaker sections and the provisions made under the Maithri Housing Scheme of the District Panchayats bear ample testimony to this commitment. Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe communities are given 100% grant for house construction and the landless poor are given assistance for constructing houses under the Bhoomaithri scheme. An integrated scheme for the production and marketing of building materials in selected Panchayats with the co-operation of Swiss Agency for Development and Co-operation has been implemented and this would be extended to more Panchayats.

39. The law and order situation in the State has been by and large peaceful over the nearly five years now. My Government could introduce the scheme of '8 hours' duty' in selected Police Stations during the year. Crime stopper system has been installed in the district headquarters and is functioning effectively. The introduction of High Band VHF Communication Network at Vaikom and Malappuram, the shifting of repeater station at Kudayathoor to the hill top at Poonchira, the commissioning of the link repeater at Civil Station, Kottayam, the introduction of additional repeater stations in Kannur District, and the commissioning of a separate VHF Communication Network in Thiruvananthapuram exclusively for State Special Branch are some of the measures already taken by my Government to strengthen the Police Department. New armed police battalions viz. Kerala Rifles I, II & III will be formed in a time bound manner.

40. My Government has started 7 new Fire Stations in the State during 2000-2001. Two new Fire Force Divisions will be started at Kottayam and Palakkad. Major jail institutions of the State have been transformed into centres of reformation, instead of keeping them as places for incarceration. Various activities have been taken up to reform and rehabilitate the prisoners, including the revision of their wages. Vocational training opportunities and medical facilities will be made available to the prisoners. My Government has decided to start a narcotic division in the Regional Chemical Examiner's Laboratory, Kozhikode and in the Chemical Examiner's Laboratory,

Thiruvananthapuram in a phased manner. Four District Chemical Examiner's Laboratories will also be started as recommended by the Legislative Committee for the Welfare of Women and Children.

41. The commitment of my Government over the years to build up a 'corruption-free Kerala' has yielded striking results. One important measure in this direction has been the establishment of the Lok Ayukta in the State. My Government has extended full support to the drive launched by the Vigilance & Anti-corruption Bureau against corruption in the State. In the wake of the recent liquor tragedy and its ramifications, officers of the Bureau have been instructed to pay special attention to the collection of information regarding disproportionate assests of corrupt officials. My Government could effectively check the spread of corruption in the State by relentless action against corrupt elements.

42. Increasing the capacity and efficiency of the State road network is a major challenge that we have to face in promoting economic development. Realising this, my Government has been exploring the possibilities of obtaining funds of a large order over and above the usual budgetary allocation. The World Bank has agreed to fund a 1,800 km. road upgradation programme. We are also in a position to make use of funds from the Asian Development Bank and expand the coverage of road rehabilitation. The Roads and Bridges Development Corporation has started work on twenty Railway Overbridges by

utilising institutional finance as well as open market borrowings. In an unsparing effort to attract investments in the road sector, my Government has had fruitful discussions with the Government of Malaysia with whom a few contracts for selected road projects will be concluded shortly. These projects would include rehabilitation of the road leading to Sabarimala, construction of bypasses in Kollam and Alappuzha and a new road connecting Kumarakam with Kottayam. As the heavy capital outlays being brought into the State's road sector need to be matched with efforts to raise road-related revenues, my Government has given shape to a legislation for creating a Road Fund.

43. My Government is giving special emphasis to the enhancement of the State's irrigation potential and to the conservation of water sources. The 11th Finance Commission has favourably considered the proposal of the State Government for special assistance to protect the seacoast from erosion. As part of the efforts to encourage the efficient use of water, the Government has formulated special rainwater harvesting schemes in selected Panchayats. A decentralised water supply project aided by the World Bank is under implementation in Malappuram, Thrissur, Kozhikode and Palakkad Districts at a total cost of Rs. 400 crore. The schemes under this project will be owned and operated by community groups led by women. The ambitious Pavaratty Water Supply Scheme has been completed and a special sanitation project for Guruvayoor Town has been

launched. A scheme to expand the sewerage system in Thiruvananthapuram city will be launched with the assistance from HUDCO. A new water supply scheme is being formulated for Pamba, Anavattom, Chalakkayam areas, to alleviate the difficulties of the pilgrims to Sabarimala.

44. The activities in the health sector have been revamped. Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation Units have been started in the District Hospitals of Kasaragod, Wayanad, Idukki and Pathanamthitta. New limb fitting centres have been set up in Manjeri and Thrissur District Hospitals. New Nursing Schools will be started at Kasaragod, Idukki and Wayanad. Three District Public Health Laboratories will be upgraded as Regional Laboratories and 20 Primary Health Centres will be upgraded as Community Health Centres. In order to strengthen the cancer treatment facilities in the Malabar area, an additional telecobalt therapy unit and a mammography unit will be set up in Kozhikode Medical College and a new cobalt therapy unit and linear accelerator will be acquired for the Regional Cancer Centre, Thiruvananthapuram. The first Geriatric Care Centre of the State will be commissioned in Thiruvananthapuram Medical College. My Government will open 50 new Homoeo Dispensaries and 25 new Ayurveda Dispensaries in the rural areas of the State. A cancer treatment and research centre with Canadian assistance of Rs. 100 crore has been started at Thalassery.

45. The forests of Kerala are luxuriant, rich and diverse with rare, endemic and exquisite flora and fauna. The Western Ghats passing through the State constitute one of the 18 hot spots in the world. The new vision in the forestry sector calls for a new paradigm for development in which the planning process is to start from the bottom. My Government has been showing staunch determination for conserving the forests of the State for posterity and for the forest dependent tribal and village communities. A World Bank aided project costing Rs. 182.39 crore, aimed at the comprehensive development of the forestry sector is under implementation. Schemes like 'Area Oriented Fuel and Fodder Development Programme', 'Modern Forest Fire Control Methods', 'Development of Non-timber Forest Products' and 'India Eco-Development Programme' are also under implementation with financial assistance from Government of India. Financial assistance and guidance are being given to the local grama panchayats under the 'Enhanced Contribution of Forests to Community Welfare Programme' for undertaking afforestation activities. A massive tree-planting programme called 'Haritha Keralam' is being implemented in all the 140 Assembly constituencies of the State. 9500 hectares of forest land have been taken over by the Government.

46. My Government has decided to issue revenue cards to all the families in the State. This massive programme is expected to be completed during the current year. In the wake of the recent tremors in many parts of the State, the

Government would bring various research institutions and Government agencies involved in the relief and rescue operations under one umbrella, with a view to respond quickly and effectively in such situations. The Mining & Geology Department will undertake detailed studies on earthquakes and their effects. My Government could provide 2,32,964 pattas, mostly to small and marginal holders and landless agricultural labourers. The effort is to complete within next three months the distribution of lands, pattas or possession certificates to all the landless families according to the nature of the land possessed by them. Action has been taken to assign land to landless tribals and those who had been dispossessed of their land. Pattas are being issued to settlers who have been in occupation of forest land prior to 1-1-1977. Under section 109 of the KLR Act the Kudikidappukars' Benefit Fund, has been constituted. Recently the corpus of this fund has been raised from Rs. One crore to Rs. Five crore so as to ensure more financial assistance and insurance coverage to the poor kudikidappukars. For completing the re-survey work in a time bound manner, my Government will provide electronic equipment and computers to the Land Survey Department.

47. My Government has provided social security cover to lakhs of Non Resident Keralites through Pravasi Suraksha and the Kudumba Arogya schemes. Encouraged by the overwhelming response received for these Schemes, the Pravasi Vanitha Suraksha Scheme has also been launched to cover Non Resident Keralite women working abroad. The Non-Residents working abroad have a critical and significant role to play in building Kerala's infrastructure. Government

has therefore constituted an Infrastructure Initiative Fund, which will structure viable commercial projects. These projects could then be utilised for channelising investments from Non Resident Keralites. An Emergency Repatriation Fund has also been constituted to extend financial assistance in highly deserving cases of repatriation. A study has been undertaken on the need for skill upgradation of prospective emigrant workers, based on the changing employment scenario in Gulf countries. A pension scheme is being contemplated for Non Resident Keralites.

48. My Government has ensured better efficiency and transparency in delivery of services to the people in the Regional Transport Offices. A Road Safety Fund will be constituted to give immediate relief to road accident victims. Weigh bridges will be set up at selected border check posts for increased collection of revenue. Rural Regional Transport Offices will be started in Thiruvananthapuram, Ernakulam and Kozhikode Districts. During the current year, the daily operated kilo metres and the daily collection of KSRTC have increased by 10.4% and 18% respectively. During the last four years, the KSRTC has put on the road, as many as 1912 buses to improve the travelling facilities of the public and an additional 500 new buses will be added to this fleet shortly. Kerala Transport Development Finance Corporation will grant an amount of Rs. 10 crores to the public as well as the Government Institutions and the public sector undertakings as loans for purchase of vehicles.

49. An amount of Rs. 30 crores has been spent by my Government for the improvement of inland waterways. Development work of the TS canal from Kovalam to Kollam will be started shortly. A scheme for the renovation and development of the canal system in Alappuzha has been prepared and this will be implemented in the coming year.

50. My Government could maintain peace in the industrial sector by ensuring timely intervention and settlement of industrial disputes. Various programmes coming under the 'Labour Agenda' have been implemented for the development and welfare of the working class during the 'Labour Year 2000'. The momentous project 'Child Labour free Kerala' has been launched and 'The Kerala State Labour Authority' has been constituted. A Labour Academy to provide quality education to the children of workers and an Institute of Labour & Management were also set up during the current year. A group insurance scheme has been introduced for the welfare of the unorganised sector, free of cost. The State Labour Conference in line with the National Labour Conference was organised for the first time in Kerala. District wise camps called 'Pariharavedis' have been conducted for the redressal of the grievances of workers on the spot, timely distribution of various welfare benefits to workers and for quick disposal of pending cases.

51. Occupational safety of workers has been ensured and industrial accidents have been minimised as compared to previous years. A new scheme called Kerala Self Employment

Scheme for the Registered Unemployed (KESRU-99) has been sanctioned. My Government has also taken several effective measures for the strengthening of ESI Scheme. The Rehabilitation Plantations Limited will set up a 'Sanjivani Kendra' for the cultivation of medicinal plants.

52. My Government has introduced pension schemes for the employees of the various institutions under the Cultural Affairs Department. A multi-purpose cultural complex by the name 'Manaveeyam Vailoppilli Samskriithi Bhavan' has been inaugurated. To honour those maestros, who have contributed immensely to 'Kathakali', the Government has instituted an award entitled 'Kerala Samsthana Kathakali Puraskaram'. Administrative sanction has been given to set up International Sree Narayana Centre for Knowledge and Pilgrimage at Chempazhanthi.

53. My Government has established a wireless communication system for the coastal belt from Thiruvananthapuram to Ernakulam for speedy communication and quick dissemination of information to ensure more effective search and rescue operations in the sea. The system will be extended to the remaining coastal districts of the State. A package of programmes will be implemented to equip the local bodies to take up aquaculture projects. An extent of 10,000 ha. will be brought under Janakiya Matsya Krishi Programme. Fishermen will be organised and motivated under self help groups and a massive self-employment Programme will be implemented for the fisher women. The

savings-cum-relief scheme implemented for the benefit of the marine fishermen will be extended to the inland sector. The assistance under the housing programme will be increased from the present rate of Rs. 35,000 per house to Rs. 40,000.

54. My Government could contribute immensely to the infrastructural development and modernization programmes of Azhikkal, Kozhikode and Alappuzha Ports. New communication equipment like VHF have been installed at various Ports of the State. Major thrust will be given for the development of Azhikkal and Vizhinjam Ports during the coming year. Sufficient land will be acquired for providing road/rail connectivity to selected ports.

55. I foresee a bright future for Kerala. This State has always been a model in the social, cultural and health sectors to other States and indeed, other countries in the world. We are now making great strides in other areas as well. However, there are several challenges to be faced and I have no doubt that the people of Kerala will face them successfully.

Let me wish all success to the deliberations of this session.

JAI HIND