

MARCH 6, 1985

*Honourable Mr. Deputy Speaker and Members of the Legislative Assembly,*

I am very happy to welcome you all to the Eighth Session of the Seventh Kerala Legislative Assembly. This is the third consecutive occasion on which I have been privileged to address you. I convey my very best wishes to you all and through you to the people of Kerala. Some of you are new entrants to this Legislative Assembly and I would like to express a word of special welcome to you.

2. Since I addressed you last, the nation has witnessed what is perhaps the greatest tragedy in its recent history—the brutal assassination of Srimathi Indira Gandhi. Let us pay our humble homage to the memory of the late Prime Minister. She will be remembered for ever, not only as one of the greatest Indian leaders of the present century, but also as an outstanding world leader. She was not merely the Prime Minister but the hope of the country and of the under-privileged everywhere, during the last two turbulent decades. In her life and in her martyrdom, Indiraji has become a symbol of India's unity, independence and integrity. She cannot die as long as the spirit of patriotism and democracy flows in our veins. She will live for ever in the hearts of millions of people all over the world for generations to come as the never-wavering voice of humanity's quest for peace, justice and dignity. The best tribute we can pay to her memory would be to go forward unitedly, along the path she charted, sinking all difference based on caste, religion, language and province and to work steadfastly to translate into reality the hopes and dreams for which she lived and died—hopes and dreams about a strong, self-reliant, progressive and united India.

3. It is an eloquent tribute to the resilience, inner strength and vitality of our democratic system that the succession to the office of Prime Minister following Srimathi Indira Gandhi's assassination was smooth and easy. It is no less significant that within a short period of two months, the elections to the Lok Sabha could be held in an atmosphere of order and discipline. The massive support given by the people to the Prime Minister Shri Rajiv Gandhi, is undoubtedly a mandate in favour of political stability, national unity and integrity. It was also an indication of the whole-hearted approval of the people and of their warm and enthusiastic response to the youthful leadership symbolized by the new Prime Minister. It leaves no room for doubt whatever that the enlightened voters of India have reposed full and absolute confidence in our Prime Minister and promised him unstinted support in his attempt to put down disruptive and anti-national forces, to wipe out corruption from public life and to ensure the well-being of the humblest of our people. The passing of the antidefection legislation within a few days of the meeting of the new Lok Sabha is a clear enough indication of the earnestness and determination of the Union Government to rid our public life of some of its long-standing evils. Simultaneously, a concerted attempt has been launched to improve the levels of efficiency and integrity of administration. I have no doubt that these dynamic measures will be warmly welcomed by our people.

4. My Government shall also accord the highest priority to stability, administrative efficiency, effective maintenance of law and order and honesty and integrity in public life. Anti-social forces will be put down with a firm hand. The administrative apparatus will be streamlined in order to root out the evils of corruption, delay and inefficiency. My Government shall not tolerate lack of integrity, indifference, incompetence, waste and insensitivity to public needs at any level. Obsolete and irrelevant rules and procedures which serve only to delay decisions and harass the general public will be done away with. The administration at all levels shall function as an efficient instrument to translate the policies of the Government into action, particularly to bring the fruits of planned economic development to the weaker sections of the community in full measure.

5. My Government is fully alive to the severe constraints on its resources. A multi-pronged effort has been started to tackle this problem. Arrears of revenue due to Government will be collected with the utmost expedition. Non-developmental expenditure will be cut down to the minimum. An in-depth review of the functioning of the public sector undertakings has been made with a view to restructuring them and

optimising their efficiency. My Government realises that there is no justification, moral, political or economic, for those public sector undertakings, which have been nothing more than a drain on the State exchequer, to continue as such. Public enterprises have to justify themselves by efficient, professional and business-like operations. A thorough revamping of the State undertakings will be made. Professional management will be inducted at the top levels. Inefficiency and waste will be eradicated. While harmonious labour relations will be accorded top priority, my Government would not hesitate to give precedence to larger public interests over the presumed interests of small sections of the society.

6. My Government is fully alive to the legitimate demands of public servants. All efforts will be made to mitigate their difficulties and to meet their reasonable demands to the extent permitted by the resources of the State. However, it will not be the policy of my Government to jeopardise development by a disproportionate increase in revenue expenditure. Developmental efforts to increase employment and welfare of the people, in any reckoning, should receive the highest priority and I have no doubt that our enlightened civil service will appreciate the need for this and co-operate with the Government.

7. It is a matter for gratification that the atmosphere in the labour front and in the educational institutions has been comparatively calm and quiet. Effective investigation and prosecution have led to conviction in a number of grave crimes and this has had a salutary effect on the overall law and order situation. My Government will continue to strengthen, train and modernise the police force and give special attention to investigation of crimes. For this purpose, it is proposed to reorganise the prosecution set-up in the State.

8. Importance will be given to the expeditious disposal of cases before courts. Six courts were newly started during this year. A good percentage of the cases pending before the High Court relate to service matters. Parliament has recently passed the Law for the establishment of Administrative Tribunals both at the Centre and in the States. As soon as this Law is brought into force, my Government will seek the establishment of an Administrative Tribunal for the State. The Tribunal is expected to be established in the next few months and will greatly help to reduce to work-load of the High Court, while ensuring, at the same time, the speedy disposal of cases relating to service matters.

9. In the field of revenue administration, one more district, the Kasaragod District, was formed during the year, thus fulfilling a long-time wish of the people of that backward area. The Kasaragod District has started functioning in full swing with more than 20 district offices.

10. As regards regularisation of titles to persons in forest lands occupied before January 1, 1977, joint verification by the officials of the Revenue and Forest Departments of such occupation has been completed in major areas. The legal formalities have to be completed and it is expected that the regularisation will become a reality soon. Meanwhile, the distribution of title-deeds is continuing in other areas.

11. While we were recovering from the unprecedented drought of 1982-83, the economy of the State was shattered once again last year—this time by heavy rains, landslides and sea erosion. There was heavy loss of life and property due to natural calamities. The Government took up relief measures on a war footing by organising relief camps, supplying free rations and arranging repairs to roads, irrigation works, and giving assistance to agriculturists, fishermen and dairy farmers. A special scheme was sanctioned for the reconstruction of houses damaged by heavy rains and floods. The Government has also completed the construction of 95 anti-disaster shelters, which were taken up with assistance from the European Economic Community.

12. As I mentioned in my last address, the Abkari Act has been amended to provide for deterrent punishment including death sentence to those guilty of adulteration of liquor or other intoxicating drugs endangering or causing grievous hurt to human life. My Government proposes to make further changes to provide for minimum punishment of imprisonment in the case of Abkari offences.

13. The public distribution system and the State Civil Supplies Corporation in the State continued to supply essential articles at reasonable prices. The retail distribution network was further strengthened during the year. Special markets were opened during the major festival seasons and this helped to check the rise in prices in the open market. My Government will continue to give close attention to the efficient and effective functioning of the public distribution system.

14. Despite the financial constraints, ours will be one of the States which will be fulfilling the Sixth Five Year Plan. The expenditure on the State's Sixth Plan will be around Rs. 1630 crores against the approved

outlay of Rs. 1550 crores. During the last three years, my Government has given particular importance to the implementation of schemes for the rural poor, especially those for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. The State's performance in the Integrated Rural Development Programme, the Rural Employment Schemes and the Special Component Plan for Scheduled Castes has been assessed as amongst the best in the country.

15. The five High Level Committees which were set up by the Government to assess the progress so far made in the various sectors of the State's economy and to suggest the perspective of development upto 2000 A.D. have submitted their reports and these were duly considered by the State Planning Board and taken into account while preparing the draft Seventh Five Year Plan. Significant changes in the direction of development are envisaged in the coming years in order to substantially increase employment, agricultural and in industrial production and productivity. The Seventh Five Year Plan is expected to be finalised during the course of the next few months. I am sure that given the necessary co-operation from all sections of the people our State would be able to go in for a plan of the required size and content.

16. Steps will be taken to introduce decentralised planning, in a phased manner, for schemes and programmes which are amenable to district and local planning. For this purpose, the District will be the unit below the State and the Block will be the primary unit at the rural level. The organisational set-up required for effective decentralised planning and implementation of rural development is being worked out and will be put in position during the coming year. You are aware that, a first step, the implementation of the Special Component Plan has already been decentralised.

17. The agricultural sector in our State requires to be looked into closely and measures have to be undertaken to revitalise it. Programmes for this purpose will be included in the Seventh Five Year Plan. Coconut is the mainstay of many of our small and marginal farmers. A massive programme for the total development of coconut holdings area-wise with assistance for cutting and removal of unproductive palms, replanting of quality seedlings and the installation of irrigation units will be taken up from the coming year. Steps will be taken to maintain a reasonable price for coconut. The Kerala Agricultural Extension Project which has been under implementation with World Bank assistance will be strengthened with additional facilities for supply and services to the farming community through the National Agricultural Extension Project. We cannot minimise the importance of food production in our State. The various studies that have been made on rice production in the State have been considered by Government and concrete measures will be adopted in the Seventh Plan for increasing production and productivity and reducing costs.

18. Through the implementation of the livestock breeding programmes and the operation flood scheme, milk production in the State has increased considerably and this has added to farm incomes. The operation flood programme is being extended to the northern districts of the State. In the field of animal husbandry, programmes will be undertaken to maximise livestock and poultry production and generate more employment opportunities and additional income to the rural poor.

19. The developmental and other programmes in the field of Fisheries have been reorganised with a view to ensuring that the benefits of the programmes reach the poor fishermen. The State Co-operative Federation for Fisheries Development has been formed and the programmes hitherto carried out by different departmental and public sector agencies are being integrated. With assistance from the National Co-operative Development Corporation, a pilot project for the integrated development of fifteen fishermen villages has been started. The integrated development programme, including the modernisation of fishing crafts used by fishermen as well as arrangements for the marketing of fish, will cover all the fishing villages during the next five years.

20. The natural forest cover, so essential for the ecology of the State, has been greatly reduced during the last few decades. My Government will give special attention to the restoration of the ecology and environment of the hilly areas of our State by undertaking suitable programmes for soil conservation and ecological restoration under the Western Ghats Development Programme as well as the programmes of the Ministry of Environment and Forest. An integrated programme is being drawn up for the Idukki District. Simultaneously, a major programme of social forestry is being undertaken in the other parts of the State through the World Bank-aided Social Forestry Project.

21. The climate for industrialisation is rapidly changing for the better and the State industrial promotion agencies have been able to increase their activities substantially. The Kerala State Industrial Development Corporation has completed eleven projects this year and has taken up the implementation of another thirty-two projects involving an outlay of over Rs. 50 crores. The Corporation's efforts to enlist investment of Non-resident Indians have also evoked good response. The Corporation has taken up forty-one projects spread over twenty-two taluks. The Public Sector holding companies like the Steel Industries Kerala Ltd., the Kerala State Industrial Enterprises and the Kerala State Textile Corporation are all implementing both new and expansion schemes.

22. The Kerala State Electronics Development Corporation has taken big strides during the last two years and major projects like those for the manufacture of telephone instruments, electronic automatic exchanges and PABX systems are under implementation. KELTRON has put Kerala prominently on the electronics map of the country. In line with the national policy giving importance to the rapid growth of the electronics industry, the activities of our electronics corporation will be greatly expanded. Proposals for reorganisation of the electronic set-up in the State have been drawn up by a Government committee appointed for this purpose and the Government's decisions thereon will be announced shortly.

23. The growth of Small Scale Industries has picked up momentum. Government will give all encouragement to the establishment and successful functioning of such units. An 'Industries fortnight' was observed last month during which over 200 units were commissioned and work on another 150 units was started. The number of entrepreneur development programmes has been increased and this has greatly helped educated unemployed persons to avail themselves of financial assistance from banks and start small-scale units.

24. The traditional industries of our State, like Coir, Cashew and Handloom are facing difficult problems. My Government have taken a pragmatic view of the situation prevailing in respect of these industries and several steps were taken like the fixation of floor price for raw nuts, reorganisation of closed cashew factories on co-operative lines, strengthening of co-operatives in the coir and handloom sectors. These have provided some relief to the large number of people engaged in these industries. My Government have decided to introduce a levy system for husk in respect of coir. I am sure that the introduction of the system will remove, to a considerable extent, the distortions in the pricing and sale of husk.

25. My Government are of the view that there is considerable scope for the location of more Central Sector industries in Kerala. A number of proposals have been made in the draft Seventh Five Year Plan and these will be followed up. During the current year, the Government of India approved the Benzene Project of Cochin Refineries and the expansion project of Hindustan Latex Ltd. Vigorous steps are being taken for the establishment of the Cochin Export Processing Zone and it is expected to start functioning in the next financial year.

26. In keeping with the needs of functional specialisation, my Government have decided to reorganise the Public Works Department, by bifurcating the irrigation and roads and buildings wings and also by forming separate divisions for roads and for buildings. For attending to rural and local works, there will be separate divisions in the districts so that these small works could be attended to at the district level itself. I have no doubt that the reorganisation of the Public Works Department, which will come into effect from the first of next month, will considerably speed up the construction of public works and will also lead to specialised skills and improved quality in the different branches.

27. A major weakness in the field of irrigation was that a number of old schemes were continuing for years. Government have given top priority to the early completion of such projects. The Periyar Valley, Pazhassi, Chitturpuzha and Kuttiadi Projects will be completed in all aspects during the next few months. The Kallada Irrigation Project is making rapid progress and the dam has been completed. It is expected that it would be possible to partially commission the project in July 1985 and irrigate 12,000 hectares of land. The works on the Kallada and other projects will be speeded up further. Simultaneously, special attention will be given to the development of the command areas with necessary legislative support.

28. It is a matter for gratification that the State Electricity Board has given a record number of connections during the last three years and that its financial position has also improved substantially. As the demand for connections is increasing, there is urgent need to increase the installed capacity in the State. The works on the Idamalayar Project and on Idukki Stage-II have progressed considerably and the first units

of these two schemes are now firmly scheduled to be commissioned by June 1985 and the remaining units by the end of the coming year. With the commissioning of the first units of the two schemes, the present peak load restrictions will be removed. The Government will give special attention to the completion of low-head hydro-electric schemes like Malampuzha, Mattupetty, Malankara, Chimony and Peppara during the Seventh Five Year Plan. Work on the Pooyankutty Project and the Lower Periyar Project will also be started. Simultaneously my Government is also urging the Government of India for the establishment of a Thermal Power Station in the State as a base station to support the hydroelectric system. Government has also drawn up schemes for the strengthening of the transmission and distribution systems.

29. Our State stands foremost in India as regards the spread of school and general collegiate education. We are naturally proud of this fact and last year we won national recognition and award for being foremost among the States in the country in providing facilities for education of women. A 'noon-meal scheme' which will gradually replace the CARE feeding programme has been started in some schools in the costal and hilly areas, in which children of fishermen and tribals study. In the coming years, my Government will be giving special emphasis to the improvement of quality in education, the spread of vocationalisation in secondary schools and to technical education. My Government will give maximum encouragement to the promotion of Science and Technology. The Science and Technology Centres of our State have continued to do excellent work and have earned national and international recognition. In all the development sectors, a Science and Technology component is being introduced in the Seventh Five Year Plan. The Cochin University which is intended to be a Technological University will be upgraded and made into an institution of higher learning in specialised branches of technology. In the field of energy the programmes for development and popularisation of non-conventional sources will be expanded substantially in the coming year.

30. The Official Language (Legislative) Commission of the State has brought out over 300 laws in Malayalam, including the latest edition of the Indian Constitution. I hope that greater use will be made of these publications.

31. Lack of training facilities for health personnel was an area of weakness in our otherwise well-developed medical and public health system. The Government have given special attention to enhancing the training facilities for paramedical and health personnel. Six schools for women and five for men were opened during the last year for training multi-purpose health workers. The number of seats for para medical courses have also been increased and new courses have been started. In conformity with the national health policy, greater emphasis will be laid on the preventive and promotive activities of health care, by providing a sub centre for every 5,000 population, a primary health centre for every 30,000 and a community health centre for over one lakh population. The indigenous systems of medicine will continue to get support and encouragement. Special attention will be given to research and development of herbs and medicinal plants.

32. Our State has made considerable progress in bringing about a reduction in the birth rate. I am glad to note that the India Population Project III which was launched with World Bank assistance, in the districts of Palghat, Malappuram, Wynad and Idukki, has had a very good start.

33. My government has given high priority to water supply schemes. By the end of the current plan, 90 per cent of urban population and over half of the rural population will be covered by protected water supply. From the coming year, the water supply systems in the urban and rural areas will be strengthened and improved. Water supply schemes costing over Rs. 115 crores will also be taken up with external assistance.

34. The Seventh Five Year Plan will have specific programmes for youth, women and children. The coverage of blocks by the Integrated Child Development Scheme will be extended next year. More facilities will be provided by way of hostel accommodation for working women. Vocational training programmes in modern fields and employment generating schemes will be implemented specially for women.

35. Preparations are underway for holding the elections to local bodies in the State within a few months. Integrated programmes for urban development are included in the Seventh Plan. A major scheme for new markets in cities and major towns has been drawn up as part of the Rs. 100 crore Agricultural Marketing Project.

36. The Agricultural Marketing Project will lead to a major improvement in marketing of agricultural products and will also help to further strengthen the co-operative movement in the State. During the Seventh

Plan, a strong, viable and integrated co-operative system will be established. The consumer cooperatives will be strengthened. The special attention given to harijan and girijan societies has yielded good results and will be continued in the Seventh Plan.

37. The last year of the Sixth Five Year Plan is being observed as "The Year of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes". A comprehensive programme of development of harijan habitats and extension of assistance to harijan families is under implementation during the year. These include provision of drinking water supply to 1299 harijan and girijan settlements, electric connection to 433 harijan/girijan settlements, construction of link roads, supply of agricultural inputs and assistance under the Integrated Rural Development Programme. Amongst the families assisted under the latter programme during the year, nearly 55 percent belong to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, which is a remarkable achievement, against the targetted proportion of thirty per cent.

38. In order to diversify the employment opportunities to Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe boys and girls, new programmes for imparting training in technical fields have been started. A number of training courses are being held in such fields like heavy vehicle motor driving, rig operation, horology, computer programming, para medical sciences and management of co-operatives.

39. A major thrust has been given to housing for economically weaker sections. The various agencies of Government working for the welfare of weaker sections like Scheduled Castes and fishermen as well as the State Housing Board have undertaken housing schemes with assistance from the Housing and Urban Development Corporation and the co-operation of voluntary agencies. As a result for the various schemes that have been sanctioned, a record number of 75,000 houses will be provided for the economically weaker sections during 1985. The Government have also taken all the steps necessary for a massive programme of housing in connection with the "international year of shelter for the homeless" which is to be observed in 1987. A demonstration project in this context was recently inaugurated by the President of India at Fort Cochin for the rehabilitation of the 250 families of fishermen. The Government hopes to achieve the construction of five lakh houses for the economically weaker sections during the Seventh Plan period.

40. The Head-load Workers Act has been implemented in Chalai, Trivandrum, on an experimental basis. It has proved quite a success. Government is now set on implementing it in other cities such as Ernakulam, Trichur and Calicut.

41. In the field of sports, the year witnessed spectacular achievements culminating in the participation of three of our athletes in the Olympic Games. It is a matter of great pride for all of us that our athletes, our boys and girls from schools and colleges, as well as our policemen have distinguished themselves in various national and zonal championships. Government will give strong support and encouragement to the promotion of sports in schools and colleges as well as outside. The G.V. Raja Sports School, Trivandrum will be reorganised and a full-fledged sports school will be started at Cannanore. Talented students will be selected at an early age and intensive coaching will be given to them. It is also proposed to start a Sports Complex in the State. I am sure that with encouragement from the Government, our sportsmen and women will earn much greater laurels in the coming years, for themselves as well as for the State and the country.

42. A number of legislative measures are before you and you have a very heavy schedule during this session. I hope that it would be possible, during this session, to complete consideration of most of these measures.

43. Hon'ble Members, as I said at the beginning, the country is once again girding up its loins to meet the challenges and problems facing it and to get ready for the twenty-first century. In this noble endeavour, I have no doubt that Kerala would contribute its best and will be an example to other States. My Government seeks the whole-hearted co-operation of all sections of our people in fulfilling this role.

I wish you all success in your endeavour.

JAI HIND