

JULY 1, 1991

Honourable Mr. Speaker and Members of the Legislative Assembly,

1. I am very happy to extend to everyone of you my sincere greetings and congratulations on your election as members of the Ninth Kerala Legislative Assembly. I have great pleasure in welcoming you all to your First Session.

2. As the present Government has assumed office only a few days ago, it has not had time to spell out in detail its policies and programmes. The former Government presented the budget on 15-3-1991 and a Vote on Account for the first four months of the financial year has been passed by the Eighth Kerala Legislative Assembly. My Government will take up action for extending the period of Vote on Account, so that it can come up within that time with a budget outlining the new approach. I shall, however, indicate briefly the policies that my Government intends to adopt and implement.

3. The country has been passing through a very difficult phase of economic, social and political problems. It had to go to the polls within a short period of two years with frequent changes in the Centre. It was the longest spell of uncertainty in the Indian political scene, climaxed by the brutal assassination of the former Prime Minister Shri Rajiv Gandhi. To millions of Indians, Rajiv Gandhi represented, as did Jawaharlal Nehru and Indira Gandhi before him, not only the values of socialism and secularism but also the hopes and aspirations of the Indian nation, its courage and optimism even in the face of the fiercest odds. It was, when the whole world was looking up to him to lead India confidently into the twenty-first century, to scientific and technological progress and all-round prosperity, that fate cut short his youthful and promising life. His assassination is indeed a national tragedy of colossal dimensions and an irreparable national loss. I take this opportunity, on behalf of the Kerala Legislative Assembly and on my own behalf, to pay my humble tribute to this great son of India. I am sure his flaming patriotism and total dedication to the nation will continue to inspire us.

4. The people of Kerala have given a massive mandate to the United Democratic Front. This can be considered only as an unquestionable expression of public opinion in favour of political stability, administrative efficiency, effective maintenance of law and order and honesty and integrity in public life. The enlightened voters of Kerala have condemned, in unmistakable terms, chaos and anarchy in social life, and the misuse of the administrative apparatus and Government finances to subserve narrow political ends. It has firmly rejected unethical practices in politics and voted in favour of the highest traditions and values in personal and political life.

5. My Government acknowledges with gratitude and humility the confidence that has been placed on it by the people of the State. My Government promises to function with dynamism, unity of purpose, clarity of vision and total commitment to the progress of Kerala State and the welfare of its people. My Government shall accord the highest priority to the restoration of law and order, activating the administrative machinery and most of all, ensuring the all-round progress of the State. All anti-social elements, irrespective of their political affiliation, will be put down with a firm hand. We have already paid a heavy price in the successive assassinations of Indiraji and Rajivji, for allowing the cult of violence to grow unchecked in our society. Violence, in whatever form or in whatever field, will be curbed promptly and effectively. The law and order machinery and the crime detection agencies will be allowed to function without fear or favour and without political interference. Let me repeat that my Government is committed to ensure to every citizen the safety of his person and property, and the freedom to follow his normal avocation in peace.

6. My Government proposes to streamline the administrative apparatus so that the fruits of socio-economic development will reach the poorest of the poor in full measure and without delay. The rights of all minorities, both religious and linguistic, will be fully protected and the constitutional obligations in respect of them will be scrupulously fulfilled. No pains will be spared to safeguard the interest of the humblest sections of society, particularly Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. Most important of all, my Government will be following a realistic policy of full co-operation with the Union Government. However my Government will not hesitate to take up promptly with the Union Government and pursue energetically any matter that is likely to affect adversely the interest of Kerala and its people.

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7. The State is in the midst of the havoc caused by the monsoon. Several lives have been lost, and there has been extensive damage to crops and other property. My Government is giving the highest priority to undertake flood relief measures on a massive scale. Maximum assistance of the Government of India will be sought to meet the emergency caused by the heavy rains and floods.

8. During the last two years there has been an alarming increase in the prices of essential commodities, hitting the common man very hard. My Government will make an all-out effort to bring down the prices to the level obtaining in July 1990. The public distribution system will be strengthened and the extend of market intervention by the Civil Supplies Corporation will be enlarged.

9. It is a cliché to say that the gravest problem facing the State is the massive unemployment of its young educated people. My Government stands committed to increase employment opportunities by working out a comprehensive and well-orchestrated plan of action. An employment generation programme with an outlay of atleast Rs. 1,000 crores will be launched during the term of this Government.

10. Consumption of electricity upto 20 units will be made free, so as to grant relief to the poorest segment of the consumers. Firm and effective steps will be adopted to put down corruption in the political and administrative fields. As recommended by the Ninth Finance Commission, Government servants and teachers will be granted Central Scales of pay. My Government proposes to grant one months pay as bonus to all Government employees and teachers. All arrears of social security pensions and other pensions will be disbursed immediately. Subject to the availability of resources, pension to agricultural workers and other weaker sections and unemployment assistance will be revised upwards.

11. The Government will devise plans and schemes for improving the industrial climate in the State. Schemes will be prepared to channelise investments in productive areas so as to encourage entrepreneurship. The public sector undertakings and corporations would be revamped to have better efficiency, growth and diversification. The Boards and Corporations not performing well would be re-structured and helped to serve the purpose they are created for. My Government will take steps to improve their managerial efficiency. The financial, economic and social objectives will be clearly laid down so that there is no ambiguity in objectives, or excuse for poor performance. The public enterprises in the state will be turned to major instruments of growth and employment.

12. Special programmes will be implemented to reorganise and revitalise the traditional industries like Coir, Cashew, Handloom etc. Steps will be taken to establish new industries for creating more job opportunities. Khadi and Village Industries would be re-organised in such a manner that people get job opportunities in every Panchayat.

13. My Government will press for larger central investment in the State in Industry and infrastructure including development of power. My Government is hopeful that the Government of India will extend its co-operation and assistance for the speedy development of the State and for finding solutions to its major economic problems.

14. A comprehensive land utilisation scheme would be worked out to utilise and cultivate all available land. My Government will take measures to protect the environment and forests for the conservation of our natural resources. Special steps would be taken to increase the productivity of agriculture and to protect the interest of farmers in the State. My Government will work out strategies for development of different crops and prepare schemes for liberal assistance to farmers.

15. In the field of education the State Government will take steps to improve the quality of education to mould a well-motivated, forward-looking and dedicated younger generation. Education upto pre-degree and plus two level will be made free. Setting up of educational institutions for weaker sections, sports schools and universities with emphasis on development of local talent and culture would be given special consideration. More Educational Institutions will be allowed in both private and public sectors.

16. The Government recognises the important role of Science and Technology in the development of the State. Suitable schemes and projects would be prepared for Malayalees returning from abroad to make use of their skills. My Government will approach the Central Government for sanctioning assistance for their rehabilitation.

17. In order to regulate the functioning of trade unions, legislation will be undertaken to implement a code of conduct among them. My Government will protect the legitimate interests of labourers and industrial disputes will be resolved by mutual discussion rather than through a policy of confrontation.

18. The Government will lay special emphasis on welfare schemes for the weaker sections of the society. The various pensionary schemes would be rationalised to make them more meaningful. New pensionary and welfare schemes to include workers in tertiary sector also would be taken up. My Government will make efforts to see that all pensions and welfare payments are made regularly and in time. For the members of SC/ST, special schemes for employment and housing would be undertaken. In addition, those who are regularly repaying Agricultural loans will be made eligible for an interest subsidy of five per cent.

19. My Government will take steps to tone up the administration. It will not tolerate the trends of corruption among those in public service and public life. Those holding public offices would be made accountable and responsive towards an honest and efficient administration. The Government will also look into the problems faced by the Government and quasi-Government employees. It will take steps to redress their grievances in service and welfare matters.

20. Kerala is known for maintaining communal harmony, even when the entire nation is torn by tensions on communal lines. However, the recent rise of communal forces in the State will be dealt with severely. My Government will take all steps to improve the law and order situation and tone up the police administration in maintaining communal harmony and peace in the State. It will take steps to improve the welfare and working conditions of policemen. Sports in the Police will be encouraged. In addition my Government is proposing to establish a scheme of "Ration money" for policemen.

21. One of your important tasks is to frame laws to guide administration and development. The legislative work should not be allowed to slow down. In the best traditions of democracy, my Government will bring forth legislation before you for consideration and approval. Emergency provisions will be resorted to only in wholly unavoidable circumstances.

22. Honourable Members, the people of the State have placed a heavy responsibility on you. I have no doubt in my mind that true to the excellent traditions of the Kerala Legislative Assembly, you will discharge your responsibilities to the people with sincerity and dedication, always governed by considerations of public interest. Our State faces tough challenges in the days ahead. I trust we will be able to face these unitedly and with a sense of purpose. I wish you all, every success in you endeavours.

JAI HIND