

OCTOBER 22, 1970

*Honourable Mr. Speaker and Members of the Legislature:*

1. It is my happy privilege to address the Members of the newly elected legislature. I congratulate them in their success in the elections and extend to them a most hearty welcome.
2. I dissolved the last Legislative Assembly on the advice of the Chief Minister on 26th June 1970. The Council of Ministers did not resign immediately, but continued for a short while and resigned on 1st of August, soon after the Election Commission had declared the date of elections to the Legislative Assembly. Therefore, President's rule had to be imposed for a short while until after completion of the elections and the assumption of office of the new Council of Ministers.
3. I am glad that the elections on the whole have been held peacefully but for one or two unhappy incidents in which a few persons lost their lives. I extend to the families of the deceased my heartfelt condolences.
4. It is a tribute to the political consciousness of the people of Kerala and the efficiency of the election machinery that 74.8% of the electorate voted and that it was possible to hold elections within about 2½ months after dissolution of the Assembly. My thanks are especially due to the Election Commission and the Officers of the Election Department and men of the police force for their co-operation in conducting the elections so successfully.
5. The new Ministry headed by Shri C. Achutha Menon and consisting of nine members was sworn in on the forenoon of October 4, 1970.
6. Since I had addressed the former Legislative Assembly on the 9th January 1970 and I have to address the present Assembly again within a few months, that is to say, on the opening of the Assembly early in 1971, I do not propose to make a long speech today containing too many details of the programmes that my Government wish to implement. I would, rather, confine myself to certain broad outlines of policy. Therefore, I shall be brief.
7. My Government will be giving first priority to the implementation of Land Reforms and to solving the problem of unemployment. The former Government had also taken big steps in the implementation of the Land Reforms Act and a large number of kudikidappukars have been given proprietary rights over the lands comprised in their kudikidappus. The Act was brought into force on the 1st of January 1970. Several parties had approached the High Court praying for invalidating various provisions of the Act. Although there was apprehension in certain circles that the Act will be struck down by the High Court, I am glad that on the whole the main provisions of the Act have been upheld by the High Court. This has enabled the new Government to go forward more vigorously with the implementation of the Act with redoubled energy and self-confidence. The secret of success of the former Government in the implementation of the Land Reforms Act lay in the fact that Government was able to bring about the co-operation of a good section of the landlords, especially the smaller ones, in giving away their ownership rights to be conferred upon their kudikidappukars. Thus, through co-operation all-round, a great social reforms was being implemented during the last several months. This process has to continue. I am sure that all concerned will co-operate with the new Government also to the utmost extent and thereby render the completion of the implementation of the Land Reforms Act easy.
8. In this connection, a word of praise is due to the officers of the Land Revenue and Development Departments who are mainly concerned with the implementation of the Act. I must say that the majority of them did not merely treat it as official routine, but worked hard to do the job effectively. Mention has also to be made of the co-operation extended by the local bodies and from all sections of the people generally in the implementation of the Act.
9. But, the High Court has struck down some of the provisions of the Kerala Land Reforms (Amendment) Act of 1969. It is necessary to deal with the situation created by the striking down of these provisions.
10. The most acute problem is with regard to arrears of rent that have accumulated. Section 73 of the Act had provided for giving relief to tenants by wiping out a substantial portion of the arrears. Since these provisions have been struck down as not coming within the purview of land reforms, landlords have begun filing

suits for realising the arrears of rent and tenants will be put to difficulties if they have to pay all the arrears fully and immediately. Pending decision on appeal in the Supreme Court, Government propose to stay all the suits and actions for the realisation of arrears of rent for a temporary period and for this purpose my Government have already issued an Ordinance. My Government are also taking steps to file immediately an appeal before the Supreme Court against the decision of the High Court to try to uphold the invalidated sections of the Act.

11. The provisions relating to ceiling have not been struck down by the High Court. It is, therefore, proposed to go to the next stage of implementation of Land Reforms Act by taking over the excess lands above the ceiling and distribute them among the landless people. More than 3 000 returns have been filed so far by the landholders indicating a surplus of 50,000 acres of land. Action is in progress to get these surplus lands surrendered. This will be pursued and ceiling provisions also will be implemented as soon as possible.

12. The land hunger of the people was sought to be eased, not only by the implementation of the Land Reforms Act but also by distribution of cultivable land at the disposal of the Government either by way of Revenue Poramboke or forest lands. Pattas were also sought to be conferred on the settlers in the hilly areas who had occupied these lands for a long time. Through all these means, tens of thousands of cultivators had been benefited. It is proposed to speed up these measures and complete distribution of all available Government land except such as those which are required for public purposes.

13. The unemployment rampant in the State is a very serious problem which is giving rise to unrest among our young men and women, both educated as well as others, on a very wide spread scale. This situation has to be put an end to and the energies of our young people have to be harnessed in a creative way to the building up of our country. First, we have to initiate a crash programme of industrialisation in Kerala. This State happens to be industrially backward still, although there are large potentialities for industrial development. I believe that the present climate is quite good for the industrialisation of the State. I am aware that the task of industrialisation cannot be performed without the assistance of the Central Government on a very big scale indeed because in several spheres it is only the Centre that can sanction the starting of certain industries, allocation of foreign exchange, etc., which are necessary. Due to lack of adequate resources on the part of the State Governments, the Central Government has also to come in a big way for investment in the public sector in various key industries. It is a long standing complaint of the people of Kerala that up to now the State has not received the consideration that is due to it by the Centre. I am sure that all sections of the people of Kerala, without any distinction of caste, community or political affiliation will stand united in order to see that the just demands of Kerala are conceded by the Centre. I hope the Central Government will realise that if it continues to neglect the needs of this part of the country, a very difficult situation is going to develop and I am sure they will come forward to help my Government in their endeavour to industrialise the State.

14. The Central Government's attention will be drawn to the immediate necessity of converting the metre gauge railway line from Cochin to Trivandrum into broad gauge, connecting up the coastal towns of Alleppey and Kayamkulam with it, and of constructing the Trivandrum-Kanyakumari line. Along with this, the development of another major harbour in Northern Kerala is also necessary for the rapid economic development of the State.

15. With regard to large industries, since January 1970, six industrial licences and twelve letters of intent have been secured from the Government of India for setting up new industrial units as well as for the expansion of existing units. About 30 applications recommended by the Government are now pending with the Government of India. My Government would take effective steps for the reopening of factories and mills remaining closed due to financial and other difficulties.

16. Apart from large industries, the aim of my Government is to bring about a very large number of small and medium industries, in fact hundreds of them, utilising the various raw materials resources and the plentiful supply of electrical energy that is available in the State. The Government have plans for reorganising the departmental set up, and the Kerala State Industrial Development Corporation, in such a way that the small and medium industrialists who are prepared to invest, but who do not exactly know what lines of production to select, will get the necessary guidance and technical help from the Government. For this, highly qualified technical teams will be appointed who will be able to prepare project reports, market surveys, etc., and to give advise to entrepreneurs on all these and allied problems.

17. The traditional industries of Kerala like cashew, coir and handlooms are employing perhaps the largest number of workers in the State although the earnings per worker in these industries are low. But from the point of view of employment opportunities, it is very necessary to stabilise these industries and bring about better conditions of service in them. You are doubtless aware that some steps in this direction have been taken by the former Government. My Government intends to carry forward the programmes already initiated. It is necessary that the Central Government should sanction the entire Rs. 15 crore scheme for Coir Development that we have put before them. They should also allow the Cashew Corporation to channel the distribution of imported raw cashew nuts in such a manner that the industry may be stabilised.

18. My Government have also a plan of helping unemployed engineers, engineering technicians, doctors, and other technically qualified people to find work through schemes of self-employment. The nationalised banks offer help in this direction. They are prepared to advance money on easy terms to such people to start industries, or to organise their professional practice. Suitable schemes will be worked out for this.

19. The creation of job opportunities need not and cannot be confined only to the industrial sector. There will be considerable opportunities in agriculture, fisheries, dairying etc. In the countryside, there is a lot of development to be done by way of bunding up of Kayal lands so that single crop lands may be converted into double crop lands, creation of house sites for landless agricultural labourers, providing housing on a big scale road making cutting irrigation channels, contour bunding and terracing. All these will provide employment to the rural people. Besides there is a large scope for the development of poultry farming, and dairying in which also there is large employment potential for our people.

20. In the field of fisheries there is still more scope. My Government intends especially to concentrate on the development of fisheries in the State which is a very valuable asset so far as this State is concerned. Developing fishing harbours and communications throughout the coastal belt and the setting up of ice plants etc., together with attention to sanitation and housing for fishermen will change the entire face of our coastal areas. All these are provided for in our Master Plan for fisheries.

21. The working class has to play a big role in the development of the State. Government would like to remind the workers that apart from winning their immediate demands, the workers have a creative role to play in the all-round economic development of the State, through which alone poverty and unemployment can be wiped off from the face of this land. The Government expects the working class to play this role. My Government's policy will be to help the workers and other sections of the toiling people to achieve better living conditions through their organised strength and through methods of collective bargaining. But, at the same time, peaceful conditions have to be maintained so that industry and agriculture may prosper.

22. I should like to mention also the case of private college teachers and the problems that they are facing because of the Supreme Court striking down various provisions of the Kerala University Act. Several provisions were incorporated in the Kerala University Act with a view to giving protection to teachers so far as their employment and conditions of service are concerned. Now the Supreme Court has held that some of these provisions are unconstitutional. The teachers are naturally disturbed and they have begun an agitation to get their grievances redressed. My Government propose to take immediate steps to remedy this state of affairs and to give protection to the teachers concerned.

23. The proposed Cochin University and the Agricultural University, the starting of which were delayed by the dissolution of the Legislature, will be set up as early as possible.

24. My Government will be paying the utmost attention to the problems of the downtrodden sections of society such as the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes, fishermen, and agricultural labourers. Apart from the question of ensuring to them their just share of Government jobs for which a number of steps are being taken, my Government will see that the question of wages of Agricultural labourers and provision of house sites for them are resolved as quickly as possible. It is our intention to initiate a big programme of housing for those downtrodden sections of society, and for this, the proposed Housing Board which will enable us to get large funds from the financing bodies like the Life Insurance Corporation, will be set up immediately.

25. My Government propose giving top priority to the question of streamlining the administration and bringing it closer to the people. Whatever be the political complexion of the Ministry that is in power, the complaint this is commonly heard is that there is always a lot of redtape and bureaucratism in

administration and many things which the Ministry promise the people and in fact make an attempt to do, are not realised within the time within which the people could normally expect them to be realised. It is, therefore, necessary to pay very close attention to the problems of administration, especially on how things decided upon by the popular Ministry can be translated into action within the shortest possible time without getting bogged down in the Secretariat and other offices at various levels. A large measure of decentralisation and democratisation also is necessary in the administration. This has been already recognised, and with this view, the Government intends taking up the Panchayati Raj Bill and get it passed by the Legislative Assembly as soon as possible.

26. To bring about efficiency in administration the willing co-operation of the Government employees is necessary. My Government are aware that the Government employees, especially the low paid section of them, have various problems. I may assure them that my Government will be ready to help to solve these problems to the utmost extent possible within the limited financial resources at the command of the State Government. But the Government would like to remind them that the general public have a feeling that the Government employees are not devoting their wholehearted attention to the tasks that they are entrusted with and are not alive to the necessity of serving the people, which ought to be the primary objective of all departments of the administration. I appeal to the Government employees to see that they do not give room for this kind of complaint from any quarter.

27. Thanks to the regular supplies from the Central Government and the increase in the production of rice in Kerala, the food position on the whole remained satisfactory during the last seven months, and the full sanctioned ration of 160 grams have been distributed during these months. It is hoped that the position will continue to be satisfactory in the coming months also.

28. The effort to maximise the production of rice in the State is bearing fruit. The production has gone upto 12.51 lakh tonnes of rice in 1969-70. The schemes for increasing production of rice will be continued.

29. The Agriculture Department has launched a Small Farmers' Development Programme and Marginal Farmers' and Agricultural Labourers' Development Programme in the Quilon District. It is hoped that a similar project will be sanctioned soon for the Cannanore District also. These projects are intended to help the small farmers and agricultural labourers who have not been sufficiently benefited by the N.E.S. and other programmes till now.

30. I am glad to announce that the annual outlay for the 1970-71 Plan, which was originally fixed at Rs. 46.94 crores, has been revised and refixed at Rs. 48.21 crores after discussions with the Planning Commission in early October. This revision of outlay was due to the institutional finance that has been made available.

31. The State Government has managed to get financial assistance from the L.I.C. for the implementation of a massive programme for urban water supply, which includes the Trivandrum Water Supply Augmentation Scheme, Calicut Water Supply Scheme, and Water Supply Schemes of 23 other Municipalities. These schemes are to be taken up and executed immediately in the course of the next three years. The Life Insurance Corporation has sanctioned a loan of Rs. 2.53 crores for this year. This has enabled the State Government to allot Rs. 3.8 crores for Urban Water Supply Schemes this year in place of the original allotment of only Rs. 1.02 crores.

32. The total area expected to be benefited by the irrigation projects already undertaken by Government is 454,230 hectares. The area benefited till the end of 1968-69 is 179,270 hectares.

33. No new irrigation projects have been included in the Fourth Five Year Plan. We have investigated about ten schemes in the Kabbini and Bhavani basins, and preliminary works have already been started in respect of two schemes, namely, Karapuzha in the Kabbini basin and Chittur (Attappadi) scheme in the Bhavani basin in anticipation of Government of India's clearance. These schemes will have necessarily to be accommodated in the Fourth Plan in view of their inter-State importance.

34. Kerala State has a coast line of about 560 km of which about 320 km are constantly exposed to the ravages of the sea. The magnitude of the problem of sea erosion has gained dangerous proportions during the recent past. Government consider that the problem of sea erosion has to be tackled at the national level and a master plan for the anti-sea erosion programme has to be implemented.

35. Besides the continuing schemes under implementation is proposed to take up a good number of Inland Water Transport Schemes both under State Sector and Central Sector during the Fourth Plan period, the most important of them being the Champakara canal in the Cochin Industrial region and the Chavara-Neendakara canal.

36. Government are proposing to lay down norms for taking over village roads by the Public Works Department, keeping also in view the effect of decentralisation of administration under consideration of the Government.

37. The State Government are taking all steps to widen and improve the National Highways in this State. The Central Government are being pressed for allocation of substantial amounts for this purpose during the Fourth Plan period.

38. It is the desire of the Government to ensure proper accommodation for Government offices and employees at least in the course of another decade. Steps are being taken to achieve this with the available resources and the funds that may become available from Housing Board.

39. The question of prescribing suitable workload for the various divisions of the Public Works Department and a re-organisation of the department on that basis is engaging the active consideration of Government. It is hoped that orders on this can be issued soon.

40. The Government propose to give utmost importance to rural electrification. Substantial progress has already been achieved in this respect in about 1,200 villages of the State. There are about 300 more villages to be covered, if every village in the State is to be electrified. This will be done in the course of the Fourth Five Year Plan. The two districts of Palghat and Trichur had been selected for the extension of electricity in the Gandhi Centenary Year with a loan assistance of Rs. 95 lakhs from the Rural Electrification Corporation. All pending connections will be given in the course of a specified time schedule. Special attention will also be paid to the extension of high tension power to cater to the industrial needs of the northern part of Kerala.

41. The policy of phased nationalisation of transport will be continued. Top priority will be given to the question of improving the finances of the Kerala State Road Transport Corporation with a view to minimise the losses that it is at present making and ultimately to make it a profitable concern. This is necessary if the services are to be extended.

42. My Government intend to nationalise the private forests as soon as possible. The forest wealth of this State which is an invaluable natural asset will be preserved and developed in such a manner as to help the industrial development of the State.

43. Although we cannot hold out much hope for increased allocations in the matter of supplies to hospitals, the Government are anxiously considering how best to make the maximum utilisation of the existing supplies so that the really deserving poor people do not suffer for want of adequate supplies and equipment in the hospitals. Government have decided to increase the ratio of staff nurses to beds in hospital from the existing 1:10 to 1:6 which would mean the creation of 1,000 posts of staff nurses during the Fourth Plan. This year 200 posts have already been created and they are being filled up.

44. It is universally acknowledged that Kerala has the greatest attraction for tourists. The facilities for tourism, however, have not been developed adequately. It is my Government's intention to develop tourism on a big scale so that the natural facilities and scenic beauty of the land may be utilised to the fullest extent in the interests of the economic development of the State.

45. The Government's police policy has come in for some adverse criticism. I wish to reiterate that my Government's policy is to give the fullest freedom to all sections of the common people to organise themselves and agitate and fight for redressing their grievances and the police will not intervene as long as these agitations are peaceful. But when any section of people resort to acts of violence and even terrorism, a tendency which is unfortunately rearing its head now-a-days, causing injury to person or destruction of property, the police cannot but intervene. The task of the police is a difficult and thankless one. I appeal to all concerned to appreciate this and co-operate with them fully in the arduous task of maintaining peace and ensuring security to the ordinary citizen of the State.

46. My Government will always seek the co-operation of the opposition parties in the great and strenuous task of building up our beloved State. I believe, no political or other difference should stand in the way of a united endeavour in the matter of the economic development of the State. For its part, my Government will always be prepared to discuss its plans and programmes with the members of the opposition and to accept every suggestion coming from whatever quarter which is in the interests of our State.

47. It is the Government's intention to switch over to the use of Malayalam language for administrative purposes, and bring about this change in a phased programme.

48. As for legislative work the Ordinances recently promulgated have to be replaced by Acts of the Legislature apart from certain other Amendment Bills which would be introduced in this session itself.

I have only attempted to indicate briefly some of the problems facing my Government and the steps they are taking to tackle them. May I once again wish you success in the legislative and administrative work you will be attending to.

JAI HIND