

MARCH 13, 1998

*Honourable Speaker, Honourable Members,*

1. I welcome you to this session of the Assembly which is meeting under circumstances in which our whole country and our State are going through momentous changes.

2. The country-wide election process to the 12th Lok Sabha has given rise to a situation, where none of the three major political formations in the Lok Sabha has an absolute majority. Any coalition, forged out of parties, groups and individuals who have very little in common, will have problems. It is probable that there might be instability at the Union level.

3. In comparison, the position is better in our State. Despite the well-orchestrated campaign, the LDF, though it lost 3 Lok Sabha seats, gained two new seats instead. Furthermore, the margin between the losing LDF candidate and the winning UDF candidate is slender. The LDF won all the three bye-elections to the Legislative Assembly giving a clear verdict of the people in favour of my Government in spite of the vicious propaganda launched by the Opposition.

4. Now that the Lok Sabha polls are over, my Government is determined that the developmental activities in the State will be carried on on the basis of popular unity, cutting across social, religious and political differences. The success of the People's planning initiated by my Government is the guarantee that these divisions would not affect popular unity in developmental activities. My Government is committed to pursue the policy of ameliorating the lot of the poor and the down-trodden, the welfare of the working class, the peasants, agricultural workers and the common man suffering under the present economic policies of the Central Government. My Government stands committed to the welfare of the youth, students and our suffering women folk. My Government will work hard to save the thousands of workers of the traditional sectors.

5. My Government will continue to pursue a policy of vigorous economic growth while at the same time addressing the problems of the large segment of our population who are yet to be brought into the mainstream of economic development. I am happy to inform the House that the Planning Commission has agreed to a Ninth Five Year Plan Outlay of Rs. 16,100 crores for our State. This is not only 294% higher than the approved outlay of the Eighth Five Year Plan but also one of the highest increases in outlay for any State in the country. The Planning Commission has given this increase recognising the State's need and its potential to achieve a higher growth rate to catch up with the rest of the country in economic development. My Government has once again unequivocally lived up to its commitment towards decentralisation by setting apart Rs. 6000 crores of this outlay as grant-in-aid to the local bodies.

6. Through its efforts on decentralised planning, my Government had embarked on a process of change that has been unprecedented in any State Government since Independence. Much of this needs extensive social reengineering. Today, the local bodies in the State are in command of 30-40% of the State's total Plan outlay. I am happy to note that the changes in laws and procedures, a prerequisite to sustain the dynamics of this change, are being put in place systematically. The local bodies have prepared their plans according to the guidelines issued by Government. As a fitting recognition of these efforts, the Planning Commission has sanctioned a sum of Rs. 4 crores for the training of those involved in the process and for the preparation of local level plans. In order to enable the local bodies to discharge their functions effectively they have to be given necessary staff support. My Government intends to restructure various development departments so that the staff needed for the local bodies could be deployed on the principle of work and worker going together.

7. The Committee on Decentralisation of Powers, that has come to be popularly known as the 'Sea Committee' has submitted the major part of its final report. My Government will take a final decision on this report very soon. I should particularly note that people's participation in planning has already been achieved to a great degree. My Government will endeavour to ensure even greater participation in the implementation of schemes. A cardinal principle that will be followed strictly will be that execution of public works and the selection of beneficiaries will be through an absolutely transparent process. The citizen will be further

empowered and given the right to seek and obtain information relating to all development programmes. In keeping with my Government's commitment to achieve genuine decentralisation, the Department of Local Administration would be renamed as Department of Local Self Government.

8. I am happy to note that the law and order situation in the State has been satisfactory. The Elections to the Lok Sabha were held in a trouble free atmosphere. Government have been able to successfully prevent communal clashes thus transforming Kerala into a State of communal harmony and religious tolerance. Many steps have been taken for the efficient functioning of the Police Department. 3000 Police Constables have been newly recruited and they are undergoing training. The Crime Branch of the Police department was reorganised in February this year so as to enhance the efficacy of crime investigation. The Vigilance and Anti Corruption Bureau has also been reorganised to take effective anti-corruption measures. Strengthening of the Traffic Police wing is now under consideration. Women Cells have been made more effective. A separate Tourism Wing has been set up in the Police Department. Police Stations have been supplied with vehicles for their effective functioning. The recommendations of the High Level Committee to study the problem of increasing road accidents are being acted on now. Inservice training programmes for the police personnel will be organised.

9. My Government attaches the highest priority to the public distribution system and intends to continue the universal statutory rationing system. PDS will be a major instrument in controlling the open market prices of essential articles like rice and sugar. Every effort will be made to increase the distribution of these articles through fair price shops. The State Subsidy Scheme of distributing 4 kg. of rice per week at Re. 1 less per kg. to both the BPL (Below Poverty Line) and APL (Above Poverty Line) families will be continued. Similarly, under the Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS), 10 kg. of rice will be distributed to all the BPL families in the State constituting about 42% of the total population in the State.

10. My Government proposes to continue the widely acclaimed Market Intervention Scheme launched by Government from 1996 to control the prices of commodities in the open market. The number of selected Authorised Ration Dealers for the distribution of pulses, spices and condiments will be enhanced from 2000 to 3000. My Government will persuade Government of India to continue the open market sale of wheat and also continue its efforts to increase the allocation of food grains to the State for protecting the statutory rationing system. My Government proposes to strengthen consumer courts and activate consumer organisations thereby building on the momentum that the consumer movement has gained in the State.

11. My Government remains fully committed to make the State self-sufficient in power generation by 2000 AD. Our State was successful in obtaining the maximum possible share of power from Government of India, and a power crisis during June 1997 was averted. Brahmapuram diesel power station, the first thermal power station in the State has been commissioned during 1997-98. The Lower Periyar Hydro Electric Project in the State has been commissioned during 1997-98. Concerted efforts are being made to complete all the ongoing hydel projects. In an unprecedented effort, Kerala Government was successful in bringing surplus power from the Eastern Region and 100% power was made available to industries. To achieve the goal of self-sufficiency, many new projects for generation and programmes for strengthening transmission and distribution have been initiated. My Government has taken action to establish a 128 Megawatts diesel plant in Kozhikode in a time bound manner. Work on the 160 Megawatts combined cycle project at Cochin by BSES is progressing and the project is expected to be commissioned during this year. Several other power projects with the participation of the private sector are at various stages of processing for implementation. My Government has been able to obtain environmental clearance for the 163 MW hydro-electric project at Athirapilly. The project will be taken up for implementation immediately. Several small and mini hydel projects are also under various stages of planning and implementation. My Government is committed to a time bound programme to give all pending electric connections. A Power Finance Corporation to raise sufficient resources for the power sector will start functioning shortly.

12. My Government intends to implement a comprehensive programme to protect the paddy lands of the State and to double the productivity. A scheme to give special assistance to paddy growers is under consideration. The year May 1998 to May 1999 will be observed as 'Ponmani Varsham', to emphasise the objective of doubling paddy productivity. The intensive vegetable production programme launched last year will be continued this year. The objective is to help the State achieve self sufficiency in vegetable production. A network of new agricultural sales outlets for delivery of inputs to farmers is proposed. As part of a long term strategy to increase employment for workers engaged in cashew processing, my Government proposes to launch a Cashew Development Programme. Other major schemes envisaged this year include schemes for increasing the productivity of coconut trees through improved irrigation, commercially organising cultivation of ornamental flowers and plants and promoting nurseries in the small scale sector. An Export Promotion Council will be set up to promote rubber-based industries and export of natural rubber.

13. The Animal Husbandry and Dairy Sectors have continued to show remarkable progress in the past year as well. These sectors have been able to successfully tap the resources of the local bodies through the People's campaign for participative planning. My Government will complete all the ongoing projects in these two sectors. The Animal Husbandry Department will intensify the animal health activities while the Dairy Development Department will focus on co-operativisation and fodder development.

14. The State attracts about 7.5% of the total foreign tourists coming to India. The growth rate in tourists visiting the State is about 13%. It is estimated that last year, an investment of Rs. 100 crores must have been made by the private sector in tourism infrastructure. My Government will focus on modernising tourism infrastructure upgrading facilities and services to tourists. Standards of tourism industry will be improved in the State by implementing the Kerala Tourism Trade Act. The thrust will be on popularising and marketing products like beaches, backwaters, hill stations, historical monuments, traditional health practices, fairs and festivals and eco-tourism destinations.

15. My Government accords paramount importance to the supply of drinking water to the people of the State. The Kerala Water Authority and the elected local bodies are about to undertake a unique collaborative effort for implementing small water supply schemes across the State. Elected local bodies are expected to be able to set apart an amount of Rs. 60 crores for water supply projects which will be implemented with the technical guidance of the Kerala Water Authority. The Water Authority is negotiating with LIC for loan assistance for six major water supply schemes and preliminary approvals from Government of India for this have been already received. The existing sewerage scheme in Thiruvananthapuram will be brought under an augmentation scheme to be completed on a turn key basis.

16. My Government is implementing a number of irrigation schemes for benefiting farmers with funds from agencies like NABARD and EEC. A large scale hydrology project with World Bank Assistance to ensure "real time" monitoring of water resources in Kerala is also under way. My Government recognises that effective implementation of irrigation projects is best achieved by a "participatory irrigation management approach". Farmers' Associations and Local Bodies will be fully involved in the implementation. Major projects sanctioned by my Government include the construction of a Regulator-cum-bridge at Thrithala across the Bharatapuzha river. A Regulator-cum-Bridge at Chamravattom costing Rs. 70 crores will also be sanctioned. In order to ensure conjunctive use of Kerala's scarce water resources, my Government intends to bring out a revised and comprehensive water policy document in the ensuing financial year.

17. In keeping with the commitment of my Government, many of the major rural development programmes have already been transferred to the Panchayats. The Employment Assurance Scheme that aims at providing assured employment to registered labourers has also been transferred to Block Panchayats. 105.11 lakh man days have been generated under this scheme. During the next year, all centrally sponsored schemes will be integrated with the annual plan of the Panchayats to ensure further convergence of schemes and resources. An "Information, Education and Communication (IEC) strategy for Rural Sanitation" will be implemented in the State. The first phase of the "Total Sanitation Programme" will be implemented during this year itself in selected Model Panchayats. As a part of the "Clean Kerala" programme for the total sanitation of the State, activities in five districts with bilateral assistance from external agencies will be taken up. My Government will launch a 'Below Poverty Line Census' in the State to identify families below the poverty line. This list, finally approved by the Grama Sabhas, will form the basic data base in implementing poverty alleviation programmes during the IX Five Year Plan.

18. District Supply and Marketing Societies will be started in all Districts by April 1998. These societies will provide marketing tie-ups to IRDP/DWCRA beneficiaries in procurement and sale of their products, product upgradation, standardisation and quality control.

19. The supplementary assistance to Scheduled Caste Beneficiaries of Rs. 13,000 for construction of houses under Indira Awas Yojana and Jawahar Rozgar Yojana, will be extended to Scheduled Tribe beneficiaries. This assistance of Rs. 13,000 in addition to normal unit cost of Rs. 22,000 has been released to 6851 houses during the year. 'Block Information Centres' in each block will be computerised to ensure easy availability of data for local planning. The policy initiatives of Government for the development of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes will be focussed in the areas of Housing, Education, Employment and Skill Upgradation. With the support of local bodies, Government hope to provide shelter to all homeless Scheduled Caste and

Scheduled Tribe families by the year 2001-02. The per unit assistance of Rs. 20,000 has been raised to Rs. 35,000. A new scheme for the rehabilitation of Poramboke dwellers has been launched. I am happy to announce that 12.1% of the Annual Plan has been set apart for SCP/TSP, of which 67% has been allocated to local bodies. Other highlights of the year include streamlining of educational concessions, increase in assistance for law graduates, substantial hike in rehabilitation assistance to SC/ST victims of atrocities. Three new Model Residential Schools have been started this year.

20. Empowerment of weaker sections necessarily entails giving them control over resources. Over 50% of Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe working population are employed as agricultural labourers. My Government intends to launch an ambitious programme to enable them to purchase a minimum of 50 cents of land each and help them become full-fledged cultivators. A massive drive to give wiring and power connection to Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe houses in remote settlements which have been electrified will be launched this year. A corps of Adivasi social workers from inaccessible habitats will be given training in various aspects like health, non-formal education and sanitation. These trained persons will be provided remuneration to work as agents of social change and development in remote localities. A special project to assist craftsmen of the Kusava community to create a niche for themselves in both domestic and foreign markets will be taken up by the Kerala Backward Classes Development Corporation.

21. My Government proposes to open more Town Employment Exchanges and computerise the existing Exchanges. Self Employment guidance programmes through Self Employment Guidance Units functioning at Kollam and Idukki will be strengthened. Unemployment assistance has been raised to Rs. 90 per month. New trades with greater employment potential will be introduced in Industrial Training Institutes. Two new Women ITIs at Kottayam and Pathanamthitta Districts have also been proposed.

22. My Government will strengthen the enforcement machinery of the Labour Department to ensure fair wages and better working conditions for workers. Importance will be given to ensure a good relationship between labour and employers to promote an atmosphere that is conducive to higher productivity. My Government accords paramount importance to welfare measures like pensions for sections of workers who do not fall under the cover of such schemes, better educational facilities for children of workers, better health care and security of employment. It is also intended to initiate steps to establish a Welfare Fund Board for washermen in the State. My Government proposes to implement special programmes for ensuring security of job, health care and financial assistance while in distress to women workers from our State working in other States, in association with concerned State Governments.

23. To cope up with the alarming increase in road accidents, emergency Trauma Care Centres will be set up in Medical Colleges at Alappuzha and Thirissur. A Virology Institute will become functional at Medical College, Alappuzha next year. An institute for research, education and training in diabetes will be set up with the help of Mayo's Clinic, U.S.A. My Government accords very high importance for the care of the aged, and proposes to start geriatric clinics and wards in the Medical Colleges and District Hospitals. The Health Department intends to invest Rs. 3.45 crores during 1998-99 for the purchase of modern equipment for Hospitals in the State. A Mental Health Authority has been constituted under the Mental Health Act in the State.

24. Efforts initiated by my Government in the last two years for the expansion and diversification of the State Public Sector Industries will be vigorously continued. The emphasis will be on professionalising management while at the same time improving their autonomy and accountability. A 'White Paper' on public sector undertakings is under preparation for presentation to the House. My Government proposes to enact a legislation that will ensure that potential investors will be able to obtain speedy clearances for their project proposals. The vital role of the small scale sector and traditional industries in providing employment opportunities in the State with comparatively small capital investment need not be overemphasised. My Government shall formulate and launch special programmes in selected sectors through trade and industry associations. The thrust of the Industrial Policy of my Government shall be to provide a conducive environment for industrial investment in the State. My Government recognises the role that industrial parks can play in the industrialisation of the State. New parks at Aroor, Alappuzha, Film Video Parks at Thiruvallam, Thiruvananthapuram and more Software Technology Parks are being considered. Government also proposes to open a Centre of Excellence in Information Technology with the active involvement of industry. To facilitate rapid industrialisation, Government has prepared a plan to set up industrial parks in all the 140 assembly constituencies. It is expected that work on 46 such parks can start in the year 1998-99. Industrialisation of Wyanad and Idukki Districts of Kerala will receive special attention.

My Government has initiated a massive programme of upgrading the existing road network in the State. A proposal for upgrading 1720 km. of State Highways and Major District Roads under the State Road Infrastructure Development Assistance has been formally posed to the World Bank for assistance. This will be taken up for implementation in the next financial year. The Public Works Department has taken significant measures for the development of major roads in Thiruvananthapuram city. The four-laning work assisted by Asian Development Bank from Aluva to Cherthala will be completed next year. A new bridge parallel to the existing Marthanda Varma Bridge at Aluva will be taken up for construction in 1998-99. Investigation for four laning from Aluva to Thrissur and Kollam to Thiruvananthapuram will be taken up in the next year. Action has been initiated for the construction of two Railway bridges at Padannakad and Pallikkara in Kasargode. Work on the Chovva—Nadal bypass will commence in May 1998. The State Government has been able to obtain sanction for the Quilandy deviation from Government of India. It is proposed to take up 47 bridges with NABARD assistance. My Government has accorded sanction for the construction of a new bridge across the Bharathapuzha at a cost of Rs. 10.80 crores. A special scheme for the development of roads leading to Sabarimala is being drawn up.

26. My Government realises the importance of developing the Inland Waterway System in Kerala and has set up a new Department of Coastal Shipping and Inland Navigation. Government of India has agreed to take up the development of the Kollam—Kottappuram reach of the West Coast Canal which has been declared as the National Waterway III. My Government has also proposed the extension of the National Waterway III from Kollam to Kovalam in the south and from Kottappuram to Kasaragod in the north.

27. The Kerala State Housing Board will continue to implement housing projects for the various sectors raising funds from financial institutions like HUDCO, HDFC and Banks. The Maitri Housing Scheme for the Economically Weaker Sections of society will be implemented with greater participation of voluntary organisations and local bodies. The Board will undertake projects worth Rs. 665 crores for various sections. It will also play a greater role in meeting the housing requirements of working women and single women by taking up construction of new hostels and schemes. The Housing Board will also undertake building tourism infrastructure by constructing wayside amenities, tourist cottages/complexes at places of tourist importance in the State.

28. My Government will develop the potential minor ports in the State by attracting private participation. A BOT agreement has been signed for the development of Chaliyam side of Beypore port. Selected minor ports will be provided modern communication, navigational and pilotage facilities. Slipway construction and improvement of workshop facilities will be undertaken in Neendakara and Beypore ports. Government is examining the proposals for two new ports at Kayamkulam and Neeleswaram, given their new importance with the construction of the Thermal Power Plant and the proposed petro-chemical plants in these places. A welfare scheme for safety and welfare of dock workers is under active consideration. An amount of Rs. 6.55 crores has been set apart for major capital expenditure which includes construction of a 100 metre wharf at Beypore, construction of breakwaters and other structures at Azhikkal.

29. In the area of school education, my Government is committed to the primary objective of the overall enhancement of quality. The comprehensive revision of curriculum in the primary classes reflects this concern for quality. Text books introduced in the districts under the District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) have been scientifically evaluated and modified for adopting them throughout the State in 1998-99. Teachers training programmes are being accorded great importance and the TTC curriculum is also being restructured to enhance the overall quality of the education in the State. My Government has already introduced computer education in selected schools and proposes to extend this coverage. The proposal to set up a Centre for Educational Technology at Thiruvananthapuram is under active consideration of Government. My Government proposes to introduce a programme "Mahila Samakhyā" financed by the Netherlands Government during the next financial year. My Government is happy to claim to be the first State to have taken up a state-wide continuing education programme. 400 continuing education centres will become operational with the help of local bodies during 1998-99.

30. My Government has initiated steps to delink the Pre-Degree course from colleges during 1997-98 and the process will be pursued as scheduled. Quality improvement programmes like refresher courses, workshops and training in computers are planned for the teaching faculty. Proposals to start more engineering colleges and polytechnics in the State and new courses in engineering colleges are being examined. Our Universities are now experiencing serious financial difficulties. Grants from Government alone have become inadequate to finance the various requirements of the Universities. A plan for making these Universities

more self-reliant by enhancing their internal resources is being formulated. The Higher Education Department has, as part of the Golden Jubilee Celebrations of Independence introduced a scholarship scheme through which the educational expenses of the top three rank holders in the Pre-Degree Examination from each University of the State who hail from families with incomes below Rs. 30,000 per annum will be met by Government. My Government will take all steps for the development of sports and encouraging sportsmen in the pursuit of their career.

31. In the wake of decentralised planning in the State, Panchayat level credit plans will be prepared and implemented. Importance will be given to strengthen agriculture, marketing and processing in the co-operative sector. Neethi Stores will be strengthened with NCDC assistance. My Government is considering the setting up of an independent agency in the form of a Vigilance Commission to deal with instances of corruption, misappropriation embezzlement in co-operative institutions.

32. My Government intends to create a Welfare Fund for workers related in fisheries related activities like fish curing, peeling, processing, distribution and sale through the Kerala Fishermen Welfare Fund Board. In order to study and evolve a strategy to conserve fisheries resources in the State and exploit the resources on a sustained basis, a Resources Management Society has been constituted. In view of the successful implementation of the People's fish culture programme with the support of the local bodies, a second phase of the programme (Janakeeya Matsya Krishi-Phase II) will be implemented in the State through ADAK. A project with an outlay of Rs. 20 crores for financial and service support to small entrepreneurs in the fisheries sector will be implemented with NCDC assistance. My Government also intends to launch a massive employment generation scheme for fisherwomen in ornamental fishery through MATSYAFED with a total outlay of Rs. 58 lakhs. In order to cater to the requirement for quality fish seed, District Fish Seed Farms with capacity of 5 million seeds each will be established in eight districts. It is also proposed to establish new fishing harbours at Muthalapozhi in Thiruvananthapuram District, Ponnani and Thalai. A net making factory at an estimated cost of Rs. 61.75 crores will be established in Kottayam with Japanese assistance. Matsya Bhavans will be established in more number of coastal panchayats in order to ensure single window clearance system for fishermen.

33. My Government intends to take up a massive afforestation programme in vacant areas in towns, cities and suburbs. A new programme 'Vanapriya' will be launched for the Adivasis of Kannur and Wayanad. Assistance will be given for propagating cultivation of medicinal plants through Adivasis in these areas. The profit realised will be ploughed back for the welfare and development of the Adivasi people. Final negotiation with the World Bank is now in progress for the Kerala Forestry Project.

34. My Government recognises the role of the Science, Technology and Environment Committee as catalyst in the advancement of the State. Plans are afoot to strengthen and augment the capabilities of the institutions under the department. Programmes in areas relevant to the State's problems like solid waste management, pollution control, water resources management, environmental management, value addition of agro-natural resources will be taken up in the institutions under the Science, Technology and Environment Committee. Specific rules will be framed keeping in mind the need for ensuring fair and equitable sharing of the benefits of biological diversity in the State, at the same time affirming the State's sovereign right over its agro/biological/geo-natural resources.

35. It is intended to distribute Film awards and T.V. awards through the proposed Kerala Film Academy from this year. The International Film Festival that is being conducted by the State will also be entrusted to the Kerala Film Academy. Steps will be taken on a top priority basis to declare reputed archaeological centres like the Padmanabhapuram Palace as "World Heritage Sites".

36. The ongoing and proposed activities of the Social Welfare Department would underscore the importance my Government attaches to serving the poor and under privileged sections of society. My Government intends to convert the State Institute for the Mentally Retarded into a National Institute. 43 new ICDS projects will be started in the State. It is proposed to start Juvenile Home for Girls at Ernakulam and a Saranalayam for patients suffering from cancer and deadly diseases. Production-cum-training centres for women will be set up in 15 places. The Kerala State Women's Development Corporation will undertake self-employment schemes for Rs. 5.45 crores. As a part of strengthening existing infrastructure, working women's hostels in Thiruvananthapuram and Kasaragod and a dormitory in Thrikkakara in Ernakulam will be started. A unit for manufacturing aids and appliances for the handicapped and a Vocational Training Centre

for ~~the~~ Handicapped at Ponnani in Malappuram District are also proposed to be started during next year. The activities of the Kerala Women's Commission will be substantially widened, and my Government will render full support to the Commission in its endeavour to ensure a better deal for women.

37. The President of India has accorded his assent to the bill abolishing the Revenue Board. The functions and duties of the Board will be decentralised. A comprehensive reorganisation of the Revenue Department to enhance its efficiency will be undertaken this year. My Government proposes to clear the pending excess land cases in a time bound manner and distribute the excess land to eligible beneficiaries.

38. My Government proposes to take early steps to constitute the State Human Rights Commission in pursuance of the Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993. State Legal Services Authority, District Legal Services Authorities and Taluk Legal Services Committees will soon be constituted under the Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987 to give free legal services to the eligible and weaker sections in the society.

39. My Government stands committed to address the problems of Non-Resident Keralites and their families. A new Department—Department for Non-Resident Keralites' Affairs has been set up. The new department has launched a widely welcomed social welfare scheme 'Pravasi Samiksha'. A field agency under this department for formulating schemes for the benefit of Non-Resident Keralites and their dependents is proposed to be created.

40. My Government proposes to extend the computerisation of offices under the Motor Vehicles Department to all offices. Regional Transport Offices will be provided with vehicles and necessary equipment to check pollution on the roads. My Government also proposes to improve boat facilities available in the State Water Transport Department. Kerala State Road Transport Corporation will undertake systematic action to reduce the accidents and improve its revenue collection. The Corporation proposes to modernise its workshops in a phased manner and introduce high-tech buses.

41. My Government intends to continue the 'Abkari Policy' that was adopted last year. The legislative amendments to enforce prohibition of arrack have been approved by this House. The enforcement machinery of the Excise Department will be strengthened. The peoples' committees constituted to help better enforcement of arrack prohibition have been expanded to include trade union representatives also.

42. Ration and risk allowance and day off allowances for the fire force personnel have been enhanced. Government have sanctioned the construction of a multi-storeyed Fire Service Complex and a well equipped and modern Fire Service Training Institute at Viyur in Thrissur.

43. Government have undertaken a number of welfare measures for the improvement of the living conditions of prisoners. Wages of prisoners have been revised. Upgrading four sub jails as district jails is under consideration of Government. Renovation of jail buildings has been undertaken with the assistance of Government of India.

44. My Government is undertaking construction of Court Buildings and residential quarters to provide accommodation for courts and their presiding officers. This includes the eight storeyed High Court Complex at Ernakulam. New courts and MACTs are being established on the basis of an approved priority list. Efforts have been made to revitalise and revamp the existing prosecution machinery in the State.

45. Let us all strive together to achieve the goal of taking Kerala as a progressive, prosperous, forward-looking State to the twenty-first century.

I wish your deliberations all success.