

MARCH 6, 1997

*Honourable Speaker and Honourable Members*

I welcome you to this Session of the Assembly. First of all, let me thank you for the warmth and the cordiality you have shown in welcoming me to this beautiful State of yours. I look forward to my service in this State in the years ahead.

2. Honourable Members must have familiarised themselves with the developments in national politics which should cause concern to all patriotic Indians. I am referring to the way in which what is called the globalisation of the Indian economy is creating havoc in our national life. The Havala case earlier, various other cases that are before the Courts and, finally, the revelations made by the Central Bureau of Investigations on the Bofors case and the Ocean Survey espionage case at Kochi, give reasons for apprehension that foreign multi-nationals are afforded the opportunity to actively intervene in our national economic life.

3. We are committed to uphold democracy and secularism and isolate caste and communal forces. Yet these dark forces have raised their ugly heads threatening peace progress and prosperity. My Government have taken every effort to put down this threat. Peace-loving people's diligence alone can fully isolate and defeat these forces. I hope you will concentrate your attention in this direction.

4. The Government of India is attempting to taking steps to see that more and more powers and financial resources are transferred to the States. My Government is committed to transfer more powers and resources from the State Headquarters to the Three-tier Panchayats and Urban bodies. My Government has decided to allot 40 per cent of plan resources from the State Centre to the Three-tier Panchayat bodies; elected Urban institutions like the Municipalities and the Corporations.

5. With this the face of planned development in the State will completely change. No more will it be a planning purely from above but from below as well as from above. The Three-tier Panchayat institutions the town municipalities and city corporations will therefore be in a position to formulate and implement their own plans.

6. For making this real, however, it is necessary to bring about some amendments in the Panchayat and Municipal Acts and existing Acts, Rules etc., as well as to bring about some reforms in the system of administration. My Government, therefore, is engaged in working out the modalities of amending the necessary Acts and bringing about desirable changes in the rules of business at the level of the State's administration.

7. The people's campaign for democratic planning from below has been a great success. Certain apprehensions entertained in some circles at the beginning of this people's campaign have been proved baseless. Far from bypassing the elected Panchayats and Urban bodies as was apprehended in some quarters, it was these elected bodies, working with the Gram Sabhas and Block Panchayats below, that formulated their own plans of development. For the first time in the State's history, people at the grass-roots level have been involved in the formulation of the Ninth Five Year Plan in their respective areas. I ardently hope that they will be as much involved in the actual implementation of the plan as they were in its formulation.

8. Processing of this planning from below has succeeded cutting across party, political as well as caste and communal barriers, people have voluntarily co-operated in the endeavour of people's planning. I take this opportunity to congratulate all those voluntary workers who acted as "resource persons" at the State, the District, the Panchayat and the Municipal levels for their self-less co-operation in making the people's plan a success.

9. My Government is committed to eradicate corruption in all levels of administration. Stringent action has already been taken by the Government in this direction.

10. My Government's functioning has gained people's approval, as witnessed by the massive mandate in the Thalassery and Punalur bye elections. Government will go forward with the people's support and fulfil the promises given to the people.

11. My Government has accorded the highest priority to live upto the mandate that the people of Kerala have given it. Nowhere else has this commitment been so fully expressed as in the efforts to prepare a Ninth Five Year Plan that fully reflects the hopes and aspirations of its people. The plan which is being formulated has its foundation built on the knowledge and experience of the people of Kerala backed up by the expertise of specialists. Task Forces and Steering Committees appointed by the State Planning Board have completed the work of reviewing the ongoing programmes and formulating the programmes for the next Five Year Plan. The Ninth Five Year Plan will target an ambitious growth rate of 7% to enable the State to catch up with the progress in the rest of the Country over the next five years.

12. The Annual Plan for this year 1997-98 has been prepared and lays emphasis on infrastructure development and basic minimum services specially housing, water supply and sanitation. It has an outlay of Rs. 2850 crores which shows a 29.5% increase in the last year's outlay of Rs. 2200 crores. The accent will be on early completion of ongoing schemes under Power and Irrigation. Adequate outlays have also been provided to Industries and Agriculture sectors.

13. To further strengthen the base of decentralised planning at the panchayat level, policy on land utilisation using remote sensing will be carried out. The State Land Use Board will be made a statutory body this year. 'Block Information Centres' with necessary computer facilities will be set up to disseminate information and provide statistical data to the local bodies.

14. As a prelude to the massive decentralisation and devolution of funds in the Ninth Five Year Plan, Rs. 214 crores have been provided to local bodies as untied funds this year. My Government recognises the need to introduce structural changes in governance at the local level. The interim recommendations of the Committee on Decentralisation of powers are being processed and the final recommendations of the Committee are expected in April, 1997. My Government believes that 'transparency is the best audit' and is committed to making offices at all levels, particularly those of the local bodies, *people friendly*. I am glad to announce the launching of a unique poverty eradication programme 'Kudumbashree' with a total outlay of Rs. 8.50 crores that will be implemented through neighbourhood groups of poor people. This programme is a thrift-and-credit-linked one which will strengthen the decentralisation process by reaching out to the poor, especially women. The Kerala Urban Development Corporation and the Kerala Rural Development Board will be restructured in the light of the decentralisation that is taking place. Sanitation with the full involvement of local bodies will be promoted vigorously and support for solid waste management will be provided in selected problem areas.

15. My Government accords the highest priority to assisting the weaker sections of society including scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, women, children, the destitute, orphans, handicapped and the aged. It is proposed to bring the entire State under the Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS). Homes for short stay will be started for women and girls in the State in selected places. My Government will take steps to evolve a State Policy on the Aged. The Kerala State Handicapped Persons Welfare Corporation proposes to set up a unit to manufacture aids and appliances for handicapped persons. Night shelters for street children will be opened in all important cities in a phased manner. Steps are being taken to set up district-level committees and panchayat-level 'Jagratha Samithies' to support the Women's Commission in its efforts to help women to meet the new challenges.

16. My Government has increased the income limit for educational concessions for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes students. Stipends and lump sum grants for them have also been substantially increased. The grant to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes people for the purchase of land and construction of houses have also been enhanced. Pooling of funds set apart for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes has resulted in better utilisation of funds. Steps are underway to set up a Tribal Hospital at Attappady and to open Model Residential Higher Secondary Schools at Munnar, Attappady and Wayanad.

17. I should specially mention that my Government proposes to constitute a State Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes on the pattern of the National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes to study the problems faced by Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and recommend

remedial measures. My Government stands fully committed to do everything in its power to prevent atrocities against Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes people. A Committee will be set up to monitor the proper implementation of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989. During the Ninth Five Year Plan an ambitious scheme of 'Shelter for All' to provide shelter to all landless and homeless Scheduled Castes Families will be launched. Various housing schemes for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes now being administered by various departments will be combined into a single scheme for more effective implementation. Nomadic Tribal Communities and Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes living in Purambokes and forest reserves will be brought under a settlement scheme. A World Bank assisted Health Scheme for Scheduled Tribes will be launched shortly. The Kerala State Development Corporation for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes will launch a scheme to provide Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes employees in Government, Banks and Public Sector Undertakings with housing loans at a concessional interest rate of 6%. The working of the Kerala State Development Corporation for Christian Converts and other communities will be revamped to make it serve the needs of the target groups better. The Kerala State Backward Classes Corporation will be further strengthened by opening five district offices next year.

18. In the current year, an amount of Rs. 161.19 crores has been earmarked for various Agricultural Development Programmes. My Government will expand the activities in the agricultural sector. As a novel step to increase employment opportunities for the youth and enhance agricultural production, 10 to 15 'Haritha Groups' with 20 members will be organised under each Krishi Bhavan. The produce raised by these groups will be sold through outlets of the Horticultural Products Development Corporation. Through this scheme my Government will organise 2.5 lakh youths who will be directly involved in agricultural production activities and thereby find self-employment opportunities in this field. Several measures are being adopted to reverse the declining trend in paddy cultivation. The absence of a large enough labour force for paddy cultivation is one causative factor. My Government intends to launch an Agricultural Worker's Bonus Scheme, whereby workers who are registered with Krishi Bhavans will be paid an agricultural bonus on the basis of the days that they have worked. A monthly pension scheme will be launched for farmers who have an annual income of less than Rs. 3000. My Government is already providing production bonus to paddy cultivators in order to sustain their interest in paddy cultivation considering the declining trend in paddy cultivation. It is proposed to extend a higher production bonus of Rs. 1000 per hectare to those farmers who produce more than a certain level of production per hectare which will be fixed by the Department. The programme of 'Vegetable villages' and marketing outlets will be extended to 9 distribution outlets 140 vegetable super markets and 500 mini shops. To modernise use of latest technology in agriculture a network of green houses will be established. An Agro Industries Development Corporation will be set up to encourage agro-based industries and an Agricultural Finance Corporation will be set up to improve credit availability in the agricultural sector. 'Green Parks' will be formed in three districts to organise agro-based industries and to cater to their marketing needs. 1500 new floriculture units will be set up new and improved varieties imported from abroad will be supplied at 50% subsidy and marketing facilities will be strengthened in this sector.

19. My Government recognises the importance of the Livestock Sector for the State. Production of milk during the Ninth Five Year Plan will be substantially stepped up through a multi-pronged strategy that focuses on enhancing productivity of cross bred cattle, increasing percentage of cross bred cattle and by systematic feed, fodder and management practices. The activities of MILMA will be strengthened and Dairy Co-operatives will be given an effective role in fodder management. Kerala Livestock Development Board will implement a pilot project to popularise artificial insemination in goats and the activities of hatcheries and nurseries and the Kerala State Poultry Development Corporation will be strengthened.

20. There have been remarkable achievements during this year in the implementation of Rural Development Programmes. Under Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP), 37000 poor families were assisted while the assistance per family rose to an unprecedented high of Rs. 17,812. My Government proposes to strengthen this poverty alleviation programme by providing market linkages from the State level to the Panchayat level. Rural Markets at Panchayat level will be established through Grama Panchayats. The Employment Assurance Scheme (EAS) has been extended to 60 blocks during the current year and will be further extended to all the blocks during the coming year. An ambitious campaign for 'Total Sanitation' which will have a far-reaching effect in improving the quality of life of the people of the State is on the anvil. 'Ganga Kalyan Yojana', a new scheme for providing water to agricultural families by providing tube wells and bore wells has been launched this year. This scheme will be extended to group farms and individual farmers next year with Government assistance and bank credit.

21. My Government has achieved considerable progress in the fisheries sector. The implementation of the Kerala Marine Fisheries Regulation Act has been strengthened. Single window clearances for supply and services by various agencies have been instituted. 'The Theera Jyothi Programme' to give electric lighting to fishermen has been launched. Assistance under the Group Accident Insurance Scheme for fishermen has been increased. A 'Nethra Jyothi Programme' to provide health care to fishermen has been introduced. Educational concessions to children of fishermen have been increased. The Savings-Cum-Relief Scheme discontinued by the previous Government has been reintroduced. The construction of Puthiyappa Fishing Harbour has been completed and construction of Fishing Harbours at Kattur, Pollathai and Punnapra has begun. Rs. one crore was distributed to riot victims at Vizhinjam for their rehabilitation.

22. My Government proposes to launch a massive 'Janakeeya Matsyakrishi' programme for extending fish culture to 10000 hectares with the active participation of local bodies. The Kerala Fishermen Welfare Fund Board will implement a new Welfare Scheme for the workers engaged in fish processing and marketing. Identity cards will be distributed to all active fishermen to enable them to avail assistance from Government and financial institutions.

23. Housing shortage in the State, particularly for the economically weaker sections of society, has worsened as a result of high land values and steep escalation in the prices of building materials. My Government has revised the unit cost of a house for Economically Weaker Sections from Rs. 26,400 to Rs. 30,000. It is also proposed to increase the allocation for purchase of land for distribution of house site pattas to landless persons in rural areas. The Maithry Housing Scheme for Economically Weaker Sections was launched by the Hon'ble Prime Minister of India on 1-11-1996. The scheme will provide shelter to one lakh beneficiaries. Beneficiaries of the Maithry Housing Scheme have also been exempted from paying registration fees. Government also proposes to reduce the process fee for loan application from 3% to 1.5% for the beneficiaries under the scheme. The limits for availing loans by LIG, MIG and HIG groups have been enhanced to Rs. 0.70 lakhs, Rs. 3 lakhs and Rs. 5 lakhs respectively. The Kerala State Housing Board will implement a scheme for forming sub-urban housing colonies in small plots of land varying from 50 cents to 1 acre to help decongest urban centres. It will also take up the construction of tourist cottages in important tourist centres.

24. My Government proposes to give Revenue Cards to all families in the State. These cards which will have statutory backing and will contain basic data about the family and will eliminate the need for approaching Government offices for certificates repeatedly. Survey of selected villages using aerial mapping and modern electronic equipment as a pilot project will be done and re-survey procedures will be restructured so that the work can be completed in three years. Computerisation of land records will be extended to twenty more taluks. Puramboke lands not needed by local bodies will be assigned to eligible occupants expeditiously. The special rules for assigning lands in urban areas will be amended to assign lands free of cost to occupants whose family income is less than Rs. 24,000. My Government is committed to give a record of rights within the next six months to tribals who are in occupation of lands inside forests after proper verification. 20000 acres of land taken over as surplus lands under the Land Reforms Act and earmarked for public purpose would be reviewed and lands which are not needed for public purpose will be distributed to landless agricultural labourers. My Government proposes to institute a monthly pension of Rs. 100 as a welfare measure for former land-owners affected by the Land Reforms Legislation.

25. The main accent in the industrial sector during the Ninth Five Year Plan will be on rehabilitation, expansion and diversification of the State Public Sector Units. Stress will be laid on professional management of public enterprises safeguarding their autonomy and at the same time ensuring their accountability. My Government intends to use the public sector enterprises as model for professional management. The major promotional agencies are gearing themselves for attracting large scale industrial investments from foreign and domestic financial markets. Projects of KINFRA and KSIDC will be completed expeditiously and efforts to market the plots will be intensified. The Technopark is continuing its several projects involving foreign investments with employment potential. It will set up an Innovation Centre to encourage local talent for innovation and entrepreneurship. Specialised trade and industry associations to implement special programmes designed to help solve problems of marketing and upgradation faced by Small Scale Units will be formed. A modernisation programme for the coir industry is being attempted with NCDC assistance. Cochin University for Science and Technology is working on a special programme for developing coir as a geo-textile

material. My Government will provide maximum employment in cashew factories by procuring nuts with the co-operation of the farmers. Detailed Project Reports for activities in sericulture are being prepared and silk weaving units will be set up to generate employment opportunities in this area. To encourage the handloom sector, my Government proposes to introduce Hank Yarn Subsidy Scheme and the Export Market Incentive Scheme.

26. My Government is considering an afforestation programme for two lakh hectares with trees of industrial and medicinal importance. The World Bank has been approached for assistance to implement a Kerala Forestry Development Project to improve the productivity of forests, An eco-development programme through the World Bank and Global Environment Facility in the Periyar Tiger reserve are in progress. My Government also proposes to strengthen the enforcement machinery of the Forest Department.

27. As a part of modernisation of the Motor Vehicles Department, all its offices will be computerised in a phased manner. This Department will also procure modern equipment like pollution-testing machines, radar and wireless sets. The State Water Transport Department intends to acquire new boats, extend boat services from Kasaragode to Parassinikadavu in Kannur district and improve wayside amenities for passengers. For the development of the Thiruvananthapuram Airport, 27 acres of land will be acquired during the first phase.

28. A massive action for computerising employment exchanges is on the anvil. The Ernakulam and the Thiruvananthapuram Employment exchanges will be taken up for computerisation first. Unemployment assistance has been raised to Rs. 80 from August, 1996.

29. My Government is seriously concerned over the continuing critical situation on the energy front. The situation indeed is extremely serious and my government is doing all that is possible to save the State from the power crisis. Power generated from the hydel reservoirs of the State and the share from Central power stations is grossly insufficient to meet the demand. This has necessitated imposing a power cut of 30% on industries and load-shedding for 30 minutes for non-industrial consumers. My Government is taking concerted steps to complete ongoing power projects. Lower Periyar Hydro Electric Project and the Brahmapuram Thermal Power Plant will be commissioned in 1997. The Kakkad Hydro Electric Plant and Peringalkuthu Left Bank Project will also be commissioned during the next year. My Government is in close touch with the NTPC on the progress of the Kayamkulam Thermal Power Project. Government have also entered into a Power Purchase Agreement with M/s. B.S.E.S. Ltd., for setting up the first private sector thermal power project in Kerala of 80 MW capacity in Udyogamandal. Steps have been taken to begin the preliminary work for the Kozhikode Diesel Plant. The policy of the State is to develop hydel potential to the maximum. A 50 MW Kuttiadi Extension Scheme with assistance from the Export Development Corporation of Canada and renovation of existing machinery at Pallivasal, Shengulam and Panniyar are to be taken up. My Government is taking active steps to get the environmental clearance for Athirappally and Kurfarkutty—Karappara hydro-electric projects from Government of India. Private parties will be entrusted with mini hydel projects.

30. My Government will take new initiatives in the power sector as decided in the meeting of the Chief Ministers convened by Prime Minister to draw up a common action programme. A grant of 13.8 million Canadian Dollars from Canadian International Development Agency has been received for studying the power sector in Kerala in detail. An Energy Management Centre has started functioning in the State this year. This centre will work on improving energy efficiency in the State through development of appropriate technologies and training in energy efficient technologies.

31. My Government is earnestly considering the implementation of minor irrigation schemes with farmers' participation at every level. Implementation of ongoing schemes will be carefully monitored involving peoples' representatives. The design and research wing of the department will be strengthened to enhance its capability to tackle operational problems at the field level. Training of farmers, members of farmers' Associations and technical personnel in modern water management practices will be initiated using the services of I.M.G. and C.W.R.D.M.

32. The Kerala Water Authority will give adequate importance to improving the quality of drinking water and the number of district level laboratories will be increased.

33. Kerala has a vast network of waterways. Its potential for transport of goods and passengers and for tourism has not been fully exploited. My Government will setup a separate department of Inland Navigation to develop the waterways and expand the infrastructure for inland navigation.

34. My Government is committed to developing a policy for the development of small and medium ports. Ports will be developed through private participation. Agreements have been entered into for the development of Vizhinjam and Beypore ports. An agreement with a private company for the development of Azheekal port will soon be finalised. The activities of the Kerala Maritime Development Corporation will be oriented to improve cargo movement in the ports.

35. My Government attaches the utmost importance to total quality improvement in education. A pilot project for in-service teachers' training with the co-operation of the local bodies has already been launched. Long overdue revision of the primary curriculum with a view to making it more child friendly and activity based has also been initiated. Requisite legislative measures and regulations to make pre primary education more scientific with the child's spontaneous development in focus are on the anvil. My Government proposes to set up a highly professionalised institution for educational management and training in addition to strengthening existing institutions like SCERT. Considerable progress has been made in the rather complex operation of de-linking the Pre Degree classes from the Universities. It is also proposed to introduce vocational orientation at the high school level with the option to branch off into vocational courses. My Government will adopt innovative schemes and strategies to combat the drop out problem and thereby help the State achieve the goal of universal secondary education. A well targeted and properly designed continuing education campaign will be launched in the State to consolidate the gains of the highly successful literacy campaign.

36. My Government proposes to start a new institute for Pharmaceutical Engineering with the assistance of All India Council for Technical Education. This unique institute will initially offer course in Pharmaceutical at the B. Tech and M. Tech levels. The Fine Arts Institutions at Mavelikara and Thrissur will be upgraded to the level of colleges of Fine Arts.

37. My Government had promised that it would stand by its assurance in the Election manifesto that 4 kgs. of rice will be distributed to all card holders through ration shops at Re. 1 less per kg., and that Kerala State Civil Supplies Corporation will intervene in the market to ensure price stability and check the price rise of essential commodities. I am happy to inform you that my Government has stood by these commitments. The distribution of 4 kgs. of rice per week at subsidised rates was commenced in August 1996 and the Civil Supplies Corporation has been distributing essential items at heavily subsidised rate through its market intervention scheme. The Maveli stores are once again emerging as "Relief Centres" to the vast majority of our people. My Government proposes to implement the new scheme of supplying 10 kgs. of rice at 50% of the Central issue price to families below poverty line. About 15 lakh families will be benefited by the Scheme.

38. My Government accords the highest priority to infrastructure development. It is proposed to avail of financial assistance from national and international funding agencies for road development. RITES has been given the task of conducting a Strategic Option Study for the State Highways and the major district roads. Once this study is completed by April 1997, the project will be posed to international agencies for financing. My Government is also considering the feasibility of a North-South Expressway from Kasaragod to Thiruvananthapuram to facilitate speedy communication and savings in time and costs. My Government plans to notify 18 important routes as new State Highways as part of upgrading the standards of the road network. My Government also proposes to introduce a State Highways Bill which envisages the creation of a State Highways Authority with the responsibility for the proper development, upkeep and maintenance of the State Highways. My Government has been able to secure sanction from NABARD for Rs. 35.56 crores necessary for completion of incomplete bridges within the next two years. It is also proposed to set up a Bridges Corporation to take up the construction of new bridge projects and attend to their maintenance. I am happy to inform this House that a Bailey bridge was successfully constructed in the place of the Ranni bridge that had collapsed; and that this vital route was restored well before the Sabarimala festival season. A new bridge at Ranni will be constructed in the course of one year. Several major road projects will be taken up during the course of the next year.

39. To ensure the proper working of the Medical College and the Hospital run by the Co-operative Hospital and Academy of Medical Sciences, these institutions were taken over through an ordinance.

40. My Government believes in the need to have a vibrant and democratic co-operative sector. A pilot scheme for organising self-help groups under the Primary Agricultural Credit Societies will be implemented in the State. Primary Societies will be selected to undertake extension activities entrusted to it by local bodies and thereby support decentralised planning and implementation. A comprehensive scheme to provide employment opportunities to women will be implemented through co-operatives. Credit Co-operative Societies will be exempted from the purview of the Chitty Act. A scheme for lending credit to economically weaker sections for construction of houses through Housing Co-operatives will be implemented.

41. Kerala has the unique distinction of having one of the best Science and Technology set-ups in the country with many autonomous R&D institutions and a separate Science and Technology Department. Plans are afoot to augment the capabilities and resources of these R&D centres. Government proposes to formulate a Science and Technology Resolution outlining the basic strategies for the next Five Year Plan. Being located in the tropics, Kerala is endowed with rich biodiversity in plants, natural as well as cultivated and animals. This genetic heritage has enormous potential for economic development which unfortunately has not yet been explored. Population increase and depletion of natural vegetation are posing severe threats, leading to extinction of many species for ever. So far, hardly any systematic effort has been made to catalogue the species, assess the potential and utilise them in the State. Urgent steps are necessary to prevent the State from getting disinherited of this great heritage. It is therefore proposed to set up a Biodiversity Board to advise the Government on conservation, preservation and sustainable utilisation of biodiversity in the State.

42. My Government intends to popularise cultural publications for the benefit of the common man. A Cultural Complex will be established in Thiruvananthapuram with assistance from Government of India. The modernisation of Chitranjali Studio will be expedited, C-DIT will be expanded to make it a premier institution in video technology and a Film and Video Park will be established under the Kerala Film Development Corporation.

43. My Government intends to formulate and announce a youth policy shortly.

44. My Government has constituted a separate department for Non-Resident Keralites' Affairs. The scope of the activities of the department will be further widened to meet the hopes and aspirations of non-resident Keralites and to attend to their various problems promptly and effectively. An NRI cell will be set up in the Kerala State Housing Board to give necessary advice and guidance to non-resident Malayalees for taking up house construction according to their requirements. A survey of the problems of Gulf-returnees will be undertaken.

45. Kerala has already become a popular international destination for tourists from all over the world. As a result of the tourism boom, Kerala Tourism Development Corporation is all set to completely wipe out their accumulated losses by this year. To mark the 500th year of landing of Vasco-da-Gama in India, 1998 will be declared as VISIT KERALA year. A new Ayurveda-Monsoon Package, a Comprehensive Backwater Tourism Management Project and Special Tourism Development Projects for the Muzhappilangad and Payyambalam beaches in Kannur and Palarivi-Thennala area of Quilon district are proposed.

46. The State has always been in the forefront in achievements in the health sector. However, factors like increase in longevity and reduction in infant mortality give rise to new issues. New challenges in health care have been thrown up as a result of the epidemiological transition that the State is going through. Though limited resources of the State constrain adequate investment in health infrastructure, my Government intends to mobilise external assistance for upgrading hospital care. The Asian Institute of Public Health in collaboration with John Hopkins University, Baltimore is to be set up in the State.

47. As you are aware, Kerala has won many laurels to our country in the field of sports. My Government proposes to take meaningful steps to encourage sports-persons to stay on in Kerala.

48. The incidence of labour unrest has dropped significantly. The new industrial relations climate in the State augurs well for its industrial growth. While the militant label unfairly attached to Kerala labour is fast fading away, the labour force in Kerala should be prepared to make some sacrifices to project a positive posture that will attract investments in the State. There is a well-oiled tripartite mechanism for conflict resolution in the organised sector. In the unorganised sector also, a number of settlements have been finalised for regulating working conditions. The Kerala Head Load Workers' Act, 1978 will be amended to rationalise the procedures for exercising control over workmen and establishments in the unorganised sector. In the wake of the recent Supreme Court judgement, a comprehensive action plan to eliminate child labour in hazardous employment and for rehabilitation of working children will be launched. A new scheme for giving a pension of Rs. 100 per month to the traditional Cigar Workers in Kozhikode and Kannur District will be introduced in the next year.

49. The ban on arrack has strictly been enforced during the last ten months. Among other things, people's committees at state, district, block and panchayat levels were constituted to render timely help to the authorities to successfully implement the ban. A lot of persons are being attracted to the calandestine flow of I.M.F.L. from neighbouring states as they find it an easy way of amassing money. This will in turn create grave social problems including the growth of antisocial elements which may ultimately emerge as underworld mafia gangs. My Government therefore proposes to take effective steps to prevent this unlawful activity. Moreover my Government proposes to amend the Abkari Act to give deterrent punishment to persons involved in the distillation, storage, transport and sale of illicit liquor particularly, to make the offence non-bailable and non-compoundable.

50. My Government accords the highest priority to maintaining law and order. Activities of goondas and antisocial elements in the major cities of the state have been substantially controlled. Attempts on several occasions to inflame communal passions in the name of religion have been thwarted successfully by far-sighted and vigilant action. A Police cell for the Women under the control of a lady IPS officer of the rank of Superintendent of Police is functioning. Women police cells have been formed in all district Headquarters. Adequate manpower has been provided for the effective functioning of police control rooms and squads. As part of the strengthening of the police department, more posts of Women police constables and head constables have also been created. A new Tourist police wing has been created to help tourists coming to Kerala. Compensation to the dependents of police personnel who lose their lives while on duty, has been enhanced to Rs. 1.5 lakhs. Preliminary construction works of the proposed Police Academy in Thrissur are in progress. Crimes against women and members of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes will be firmly dealt with. The courage and dedication of Sri Vijayan of Flying Squad in Thiruvananthapuram city and Sri Chandran, Police Constable in Quilon District who lost their lives while encountering criminals are shining examples of the commitment and devotion to duty of the Police force in the State. The enquiry of the Sooryanelly case is progressing satisfactorily. As part of the modernisation of Police force, stress will be laid on modern communications and computerisation and effectively linking up important police stations through a computer network. Five more courts have been sanctioned. Top priority will be given for construction of court buildings and residential buildings for judicial officers.

51. The Central Prisons of Thiruvananthapuram, Viyoor and Kannur and Open Prisons are being connected with Thiruvananthapuram on the computer network. The amenities in prisons are being improved in a phased manner:

52. It has been decided to open more-functional fire stations. A modern multi-storeyed complex will be constructed to accommodate the Fire Force Headquarters and Modern Fire Station for Thiruvananthapuram.

53. In conclusion, I would like to affirm that my Government shall strive continually to build up an economically progressive State, while at the same time building on and consolidating the high social standard and quality of life that the State has already achieved.

I wish your deliberations the very best.