



**GOVERNMENT OF JAMMU AND KASHMIR**

# **ADDRESS**

*BY*

**LT GEN (RETD) S K SINHA, PVSM**

**HIS EXCELLENCY THE GOVERNOR**

**TO THE**

**JOINT SESSION OF THE LEGISLATURE**

**MONDAY, 7<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY, 2008**

**Hon'ble Chairman of the Legislative Council, Hon'ble Speaker of the Legislative Assembly and Hon'ble Members**

1. It gives me immense pleasure to welcome you all to this Budget Session and address this august gathering of legislators. Let me also wish you a very happy new year.

2. The last one year has been truly satisfying for my Government as a number of initiatives taken during the year and the previous years have begun to show impressive results. It has been a year of both continuity and consolidation.

3. Within the State, the consolidation of the peace process is going on relentlessly. It is heartening to know that the year 2007 has witnessed the lowest number of militancy related incidents and civilian killings. Simultaneously, we acknowledge the excellent work done by our police, paramilitary forces and army for the restoration of peace and remember the sacrifices made by them. We also acknowledge the cooperation extended by the people of the State.

4. The commitment of my Government to the protection of human rights remains firm and unshakeable. We have practically achieved the goal of zero tolerance to violation of human rights. Prompt action has been taken by the Government whenever complaints were received.

5. The process of building up relationships between the divided parts of the State was set in motion with the start of the

bus service in April, 2005. Till now 2215 persons from our side and 3061 from POK have travelled across the LOC using the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad and Poonch-Rawlakote bus service. It is the vision and commitment of our leaders, Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh, UPA Chairperson Mrs. Sonia Gandhi, Jenab Mufti Mohammad Sayeed and the Chief Minister Jenab Ghulam Nabi Azad that made the bus service possible thereby dismantling the decades old wall of suspicion. Meanwhile, efforts are being made for opening of the Kargil-Skardu road as has also been recommended by the working group on 'Strengthening Relations Across the Line of Control'.

6. Notwithstanding the difficulties and recent unfortunate events in Pakistan, it is our fond hope that the Governments of India and Pakistan work together to build closer relationship between the people of the two countries to usher in an era of stability, peace and prosperity in the sub-continent.

7. On April 24<sup>th</sup>, 2007, the Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh convened the 3<sup>rd</sup> Round-Table Conference of the State leaders and other representatives at New Delhi to discuss the reports submitted by four out of the five Working Groups. It was indeed a historical event and ever since a process has been set in motion both at the levels of the State and Central Governments for implementation of the recommendations of the working groups. A Committee headed by the Union Home Secretary and comprising senior representatives of the State Government has been constituted to oversee and monitor the implementation of the said recommendations.

8. The three Round-Table Conferences afforded an excellent opportunity to various political parties and social groups of the State to express their views across the table. Unfortunately, certain groups chose to keep away from these conferences. My Government will be happy to welcome the participation of all shades of public opinion in the future dialogue process as dialogue is the only way forward for resolution of the problems.

9. The Common Minimum Programme (CMP) of the coalition partners lays due emphasis on building internal cohesion among the various regions of our State. Under the leadership of Jenab Mufti Mohammad Sayeed for the first three years and now under the leadership of Jenab Ghulam Nabi Azad, my Government has made every effort to promote internal cohesion and harmony. One of the CMP points related to the setting up of the State Finance Commission and towards that end the Commission was constituted in August, 2007 and has since begun to function.

10. My Government has taken a number of steps to make the administration transparent, corruption free and responsive to the needs of the people. Immediately after posting the Deputy Commissioners in the newly created districts, the Chief Minister visited the headquarters of all the 22 districts and in a face to face interaction with the officers gave them new guidelines for hearing and redressal of public grievances at the block and tehsil levels. It is a matter of satisfaction that the district officers have been actively implementing the new guidelines.

11. I am happy to inform you that all the eight new districts were operationalized in April, 2007 and Deputy Commissioners and some key officers posted. Funds have also been earmarked

for development of infrastructure in the new districts and posting of other officers and staff is in the offing.

12. In the two districts of Leh and Kargil, three new tehsils at Khaltsi, Nobra and Sankoo have been set-up in order to bring the administration closer to the people of these far-flung areas.

13. The economic and social development of our State remains the first priority of my Government. For the current financial year, the size of the Annual Plan is Rs. 4000 crore, excluding Rs. 850 crore under the PM's Reconstruction Plan (PMRP). For the next financial year, the plan size is projected at Rs. 4500 crore. This excludes around Rs. 1000 crore under the PMRP. Efforts are being continuously made to increase the capital component of the Plan outlay by way of transfer of revenue expenditure to the Non-Plan, as a result of which the capital component during 2008-09 is expected to increase by 23%.

14. The 11<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan i.e. 2007-2012, has been formulated with the objectives to (a) focus on the core sectors of agriculture, health, education, road connectivity, power and urban infrastructure, (b) attract private investment alongside the Government funding, (c) source maximum funds under the centrally sponsored flagship schemes like Prime Minister's Gram Sadak Yojna (PMGSY), Jawahar Lal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM), National Rural Health Mission (NRHM), Central Road Fund (CRF) and Sarva Shiksha Abhayan (SSA) etc., (d) focus on completion of ongoing projects/schemes so as to consolidate the benefits of investment and (e) focus on employment generation.

15. For the 11<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan (2007-2012), an outlay of around Rs. 25000 crore has been projected for the State, targeting a net growth rate of around 8% per annum as against the total outlay of around Rs. 14500 crore during the 10<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan (2002-2007).

16. The Coalition Government has given highest priority to infrastructure development and registered notable achievements. Therefore, it will be appropriate to term the last five years as an 'Era of Infrastructure Development'.

17. I will now highlight some of the major achievements of my Government :

18. Under the road communication sector in the State, 277 PMGSY road projects constituting a length of 1026.73 kilometers and costing Rs. 315.22 crore were under execution as on December, 2006. During 2007, 143 new road projects constituting a length of 1152.83 kilometers and costing approximately Rs. 531.22 crore were got sanctioned. Out of the above, 107 projects have been completed adding 257 kilometers of new length. In addition, a road length of 335 kilometers under 29 rural road upgradation projects is expected to be sanctioned for blacktopping by the end of March, 2008 at an approximate cost of Rs. 198.20 crore.

19. Due to the efforts of my Government, new projects costing Rs. 831.82 crore are expected to be sanctioned by NABARD by or before March, 2008 out of which Rs. 333.63 crore have already been sanctioned up to December, 2007.

20. Under the Central Road Fund, projects worth Rs. 180.46 crore were sanctioned in 2007, which is the maximum in any given year till date and for the first time, one project, namely Basohli – Bhaderwah – Chamba road, costing Rs. 79.97 crore, was sanctioned under Inter-State connectivity. In addition, Rs. 600 crore have been approved by the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways for flyovers and infrastructure development for Jammu and Srinagar cities.

21. I am happy to inform that in the first ten months of the year 2007 about 1000 kilometers of road length were blacktopped with an expenditure of about Rs. 60 crore.

22. Few projects which deserve special mention are : the Rs. 255 crore Mughal Road Project, the National Highway By-Pass Project, Srinagar which is likely to be completed by June, 2008, Kokernag-Warwan-Marwah Road, likely to be made motorable in 2008, the Gandoh-Bhaderwah Road and Akhnoor Bridge over river Chenab being constructed by the BRO and to be completed by the middle of 2008. The State Government has got two prestigious bridge projects at Meramandrian near Akhnoor on river Chenab and at Nowshera sanctioned under the Central Road Fund. The geological survey for the proposed tunnel across Zojila is in full swing. The tunnel will ensure round the year connectivity to the Ladakh region.

23. Some of the important bridges likely to be completed in 2008 are: Chhati Padshahi in Baramulla, Bemina and Tengpora in Srinagar, Ganpat over river Chenab in Doda, Chadoora and

Lasjan in Budgam, Behni nallah in Kathua and Mughalpora in Kupwara. The Utterbeni Bridge near Jammu was completed during the current financial year.

24. On an average, 1 kilometer of road has been added, 2 kilometers have been blacktopped, 10 running meters of bridge and 4000 square feet of new buildings constructed every day during 2007 in the R&B sector.

25. Work on the Assembly Complex Project at Srinagar, resumed during 2007, is likely to be completed by the middle of 2008 at a cost of Rs. 22 crore.

26. Under the PHE sector, about Rs. 456 crore is being spent during 2007-08 under the Accelerated Rural Water Supply Programme and Minimum Needs Programme to cover a total of 3068 hitherto uncovered habitations. Construction of 587 filtration plants is also likely to be completed during the same period. An additional capacity of 12.25 million gallons per day is being added to Rangil and Doodganga Water Supply Schemes at a cost of Rs. 70.18 crore for Srinagar and 14 MGD to Sitlee Filtration Plant for Jammu at a cost of Rs. 38.14 crore. Phase-I of the Sitlee Plant is expected to be completed during the current month. New projects costing Rs. 338.74 crore for Srinagar and Rs. 290 crore for Jammu have been submitted to the concerned Ministry in the Government of India for funding under JNNURM. The Water Filtration Plant Tangnar, Srinagar stands already sanctioned for Rs. 148 crore.



27. With a view to create additional irrigation potential, the work on 28 major/ medium irrigation schemes and 463 minor irrigation schemes, which include 77 new schemes sanctioned during the current year, is in progress.

28. Work on the anti-erosion and flood protection projects for Jhelum and the Tawi riversn has been taken up by the Flood Control Department. Beautification of the river front is expected to attract tourists and morning walkers.

29. The last two decades have witnessed a substantial increase in the urban population of the State which is now 25% of the State's total population. The centrally sponsored scheme of JNNURM has provided a fine opportunity for creation of infrastructure and provision of basic services in the urban areas. My Government has been able to get projects worth Rs. 1594 crore sanctioned which include Rs. 519 crore for the two Mission cities of Srinagar and Jammu and the balance for infrastructure development and provision of services in other towns of the State. The Government has already received Rs. 160 crore as the first installment of the central share against these sanctioned projects.

30. The implementation of the Rs. 298 crore Dal-Nagin Lake Conservation Project has indeed become a big challenge. A notable achievement has been the sanction of the Housing Colony Development (Phase-I) at Rakh-i-Arth at a cost of Rs. 95 crore for resettlement of the Dal dwellers. There is an additional requirement of Rs. 323 crore for compensation and dredging

which has now been agreed to by the Ministry of Environment on the kind intervention of the Hon'ble Prime Minister.

31. With a view to protect the environment and deal effectively with the growing menace of pollution from non-biodegradable material, an Act titled 'Jammu and Kashmir Non-biodegradable Material (Manufacture, Handling and Disposal) Act, 2007' was passed during 2007.

32. The pace of work on the Economic Reconstruction Agency (ERA) projects has also picked up. The Agency is on course to meet the targets set by the Asian Development Bank (ADB). Under ADB loan-1 of 250 million US dollars, the Agency has awarded 58 sub-projects costing Rs. 801 crore whereas 26 sub-projects costing Rs. 354 crore have been tendered and are in the process of being awarded. The projects are mainly in the water supply, drainage and road & bridges sectors. Two more loans for 300 million US dollars under the J&K Urban Sector Development and Investment Programme for Jammu, Srinagar and important regional towns from 2008 onwards and for 200 million US dollars for Rural Road Projects from 2009 onwards are in the pipeline. In fact, the first tranche of 42 million dollars of the second loan of 300 million dollars was signed very recently at Delhi. Due to the persistent efforts of the Chief Minister, the Central Government has agreed to provide the counterpart funding of loans as additional central assistance with 90% component as grant.

33. It is a matter of satisfaction that the Baglihar Hydroelectric Project (450 MW) will be commissioned by the middle of 2008. Meanwhile, the work on Nimmo-bazgo Hydro-electric Project in

District Leh and Chutak in District Kargil is going on in full swing to ensure their early completion and commissioning.

34. In the Power sector, 13 Grid Stations of 540 MVAs, 7 major transmission lines of 220/132 KV, 4053 kilometers new transmission lines of 33/11KV, 34 receiving stations (163 MVA) and 2410 distribution sub-stations are proposed to be completed during 2007-08 and 2008-09 under Accelerated Power Development and Reforms Programme (APDRP) and PMRP. 125 feeders have been fully metered and the consumers are being provided round-the-clock power supply.

35. The power supply position in the State has become better than last year in spite of the fact that there has been a sharp decline in hydropower generation due to the continued dry spell. During the current year, on an average, 260 lac units per day(LUS/day) as against 240 LUS/day during the last year are being supplied, which is 10% higher.

36. Under the Infrastructure Development Plan for the Health sector, 142 health institutions at district, tehsil and block levels are being upgraded and services up-scaled as per the Indian Public Health Standard norms. The plan envisages establishment of a 200-bedded hospital at each of the 22 district headquarters, 50-bedded 61 sub-district hospitals (SDHs) at the tehsil level and 30-bedded community health centres (CHCs) at the 59 block headquarters. Consequent upon this, 8000 beds will be added by the year 2012.

37. Out of the 336 projects/works presently under execution at a cost of Rs. 548 crore, 61 projects will be completed during the current financial year and 43 during 2008-09. Some of the major

projects likely to be completed during the current financial year are OPD blocks at Kulgam, Kishtwar, Doda, Sopore, Baramulla, Sarwal, Handwara ; CHC/SDH building complexes at Samba, Ramgarh, Khansahib, Seer Hamdan, Chrar-i-Sharief ; Trauma Centres at Qazigund and Ramban and a Psychiatric Hospital Block at Srinagar. The Academic block of the Indira Gandhi Government Dental College, Jammu was inaugurated last month.

38. The major projects likely to be completed during the next financial year include 200-bedded Paediatric Block in SMGS Hospital, Jammu, additional Emergency Block of GMC, Jammu, Attendants Sarai, Jammu, Boys and Girls Hostel Blocks of Dental College, Jammu, Oncology Block of GMC, Srinagar, OPD Block of CD Hospital, Srinagar, IPD Block at Poonch, AMT School, Udhampur, refurbishing of Lalla Ded Hospital, Srinagar, Trauma Centres at Leh, Kargil, Mahanpur, Thathri and Gund.

39. While the work on the Rs. 120 crore Pradhan Mantri Swasthya Suraksha Yojana (PMSSY) project for upgradation of Medical College, Jammu to AIIMS level has been started, the work on the project at Shireenbagh, Srinagar is being taken up shortly. J&K is the first state in the country to start the work under PMSSY.

40. Indira Gandhi Government Dental College, Jammu has been recognized by the Dental Council of India, increasing its seats from 20 to 50. MDS course has been introduced for the first time in Dental College, Srinagar.

41. In the School Education sector, construction of over 2000 primary and middle school buildings and 2500 additional class rooms is in progress and expected to be completed by the end of

the current financial year except in snowbound and inaccessible areas. About 250 school buildings and 622 class rooms have already been completed during the current financial year.

42. The implementation of the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) scheme is going on in full swing. Emphasis at the primary and middle levels has led to a decrease in the drop-out rate and improvement in the gender ratio. The mid-day meal scheme has been extended to the upper primary level in the educationally backward blocks.

43. For training of our teachers and continuous upgradation of their skills, the State Institutes of Education at Srinagar and Jammu are being up-scaled to the level of State Council for Educational Research and Training and State Institute of Educational Management and Training, respectively. The College of Education at Srinagar is being up-scaled to the level of Institute of Advance Studies. Two new Colleges of Education and 8 new District Institutes of Education are in the pipeline.

44. A Computer Education Plan to cover 200 additional higher secondary schools at a cost of Rs. 13.40 crore has been cleared by the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India.

45. To ameliorate the difficulties faced by the college going youth, the Government has recently approved the opening of 18 new Degree Colleges in the State.

46. Similarly, buildings for a number of degree colleges are under construction. It is expected that 14 new college buildings will be completed during 2007-08 or by middle of the year 2008.

47. In the Technical Education sector work on Phase-II of the College of Engineering & Technology at Jammu, costing Rs. 30 crore, is likely to be completed by middle of the year 2008. Seven ITI buildings presently under construction are also likely to be completed during 2008. A project worth Rs. 37 crore for upgradation of the existing ITIs has been sanctioned by the Ministry of Labour & Employment, Govt. of India. Work has already begun at certain places.

48. Construction of the new building for the SPS Library at M. A. Road, Srinagar, estimated to cost about Rs. 17.34 crore has been started. The work on the Rs. 28 crore new Museum Building at Srinagar, started in 2007, is likely to be completed by the middle of 2008.

49. With a view to address the problems of the disadvantaged sections of society, including children, widows, old and infirm, my Government is implementing the target group welfare schemes with great earnestness.

50. About 4,25,224 students belonging to SC, ST, OBCs, Pahari Speaking People and Physically challenged categories are receiving pre and post-matric scholarships for which an amount of Rs. 14.14 crore has been earmarked for the period 2007-08.

51. The ST Girls Hostel at Women's College, Srinagar and ST Boys Hostel at Government Degree College, Anantnag, with an intake capacity of 100 students each, are likely to be completed during 2007-08. Work on the SC Girls Hostel at Rajouri and SC Boys Hostels at Kathua, Rajouri and Udhampur is in progress.

52. The Government has decided to amend the J&K Reservation Act, 2004 to raise the percentage of reservation in promotions in respect of scheduled castes and scheduled tribes with a view to give these disadvantaged sections of society adequate representation at different levels in the administration.

53. An amount of Rs. 85.33 crore under the Integrated Social Security Scheme (ISSS) is being disbursed as pension to the widows, oldaged and physically challenged persons during the current financial year. While 6856 anganwari centres out of 8317 sanctioned under PM's Reconstruction Plan and PM's Employment Package have been established during the last four years creating jobs for 12787 workers/helpers, the balance 1461 and the newly sanctioned 6711 centres are expected to be established during the current and the next financial year with the potential to create jobs for over 16344 workers/helpers.

54. The flagship programme of National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS) is now being implemented in 9 out of 22 districts. The objective of implementation of the Scheme is to provide at least 100 days of guaranteed employment to each rural household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled and manual work. The scheme has been notified by the Government of India for extension to all the districts of the State with effect from April, 2008.

55. All the 119 Model Villages taken up under the PMRP are expected to be completed by the end of the current financial year.

56. The Roshni scheme, after reformulation by my Government, has started showing good results. Over 2.45 lac applications have

been received for vesting of ownership rights. An area of 1.52 lac kanals has already been approved for vesting of rights.

57. Production in the Agriculture sector has been continuously increasing due to the adoption of modern farming practices and use of high yielding varieties of seeds. In this regard, my Government is facilitating the work of the farmers by providing technical expertise and assistance under various departmental schemes.

58. The annual fruit production is touching around ten lac tonnes. The income to the growers from fresh/dry fruits is estimated to have crossed Rs. 2000 crore.

59. Saffron and floriculture have now been included under the centrally sponsored scheme for Integrated Development of Horticulture. With a view to expand the floriculture activities to all parts of the State, separate Directorates of Floriculture have been created for the two Divisions during 2007-08.

60. Under the Sericulture sector, cocoon production in the State was recorded at 832 metric tonnes in 2006-07. Our State is fast becoming the leading bivoltine cocoon producing state in North India with the promise to become a major source of income for our growers.

61. A fair portion of the State GDP is contributed by the Animal/Sheep Husbandry sector. Notable achievements during the 10<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan i.e. 2002-07 have been registered in milk, mutton, wool, egg and poultry meat production. Introduction of Dorper breed of sheep is intended to increase mutton production. A new centrally sponsored scheme, 'Livestock Insurance', to bring



high yielding cows/buffaloes under insurance cover has been launched.

62. While work in the Fisheries sector is progressing well, an Aquarium-cum-Awareness Centre at Bagh-i-Bahu, Jammu was commissioned in July, 2007.

63. Since 2002, over Rs. 2500 crore investment has been made in the State in the industrial sector generating employment for around 20,000 persons. Similarly, employment for about 1.62 lac persons has been generated under the small scale sector and KVIB. With the efforts of my Government, the Income Tax exemption/transport subsidy applicable upto March, 2007 for new industrial units has been extended by Government of India beyond the cut-off date.

64. In order to ensure balanced industrial development in the State and to promote industrial activity in the far-flung areas, separate Directorates of Industries and Commerce have been created for the two Divisions.

65. The new cement plant of 600 tonnes per day capacity at Khrew in Pulwama is being completed well before the target period of 18 working months expiring in June, 2008.

66. My Government organized an International Buyer-Seller meet at Srinagar during October, 2007 which was a huge success. A few handicraft products like Kani Shawl, Sozni Shawl and Kashmir Pashmina are being registered under the Geographical Indicators Act to protect them from fakes in the market.

67. The Government of India has approved the setting up of an International Trade Centre at Pampore which will be fully funded by it.

68. The decade old lingering issue of the claims of the furriers whose stocks had been inventorised in 1997, prior to the amendment of the J&K Wildlife (Protection) Act, has been resolved during 2007.

69. The overall tax revenue realization under the VAT system has recorded a growth of more than 35% ending October, 2007 compared to the corresponding period of last year. The performance of the State in the switch over to VAT has been hailed even at the level of the Empowered Committee of the Finance Ministers of the State Governments which met in Srinagar last summer. Those State officers and officials who have worked hard to make this possible deserve our appreciation. We must also acknowledge the cooperation extended to the Government by the traders and entrepreneurs in this regard.

70. Revival of tourism has been one of the major achievements of the coalition Government. The yearly tourist inflow over the last five years and the Pilgrim tourism has also registered a phenomenal increase thereby generating substantial employment opportunities.

71. Infrastructure development work has taken off in all the newly created Tourism Development Authorities. The extended Golf Course at Pahalgam and upgraded Golf Course at Gulmarg will be made functional by mid 2008. Similarly, the Phase-I of the new Golf Course at Sidhra, Jammu is expected to be completed

by September, 2008. The Department of Tourism is preparing an action plan for the conservation of Heritage Monuments and sites to promote Heritage Tourism. A case in point is the renovation and restoration of the Mubarak Mandi Complex at Jammu, work on which has already started.

72. National Winter Games are being held at Gulmarg during February, 2008. Hundreds of skiers and tourists are expected to visit during this period. It is a matter of pride that the All India Football Federation has chosen J&K as the venue for holding the Santosh Trophy Tournament, 2008.

73. Another major achievement of my Government is the completion of the prestigious Haj House at Bemina, Srinagar, in a record time of one year with immigration, customs check and other pre-boarding facilities which has proved to be of great relief for the Hajjis.

74. Funds have been sanctioned and land identified for the construction of a Yatri Niwas at Jammu.

75. To improve the living conditions of the migrants, work on the construction of Rs. 294 crore project for 4218 flats at Jagti, Nagrota, started in September, 2007, is going on in full swing. The flats are expected to be completed during 2009-10. 1024 flats taken up for construction during 2005-06 at Jammu are almost complete. However, my Government is committed to facilitate the permanent return of the Kashmiri Migrants to their homes and hearths in Kashmir as expeditiously as is safe and appropriate.

76. The State Government is keen to address the problems being faced by ex-servicemen and towards that end has

constituted a Cabinet Sub-Committee to look into their problems. The Sub-Committee has submitted its report which is under consideration.

77. With a view to empower the local self-government institutions, my Government has already enhanced the monthly honorarium of the Municipal Councilors and Corporators. Similarly, with a view to revitalize the age old Numberdari and Chowkidari institution in the villages, the honorarium of the village Numberdars and Chowkidars was also enhanced during the current financial year.

78. Vacation of Government buildings by the army is being pursued with the result that almost all the buildings belonging to the Education, Health and PHE Departments have been got vacated. On the request of the State Government and with the personal intervention of the Chief Minister, the Ministry of Defence has agreed to increase the rent of land hired by the army. This was a long pending issue.

79. The Transport Department is shortly introducing 'Passenger Welfare Fund' for providing immediate relief to the accident victims and dependents of the persons killed. The department has also decided to issue driving licences and motor vehicle registration certificates using Smart Card Technology to replace the present system.

80. The problem of unemployment among the youth of the State has been engaging our attention and towards this end my Government is keen to formulate a new employment policy. A

Cabinet Sub-Committee has already been constituted to examine the various issues pertaining to unemployment.

81. Hon'ble Members, this is going to be the last Budget Session in the present term of the Government. This is a time for honest introspection and realistic appraisal. Each political party has its own agenda and is entitled to pursue that by mobilizing public opinion in its favour. The partisan considerations of politics are a part of democratic life. However, there are occasions in the task of nation building, when we are all required to rise above our partisan considerations and pool our moral and material resources for a greater common good. This year presents such an occasion and I trust that you will not be found wanting in this challenge.

82. As is natural on this occasion, I feel impelled to look back at the overall performance of my Government during its present term. I do so with a sense of realistic appreciation and achievement. The task before my Government and the challenges it faced were stupendous and required great vision and sense of purpose on the part of its functionaries. I will not say that we have achieved everything we wished to or ought to have to meet all the aspirations and expectations of our people. Nevertheless, we successfully steered through a bold and comprehensive intermediate stage of nation building. We have not only laid down a strong, stable and sustainable foundation of a peaceful and prosperous society but have also made commendable progress in the development of infrastructure, both social and physical. As a result of our combined endeavours, our achievements have universally impacted on the people of the State and substantially improved their standard of life. As a concomitant of this process,

people have developed a sense of belonging and their feeling of alienation has diminished. However, while this entailed a corresponding increase in their impulse for participation in the democratic process, it simultaneously raised their expectations. Meeting those expectations is a daunting task but we must not fail them.

83. Ladies and gentlemen, as I look forward to the future I see a happy era dawning on the horizon. This cannot be possible without the cooperation of the people who are key to the process of restoration of peace and economic development and who are our ultimate sovereigns. I expect that my Government will summon all its moral and material resources and ascend the scales of performance steadfastly, both in qualitative and quantitative terms as the future unfolds before us. Our ultimate objective is to establish and consolidate a society that is peace-ful and prosperous, harmonious and cohesive, forward-looking and all-inclusive. Towards that goal of hope and enterprise, I beckon you with humility and confidence.

84. I wish you again a happy and prosperous new year.

‘Jai Hind’