



**Government of Tripura**

**ADDRESS**

to the  
**Tripura Legislative Assembly**

by  
**Dr. D. Y. Patil**  
**Governor of Tripura**

**Friday, March 4, 2011**

Hon'ble Mr. Speaker and Hon'ble Members,

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to the first session of the Tripura Legislative Assembly in the year 2011. I take this opportunity to convey my best wishes to all of you and to the people of Tripura. I am sure that Tripura will continue its steady march on the path of peace and prosperity.

2. I request all the Hon'ble Members of the House to join me in paying tribute to the men in uniform who made the supreme sacrifice in the call of duty as well as the civilians who lost their lives in the mindless violence unleashed by the terrorists, extremists and other divisive forces.

3. During the year, we all were honoured by the visit of Her Excellency Dr. Pratibha Devisingh Patil, the President of India, to the State, on the occasion of the 8<sup>th</sup> Convocation Ceremony of the Tripura Central University. The inspiring words of the President of India during her address on the occasion of the civic reception at Agartala Town Hall and the convocation ceremony at the University shall continue to guide us on the path of development.

4. The recent developments in Egypt reflect the deep urge of the people for democracy and for freedom from tyrannical rule. This is a significant development. The unprecedented upsurge of the people that has already liberated Tunisia and Egypt from their authoritarian rulers, holds the potential to engulf the entire Arab World and beyond. People want to have control over their destinies. These developments also have a message for all of us that suppression of democracy and dictatorial actions of any ruler will not be tolerated by the people for a long time.

5. The World continues to suffer from the ill effects of the economic recession triggered by the inherent flaws of the capitalist system. The recession that started in December, 2007 is far from over. It is estimated that about ten million jobs were lost in the United States due to recession and even now, the unemployment rate in the U.S. continues to be around 10%. India has also been badly hit by this recession and a recent study shows that the unemployment rate in India has risen to about 9.4%. What is worse is that persistent pressure is being put on India for adopting the detrimental and discredited policies of liberalisation and privatisation under the garb of so called 'globalisation'. India

is being pressurised to open up the retail sector to Foreign Direct Investment. It is estimated that the Indian Retail Sector, which is largely in unorganised sector, provides jobs to about four crore people (which is next only to agriculture). . The operations of foreign retail giants like Wal-Mart are highly capital-intensive which may result in loss of large number of jobs in the Country. India needs to evolve its own job-oriented development model rather than blindly following the prescriptions of so called 'liberalisation' being dictated by the World Bank, IMF and WTO.

6. A very serious and burning issue before the Nation is that of inflation, especially the food inflation. The food inflation was at a shockingly high level of 21% in April, 2010 and continued to remain as high as 17.05% for the week ended 22<sup>nd</sup> January, 2011. Worse still, the food inflation has remained at very high levels for last about 5 years. It is high time that for controlling the food inflation, the Government of India takes effective measures including universalisation of Public Distribution System, banning of the system of 'futures trading', strengthening the Essential Commodities Act to firmly deal with illegal hoarding and providing 'food security for all'.

7. As the Hon'ble Members of the House are aware, a series of corruption scandals have rocked the Nation during last few months. The numerous scams like the 2G Spectrum Scam, Commonwealth Games Scam, Adarsh Housing Society Scam, IPL Scam, the Land Scam in Karnataka, etc. involve political leaders, bureaucrats, army officers, sports authorities and corporate houses, i.e., almost all the people in positions of power and authority from whom the common citizens expect high level of integrity. So much so that the institutions designed to check corruption, namely, the Chief Vigilance Commissioner and some sections of Judiciary have themselves become subject matter of controversy. The public anguish against such blatant corruption is so high that the common people are coming out on streets in a number of cities across the Country and demonstrating against corruption.

8. This House is aware that the Government of India has embarked on a detrimental policy of disinvestment of equity in profit-making public sector undertakings. The recent sale of 10% equity in Coal India saw Foreign Investors lining up to buy a stake. The Government of India has also announced the decision to sell equity in a number of other profit-making PSUs as well. The Hon'ble Members would agree that the public sector has played an

important role in the economy of our Country. The ownership and management of the PSUs should continue to remain with the Government. The policy of disinvestment in profit-making PSUs should be discontinued and the policy of disinvestment in respect of other PSUs should be reviewed in the greater interest of the Country.

9. My Government has an impeccable record of prudent financial management. The State Government has not gone into overdraft during last 11 years. The State Government enacted the FRBM Legislation in the year 2005 and has consistently achieved the FRBM targets during last 4 years. However, the inadequate Award of the 13<sup>th</sup> Finance Commission has put the State in an extremely difficult position. The Finance Commission did not even accept the committed salary and pension liabilities of the State and sanctioned Non-Plan Gap Grant of Rs. 4,453 crores only (over a 5-year period) as against the requirement of Rs. 14,712 crores. The Non-Plan Gap Grant sanctioned by the Finance Commission is even lower than the Grant of Rs.5,494 crores provided to the State during the 5-year period under 12<sup>th</sup> Finance Commission. The numerous requests of the State Government to the Government of India for providing additional support have not yielded any results. I would urge upon the Government of India to provide necessary support to enable the State Government to carry on its developmental activities in a smooth manner.

10. Against this backdrop, a silver lining has been the visit of Dr. Dipu Moni, Her Excellency the Foreign Minister of Bangladesh, to Tripura during November, 2010. The visit has raised the hopes for further strengthening of the relations between Tripura and Bangladesh and for expeditious implementation of the agreements signed by India and Bangladesh during the visit of Her Excellency the Prime Minister of Bangladesh to India in January, 2010. In fact, the progress so far has been quite encouraging. The Bangladesh Government has already declared Ashuganj as Port-of-Call and all necessary steps are being taken for bringing the equipments for Palatana Power Project through Ashuganj Port. A Joint Indo-Bangla Team has already suggested the alignment for Agartala-Akhaura Rail Link and further steps are being taken. Similarly, a team of Bangladesh officials has visited the State for finalising the alignment of the bridge over Feni River, which will facilitate access to the Chittagong Port. My Government is conscious of the fact that expeditious implementation of these agreements has the potential to make Tripura the 'Gateway to the North-East'

and transform the economy of the State and has, therefore, been vigorously following up the matter.

11. While some other parts of the Country continue to be plagued by extremist violence, my Government has set an example by effectively dealing with the extremist problem by adopting two-pronged strategy of accelerating the development process and effective security operations against the extremists - with the active involvement of the people. The number of extremist incidents declined from 305 in 2003 to only 22 in 2010. However, the State Government is not complacent in the matter and continues to make efforts to eliminate the extremist problem from Tripura. In this respect, my Government has sought the support of Government of India, inter-alia, by way of sanction 2 additional IR Battalions, re-deployment the 3 CRPF Battalions withdrawn from Tripura, expeditious completion of the work of border fencing on Tripura-Bangladesh border and deployment of 4 to 5 additional battalions of BSF. The Government of India has also been requested to take up the matter with the Government of Bangladesh, so that the extremists are not allowed to operate from the Bangladesh soil. The general law and order situation in the State also continues to improve day-by-day.

12. Continuous presence of over 34,000 Reang refugees who migrated from Mizoram and are staying in our State for over 14 years has been giving rise to financial, social and law and order related situations. Our Government has been providing all the support for repatriation of these families. However, the progress has been extremely slow. I would urge upon the Government of India to resolve the matter so that these families are repatriated with respect and honour to their places of original residence at the earliest.

13. My Government has been continuously working for the all-round development of the State and for raising the standard of living of the people by adopting the "Approach to the People's Plan" as the core of planned development. The developmental priorities of my Government include agriculture and allied activities, drinking water supply, housing, road connectivity, rural electrification, education, health, poverty alleviation and generation of employment.

14. Tripura has a strong tradition of democracy at the grass-root level. The State has 3-tier Panchayati Raj System for the non-ADC rural areas. For the

non-ADC urban areas, there are elected local bodies in the form of Agartala Municipal Council and 15 Nagar Panchayats. For the tribal areas, the State has a Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council (TTAADC) along with 527 Village Committees. As a progressive measure, 50% reservation has been provided for women in 3-tier Panchayati Raj institutions, urban local bodies as well as ADC Village Committees. My Government has progressively transferred more and more functions, manpower and resources to these local bodies. The elections to the TTAADC, the urban local bodies and the village committees in the ADC areas have been held during the year in a free, fair and smooth manner, which only strengthens the tradition of strong democratic decentralisation in the State.

15. Development of basic physical infrastructure is a pre-requisite for development of the State and therefore, my Government attaches highest priority to development of infrastructure, including roads, railways, airports, power and telecommunication. As far as the road network is concerned, the State is committed to connect all the habitations with all-weather roads. Under Prime Minister's Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY), the work is being taken up for providing new connectivity as well as for upgradation and renewal of existing roads. Upto 2009-10, the work had been completed for about 1,152 km. and was in progress for about 1,442 kms. The State Government has been making persistent efforts for 4-laning of NH-44, but it has recently been decided by the Government of India that initially 2-laning will be done and later on, 4-laning will be taken up. Matter is accordingly being followed up. The Government is also pursuing the matter for development of an alternative National Highway from Kukital to Sabroom as also for development of Manu-Simlung Road (NH-44A).

16. The State Government has always pursued the matter for expeditious implementation of Railway Projects. The work of broad-gauging of railway line on Lumding-Silchar section has been resumed after a long time and the same is going on at a rather slow pace. The same needs to be speeded up. Once this is done, broad-gauging of railway line upto Agartala can be completed without much delay. The work of extension of railway line on the Agartala-Udaipur section is progressing. The matter is being followed up with railway authorities for taking up the work on Udaipur-Sabroom section as well. The matter has also been taken up with Railways for improving the passenger

amenities on the existing railway network as also to provide adequate security to the passengers.

17. Agartala Airport is the 2<sup>nd</sup> busiest Airport in the North-East after Guwahati and presently, about 30 flights operate to and from Agartala every day, carrying about 3,000 passengers per day. The matter is being actively pursued with the Government of India for upgrading Agartala Airport as an International Airport with connectivity to Dhaka, Chittagong and other foreign locations. The matter is also being pursued for making Kailashahar and Kamalpur Airports operational.

18. The power situation in the State is improving gradually due to persistent efforts made by the State Government. A new 21 MW gas-based unit has been commissioned at Baramura in September, 2010. The construction work of the 726.6 MW Palatana Power Project is progressing as scheduled and the first unit is expected to be commissioned in December, 2011. All necessary development work for bringing the Turbine for the Project through Ashuganj Port of Bangladesh and taking it upto Palatana is progressing as per the Plan. The 104 MW NEEPCO Power Project at Monarchak has also been cleared by the Government of India. Recently, the Union Power Minister also laid foundation stone for a Project for generation of additional 52 MW power at NEEPCO Power Project at Ramchandranagar by converting it into a Combined Cycle Project. It is also proposed to take up one more 21 MW Project at Rokhia. With all these power projects coming up, the State will be very well-equipped to meet all its future requirement of power.

19. Rural electrification continues to be a thrust area of the Government. Steps are being taken to speed up the implementation of the current RGGVY (Rajiv Gandhi Grameen Vidyutikaran Yojana) Project for covering about 1.95 lakhs BPL families with total outlay of about Rs. 168.55 crores. Meanwhile, the Government has undertaken a comprehensive survey for 100% coverage of households and based on such survey, a Project involving additional Rs. 373.73 crores has been formulated and sent to Government of India for funding. Further, Remote Village Electrification (RVE) Programme, using non-conventional sources of energy like solar lighting, has been undertaken in villages where the conventional electric connections are not feasible or viable. Upto 2009-10, about 24,000 systems have been installed in 503 hamlets.

20. The telecommunication network in the State has expanded at a fast pace. Besides the BSNL, a number of private operators are providing mobile telephony and other services. The total number of mobile subscribers in the State now exceeds 15 lakhs. However, the services of BSNL, which caters to a large section of population through landline and mobile services, continue to be extremely poor. The matter is being actively pursued with the BSNL and the Department of Telecommunication, for improving the BSNL services.

21. The economy of Tripura is primarily an agrarian economy, providing employment to about 52% of State's population. Although the cultivable area is only about 27% of the total area of the State, my Government has been implementing a Perspective Plan for achieving self-sufficiency in foodgrains production by 2011-12. The total foodgrain production was 6.48 lakhs MT in 2009-10 and the same is expected to increase to about 7.20 lakhs MT during 2010-11. During 2009-10, about 60,000 hectares of area was covered under 'System of Rice Intensification (SRI)', which has been acknowledged as one of the successful models in the Country. The seed replacement rate of 33% per annum has already been achieved during 2009-10. The State is producing certified HYV Paddy Seeds in excess of its requirement and the excess is being exported to other States. About 1.05 lakh hectares of area has been brought under irrigation by the year 2009-10 out of the total irrigable area of about 1.17 lakh hectares. A Special Drive has been undertaken to bring maximum number of eligible farmers under Kisan Credit Card (KCC) within a 3 year-period. One major constraint has been the inadequate availability of chemical fertilizers due to non-allocation of sufficient railway rakes for transportation of fertilizers to Tripura. I urge upon Government of India to take necessary steps to remove this bottleneck.

22. My Government is also implementing a 10-year Perspective Plan (2002-2012) for increasing production of fruits and vegetables. The total production of fruits and vegetables has increased from 6.62 lakh MT in 2001-02 to about 10.59 lakh MT in 2009-10 and is further targeted to increase to about 12 lakh MT by 2011-12. Staggered plantation of pineapple has been taken up to prolong the harvesting season. Production of certified vegetable seeds has also been taken up in order to replace the low-yielding local seeds.

23. The State Government has also taken up a 10-year Perspective Plan (2002-2012) for achieving self-sufficiency in production of milk, meat and

eggs. During 2009-10, total production of milk, meat and eggs was about 1.01 lakh MT, 21,102 MT and 14.42 crores respectively. The State has achieved self-sufficiency in meat production. The per capita availability of Meat in Tripura was 5.82 kg. for the year 2009-10, which is higher than the National average. The per capita availability of eggs was about 40 eggs for the year 2009-10 which was very close to the national average of about of 42 eggs. Special efforts are being made to further augment the milk and egg production in the State.

24. The fish production in the State was about 42,285 MT in 2009-10, registering an increase of about 14.3% over previous year. Due to intensive efforts, the area under pisciculture as well as the productivity has been rising significantly and my Government is confident of achieving the target of self-sufficiency envisaged in the 10-year Perspective Plan, by the end of current year, with per capita fish availability of 13 kg., which is higher than the national average of 11 kg. The Government plans to set even higher targets in the coming years.

25. My Government has been making sincere efforts for afforestation, with active involvement of the people through Joint Forest Management Committees (JFMCs). So far, over 800 JFMCs have been formed involving about 78,000 forest-dependent families. Two Externally-aided Projects, namely, JICA and Indo-German Development Cooperation Project are also being implemented, inter-alia, for rehabilitation of degraded forests. During the current year, afforestation has been done over about 11,300 hectares of area, out of which about 5,700 hectares of area has been covered by bamboo plantations.

26. Tripura has a strong tradition of effective implementation of various Rural Development Programmes. The State has done exceptionally well in implementation of MGNREGA Scheme. During 2009-10, total about Rs.729.41 crores was spent under the Programme and about 460.23 lakh person-days were generated. The achievement of Tripura was about 6.2 times the national average in terms of per capita expenditure. During 2010-11, the implementation of the Programme has been hampered due to non-release of required funds by the Central Government. I would urge upon the Government of India to release adequate funds as per demand of the Job Card holders. The achievement under other Programmes is equally impressive. Under Indira

Awas Yojana, about 9,500 houses have been constructed during current year with an expenditure of about Rs.50.82 crores. Under Swarnajayanti Gram Swarojgar Yojana (SGSY), 2,499 new self-help groups have been formed and an amount of Rs.14.33 crores has been spent during current year. I am glad to inform the House that the State has also done a commendable job in implementation of the Unique Identification (UID) Number or AADHAAR Project and is the leading State in the Country in terms of performance so far. Over 6 lakh persons have already been enrolled under the Project and the number is increasing every day.

27. Provision of potable drinking water for all the people of the State is one of the key policy objectives of the Government. The drinking water sources created so far include 1,149 Deep Tube Wells, 1,076 Small Bore Tube Wells, 422 Iron Removal Plants, about 24,500 spot sources, 24 Surface Water Treatment Plants and about 7,600 Kms. of pipelines. Steps have been initiated for preparation of Village Water Security Plans through door-to-door survey in consultation with PRIs with a view to effectively cover the entire State.

28. Effective steps are being taken for upgradation of urban infrastructure with the help of the elected bodies, namely, Agartala Municipal Council and 15 Nagar Panchayats. The Government has also taken up an Employment Guarantee Programme, namely, Tripura Urban Employment Programme (TUEP) on the pattern of MGNREGA. A Project for slum development have been implemented, under BSUP (Basic Services for Urban Poor) component of JNNURM, at Kunjaban Mouja under Agartala Municipal Area providing housing and other infrastructure facilities to 256 slum dwellers. I am glad to inform the House that Agartala has been awarded as the 'best City among the special-category States' for successful implementation of this Project. For improving the transport facilities at Agartala, the Agartala City Bus service has been launched in October 2010 with 38 buses procured under JNNURM.

29. The Government has also been making efforts to accelerate the industrialisation process in the State. Bodhjunnagar Industrial Complex is emerging as the flagship industrial cluster of Tripura. Total investment of about Rs.400 crores has already taken place in this Complex. Assistance is being given to first generation entrepreneurs under self-employment programmes, namely, Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP) and Swavalamban. During 2009-10, total assistance of about Rs.24 crores was

given to 1,290 entrepreneurs, which is expected to double during current financial year. During the year, Dhalai Tea Processing Cooperative Factory was commissioned at Kamalpur, benefiting about 2,000 small growers of Dhalai district. The Tripura Bamboo Mission has been doing commendable job for integrated development of bamboo sector. The turnover of the bamboo sector has increased 3 times in 3-year period since 2007. The interventions in Agarbatti sticks sector have been particularly significant. Steps have also been taken to promote trade with Bangladesh. The total volume of trade with Bangladesh was about Rs. 178.21 crores during first 9 months of the current financial year, as against total Rs.163.30 crores during 2009-10.

30. Initiatives have also been taken for skill development. The State Skill Development Mission has been constituted and the first meeting of the Mission has been held. The work of construction of new ITIs at Khumulwng and Manubankul under the NLFT (NB) package has been taken up. Projects have been submitted under NLCPR for new ITIs at Khowai, Sonamura, Gandacherra and Sabroom. Other Departments of the Government are also taking steps for skill development in their respective areas of activity.

31. Tripura offers great opportunities for tourism, including archeological and heritage tourism, cultural tourism and eco-tourism. A number of Projects, involving total outlay of over Rs.33 crores, are being implemented for promotion of tourism. The Gitanjali Tourist Guest House at Agartala, with all modern amenities, has been made operational.

32. My Government attaches the highest priority to the development of human resources. The Government has been implementing Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), Mid-Day Meal and other Flagship Programmes for universalisation of School Education, in the right earnest. The achievements during the current year include setting up of 70 new J.B. Schools as also the upgradation of 71 J.B. Schools, 44 S.B. Schools and 16 High Schools to the next higher level. The drop-out rates have further come down during 2009-10 to 4.55 % at primary stage and 9.19% at elementary stage. A number of Projects have been taken up for up-gradation of infrastructure. Under various Schemes for scholarships and stipends, total about 3.5 lakhs students benefited during 2009-10. The Mid-Day Meal Scheme now covers over 6 lakh students.

33. A 10-Year Perspective Plan has been drawn up for development of Higher Education. The construction work of 6 new General Degree Colleges at Bishalgarh, Mohanpur, Teliamura, Longtarai Valley, Santir Bazar and Kanchanpur has started. It has been decided to set up one more Degree College at Gandacherra. The total enrolment of students in General Degree Colleges is now about 26,000 students. New Polytechnics are also being set up. Dhalai District Polytechnic has started functioning from the old DM's Office Complex at Ambassa. The construction work for the new building for Dhalai Polytechnic as also for the North District Polytechnic at Bagbassa will be started shortly. The construction work of South District Polytechnic at Fulkumari has already started. One more Polytechnic is proposed to be set up at Khumulwng.

34. The State Government places very high emphasis on various Social Welfare and Social Security Programmes. During the current year, over 2,500 new Anganwadi Centres have been set up, taking the total number of Anganwadi Centres in the State to about 9,900. The ICDS Programme now covers over 3.70 lakh children and mothers in the State. Construction of new buildings for about 3,500 Anganwadi Centres has been taken up during current year. The State Government has introduced a number of Social Security Pension or Benefit Schemes in addition to the Schemes introduced by the Government of India. Currently, about 2.00 lakh persons are benefiting from various Social Security Schemes.

35. Hon'ble Members would agree that sports and games play an important role in development in human resources. The Government has been making serious efforts for development of the sports infrastructure. Steps have been taken for development of infrastructure at Dasharath Deb State Sports Complex, Badharghat, Tripura Sports School, Badharghat, Regional College of Physical Education, Panisagar, Astabal Ground, etc. The infrastructure of Bhagat Singh Youth Hostel at Khejurbagan is also being upgraded by construction of 350-bedded Hostel. Under the Panchayat Yuva Krida Aur Khel Abhiyan (PYKKA), sports activities are being promoted right up to the village level. I am glad to mention that sports persons from Tripura have started doing well at the National as well as International level.

36. To achieve the goal of 'Health for All', the healthcare infrastructure is continuously being upgraded. Currently, there are total 627 Health Sub-Centres. Construction work of 32 more Sub-Centres is nearing completion and

additional 200 Sub-Centres have been taken up or are being taken up under NRHM, BADP and BRGF. Similarly, 31 PHCs are under construction in addition to the existing 79 PHCs. The construction work of three District Hospitals at Udaipur, Kailashahar and Ambassa is at an advanced stage. At the Sub-divisional level, the work has been completed at Kamalpur and Bishalgarh and the same is progressing well at Khowai, Dharmanagar and Belonia. The work has also been started at Teliamura and Santirbazar. The Government is placing high emphasis on Medical Education. A new Directorate for Medical Education is being set up. The Agartala Government Medical College has completed 5<sup>th</sup> year successfully and it is expected that the first batch of trained doctors from this College will start delivering health services to the people of the State from April 2011 onwards. The Tripura Medical College is also functioning smoothly. The first batch of students has completed their Final Year and will now start internship. Steps have also been initiated for starting Post-Graduate Courses in Agartala Government Medical College. The Government is also taking proactive steps for implementation of Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana (RSBY) for providing healthcare facilities to BPL families. The Scheme has been extended throughout the State. Up to December, 2010, about 2.61 lakh families have been enlisted and so far, about 28,000 patients have got benefit under the Scheme. The Health Indicators of Tripura are far better than the National Average and the same have further improved with the effective implementation of National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) in the State.

37. Welfare of the tribal communities continues to be a matter of highest priority for my Government. During the year, over 1.27 lakh ST students have benefited from various Schemes for promoting education like scholarships, stipends, free textbooks, coaching centres, etc. Ashram Schools and Eklavya Model Residential Schools have been set up for providing quality and value-based education. For the economic advancement, financial assistance was provided to 2,145 ST families during 2009-10 for taking up Rubber, Tea, Coffee and Horticulture plantations. Rehabilitation of the returnees through vocational training has been continuing. The construction of composite market at Khumulwng under NLFT(NB) Package has been completed. St. Paul's Girls' Hostel at Agartala and the Girls' Hostel at Birchandrapur in Khowai Sub-division have also been completed this year.

38. A path-breaking measure for the upliftment of the tribals has been the implementation of the Schedule Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006. I am glad to inform the House that Tripura is one of the leading States in the Country in implementation this Legislation. So far, 1,18,772 Forest Dwellers have been vested with Forest Rights, involving about 1.74 lakh hectares of Forest Land. Patta Pass Books have been distributed and demarcation of land has also been completed for a large chunk of the Patta Pass Book holders. The Government has also been implementing programmes for economic upliftment of these families through convergence of funds available under MGNREGA and other Schemes. In addition, a Special Project has been formulated, with project outlay of about Rs.440 crores, for taking up land-based activities like agriculture, horticulture, bamboo plantation, fodder cultivation, etc, covering an area of about 1.04 lakh hectares over a 3-year period. The matter is being followed up with Government of India for funding of this Special Project.

39. My Government has been taking several steps for educational and economic development of the Schedule Castes and Other Backward Classes (OBC). During 2009-10, about 70,000 SC students and 68,400 OBC students benefited from Stipends, scholarships and other programmes for promoting education. Students are also being sent to other States for job-oriented courses like D. Pharm., GNM (General Nursing and Midwifery), etc. For the economic advancement of the SCs and OBCs, credit is arranged through the Tripura SC Cooperative Development Corporation and Tripura OBC Cooperative Development Corporation.

40. Tripura attaches very high priority to the development of the religious minorities in the true spirit of its tradition. A separate Department for Welfare of Minorities has been created. A comprehensive Action Plan has been taken up for all-round development of 72 minority-dominated villages, which includes construction of roads, electrification of villages, drinking water supply, irrigation, construction of dwelling houses, market sheds, health sub-centres, girls' hostels, etc. A number of Schemes have been taken for promoting Education like providing scholarships to students, special incentive to minority girls, awards for meritorious students, sponsoring students outside State for job-oriented courses, etc. During the current year, over 22,000 students have benefited from these Schemes. Efforts are being made to promote Madrassa Education by providing grant-in-aid, upgrading Madrassas

and providing quality education including subjects like English, Mathematics, Science, etc. Besides this, various Schemes for economic development are also being implemented for the benefit of the minorities.

41. My Government is committed to maintenance of an efficient Public Distribution System (PDS) for the benefit of the poor people. The main constraint has been the inability of the FCI to bring adequate quantity of rice to the State due to non-availability of required number of railway rakes. The State Government has been actively pursuing the matter with the Ministry of Railways and the FCI to ensure that sufficient quantity of rice is brought into the State and buffer stock of rice equal to at least 3 months' requirement is built before the onset of the monsoon season. During the year, special efforts were made for issue of over 20,500 new domestic LPG connections and over 12,000 double-barrel connections, taking the total number of LPG consumers in the State to about 2.74 lakhs.

42. The Government has taken effective steps for rejuvenation of Cooperative Institutions in the State. Pursuant to a MoU signed by the State Government with NABARD and Government of India for revival and restructuring of 268 LAMPS and PACS, in line with the recommendations of the Vaidyanathan Committee, the Tripura State Cooperative Bank (TSCB) has received an amount of Rs.69.17 crores from the Government of India. The State Government has also released its share of Rs.7.71 crores. I am glad to inform the House that Tripura was the first State in the North Eastern Region to be able to avail this benefit.

43. My Government is fully committed to protection of rights of the workers as also for their welfare. During the year, minimum wages was revised for two categories of scheduled employments, namely, rubber plantations and construction or maintenance of road building operations, benefiting a large number of workers. A major Social Security Programme called Ashangatitha Sramik Sahayika Prakalpa is being implemented for unorganised workers benefiting over 46,000 workers upto the year 2009-10.

44. The Government has been making continuous efforts for strengthening the Justice Delivery System in the State. As the Members of the House are aware, the Agartala Bench of Gauhati High Court has started functioning from the new High Court Complex. The Complex has all the required facilities for a

full-fledged High Court and I am glad to mention that due to persistent efforts of the State Government, supported by the people and the Bar Association of Tripura, the Government of India has now agreed 'in principle' to upgrade the Agartala Bench into a full-fledged High Court. The matter is being actively followed up. Besides this, a number of Projects have been taken up for upgrading the infrastructure of various Court Buildings as also some buildings for the Bar. Proactive steps are also being taken to promote legal literacy and awareness among the people for which the State Legal Service Authority has taken up a major Programme.

45. My Government has taken various e-Governance initiatives for effective delivery of services to citizens at their door-steps. The infrastructure required for delivering of e-Services has been put in place. A State Wide Area Network (SWAN) has been created with connectivity upto Block level through OFC network. The uptime performance of SWAN was about 96.6% during December, 2010. Tripura is the first State to operationalise the State Data Centre for housing all e-Governance applications. For delivery of e-Services at village level, 145 Common Service Centres (CSCs) have been set up, of which 83 Centres have become functional and the rest will become functional as soon as internet connectivity is made available by BSNL. Various Departments have started launching e-Services, some of which are e-Hospital, Vision Centres, Tele-medicine Centres, Energy Billing System, e-Pourasabha, Vahan Sarathi, e-Suvidha, Land Records Computerisation, etc.

46. Hon'ble Speaker and Hon'ble Members of this august House, I have briefly presented before you an outline of the Policies, Programmes and some significant achievements of my Government as also the plan of action for further development. I would like to conclude by reiterating that my Government remains fully committed to maintenance of peace and to conducting the affairs of the State in an efficient and transparent manner for all-round development of the State and its people. I am confident that my Government will receive full cooperation of the people as well as all the Hon'ble Members of the House, in this endeavour.

47. With these words, I now seek your leave, with the hope that your deliberations will be fruitful for the people of the State.

**Jai Hind**