

PROCEEDINGS OF THE SIXTH SESSION OF THE FOURTH MIZORAM
STATE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY HELD ON 15.3.2000 (WEDNESDAY)

1ST SITTING ON 15TH MARCH, 2000

PRESENT

PU R.LALAWIA, Speaker at the Chair, 14 Ministers, Deputy Speaker and 23 Members were present.

GOVERNOR'S ADDRESS

1. His Excellency, the Governor of Mizoram A.padmanaban to address the House.

MOTION OF THANKS

2. Dr.LALZAMA to move a motion of Thanks on the Address given by the Governor of Mizoram.

HON'BLE GOVERNOR'S SPEECH :

Honourable Speaker and distinguished Members of this august House.

It is a great privilege for me to welcome you to the second Budget Session of the Fourth Legislative Assembly which is also the First Session in the New Millennium which, I trust, will take us into a new era of growth and prosperity. I extend my warm greetings to the people of Mizoram on this historic occasion and on the joyous conclusion of Chapchar Kut. Even as we leave the past behind, I am sure the business of the House will be conducted as always, with grace and dignity, keeping in view the time-honoured conventions and the rich democratic traditions of the people of Mizoram and our country.

2. Honourable Members will recall that in my first Address to the Fourth Legislative Assembly on 9th December, 1998, I had outlined the priorities of my Government viz., achieving self sufficiency in food, evolving a new economic system to end our near-total dependency on the Centre and thereby putting our finances in order, creating more opportunities for generating income, seeking a lasting solution to the problems on the social front and promotion of trade and commerce. Since then we have been taking steps steadfastly to achieve these goals.

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My Government has completed a little over one year in office. Honourable Members are aware that one year is too short a period for any Government, however keen and earnest, to achieve significant results. But I am happy to note that our priorities have been set and the ground-work has been laid for a number of developmental projects and schemes which collectively have the potential of completely transforming the economy of Mizoram.

2.2 It is a matter for satisfaction that my Government has been able to earn the goodwill and support of the Central Government and various agencies in its endeavours. Their response to our proposals has been very positive and several of these are now being launched with their liberal financial assistance. The Honourable Prime Minister, Pu Atal Behari Vajpayee visited Aizawl on 22nd May, 1999 and announced several new initiatives for the development of Mizoram. It is indeed heartening to note that our State located in the remotest corner of the North East is now visited by Central Ministers, top officials and other dignitaries. I sincerely hope that this trend continues and the State gains from their visits and interaction with the State Government.

3. I am particularly happy to bring to the notice of Honourable Members that our commitment to peace as enshrined in the Mizoram Accord of 1986 and the idea of a Peace Bonus have been finally acknowledged. The Honourable Prime Minister, Pu Atal Behari Vajpayee, during the recent Conference with Governors and Chief Ministers of the North East in Shillong announced several initiatives for socio-economic development of the North East and Sikkim including a Rs. 180 crore Peace Bonus for Mizoram to tide over our financial problems. The Centre will also release Rs. 50 crores every year from the Non-Lapsable Pool of Resources for 5 years for specific infrastructure development projects in Mizoram. We are greatly indebted to the Centre for standing by us in our hour of need. My Government places on record its deep sense of gratitude for the painstaking efforts made by the Centre to understand the malaise affecting the State's economy and to seek a lasting solution. The Centre's benevolence in accepting the Report and Recommendations of the Group of Officers constituted by the Ministry of Finance to review the financial problems of Mizoram deserves our deep appreciation. I am confident that this Peace Bonus and other measures will play a significant role in transforming the economy of Mizoram and strengthen the confidence of the people of Mizoram in the Union of India and indeed, fortify their commitment to peace.

4. Notwithstanding these developments, the State continues to reel under the impact of its financial problems and further burdened by upward revision of pay scales of Government employees from 1st May, 1999 as well as the salaries and allowances and various other facilities for Honourable Members of this House. However, it is a matter of satisfaction that there has been no suspension of payment by the Reserve Bank of India ever since my Government assumed office. This is entirely due to the sincere efforts that have been made to keep our finances in order, maintain strict fiscal discipline and implement austerity measures to curtail wasteful revenue expenditure.

5. My Government remains committed to provide a clean, responsive, progressive and development-oriented administration. Steps have been taken to infuse professionalism, transparency and enforce accountability in Government at all levels. As part of various measures to tone up the administrative machinery and to make it pro-active, responsive and people-friendly, a training and orientation programme with adequate emphasis on development administration was organised in association with the Indian Institute of Public Administration (IIPA), New Delhi, in Aizawl from 3rd November to 6th November 1999 on 'Good Governance' and 'Responsive Administration'. Commissioners and Secretaries, Joint Secretaries, Directors and others attended this programme.

6. I am happy to inform you that the long-awaited Mizoram House at Vellore has been formally inaugurated by the Chief Minister on 9th February, 2000 and made fully functional. This Guest House which is primarily meant for medical patients referred to the Christian Medical College Hospital, Vellore, will cater to a long-felt need of such patients and their attendants.

7. I am also happy to inform you that for the first time a commemorative stamp on the historic Mizoram Accord of 1986 was released at Aizawl on Remna Ni, 1999 by pu Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi, the then Union Minister of State for Information & Broadcasting.

8. My Government has been making sincere efforts to relocate the 1st Assam Rifles Headquarters from the heart of Aizawl to their new site at Zokhawsang and it is a matter of satisfaction that this process of relocation which had been kept in cold storage for a considerable period of time has been revived on the initiative of my Government. Construction work for the approach road to the areas taken over by us inside the Assam Rifles Range Headquarters at Khatla has been started. Land development plans for both the Assam Rifles Range and 1st Assam Rifles Complexes have been drawn up. My Government will continue its efforts to bring the matter to its logical conclusion.

9. The State's deficit continues to rise and the current financial year was opened with a deficit of Rs. 145.00 crores. Despite this grim situation, my Government is determined to maintain this year's Annual Plan size of Rs. 364.00 crores through additional resource mobilisation supplemented by the Peace Bonus and other assistance and adopting stringent austerity measures. I appeal to all sections of the people of Mizoram, through you, Hon'ble Members, to extend their whole-hearted support in this important task.

10.1 Although the most peaceful State in the country today, the strategic location of Mizoram and its long international border of hilly jungle terrain with Bangladesh and Myanmar serve as ideal ground for various insurgent groups and trans-border activities of anti-social elements like smugglers and drug traffickers. There have been certain sporadic and stray incidents, border skirmishes and, of late, looting and extortion involving these insurgent groups and other anti-social elements. In spite of these, my Government remains committed to maintain law and order and peace and harmony amongst all sections of the people, to protect the security of the State and will leave no stone unturned to apprehend the perpetrators of these crimes. Honourable Members will appreciate that the present strength of the State Armed Police comprising only three Battalions of the Mizoram Police and one India Reserve(IR) Battalion is very inadequate to handle the exigencies of law and order and the anti-insurgency operations. Against this background, strengthening the law and order machinery and modernisation of Mizoram Police assume urgency. Therefore, efforts to provide them with modern and sophisticated equipment, weaponry and other inputs necessary for effective policing are in full swing. On the request of my Government, the Central Government has already allotted a number of vehicles, arms and ammunition and communication equipment under the Special Central Assistance Scheme. The State Government's proposal for raising of a second IR Battalion has been approved and sanction order is expected shortly. The Government of India will provide Rs.5.00 crores every year for 3 years for the purpose.

10.2 Duty allowances and various other allowances of the Mizoram Home Guards personnel have been raised from Rs.144/-per head per day to Rs. 200/- per head per day. Accommodation facilities in the various Jail Complexes and the Directorate of Prisons are also being augmented. Adequate emphasis is also laid on Police Housing and construction of various other buildings for Fire Stations and Sub-Fire Stations.

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11. My Government continues to accord high priority to achieving self-sufficiency in the production of food. The gradual shift towards mechanisation of agriculture continues to progress. An indigenous pit system of farming has been introduced as an alternative to the destructive shifting cultivation. A programme of land development to create 395 hectares of Wet Rice Cultivation (WRC) has been taken up at various locations. 9 Minor Irrigation Projects with a command area of 465 hectares, facilitating double or triple cropping with High Yielding Variety (HYV) rice, have been successfully completed. 20 other Minor Irrigation Projects are being implemented at various locations with financial assistance from National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD). 36 projects under National Watershed Development Programme under Rain-fed Area (NWDPRA) and 33 projects under Watershed Development Programme under Shifting Cultivation Area (WDPSCA) are also being implemented during the current year and 19 lakhs of various planting materials of Citrus and other fruit species are distributed to farmers under these projects. Procurement, production and distribution of improved or HYV seeds of various foodgrains and oilseed crops including Sesamum, Soya Bean, Sunflower, Mustard and Safflower are given priority. For the first time steps are being taken to increase production of potato in both Kharif and Rabi seasons for which 4000 quintals of seed potatoes have been sown. The Department is also implementing a comprehensive programme to produce Maize and Soya Bean to meet the immediate requirements of the poultry and cattle feed mill of Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Department. The Department's Biological Control Laboratory at Neihbawih produces various bio-pesticides required for control of pests and crop diseases.

12. Keeping in view the great potential for horticultural development in Mizoram, my Government has initiated several schemes to tap this potential and provide adequate opportunities for more gainful employment to the rural population. Greater emphasis will now be laid on construction of link roads in rural areas to connect orchards and gardens as well as in areas where there is good potential for development of horticulture. Emphasis will also be laid on plantation of fruit crops of high market potential like Passion Fruit, Hatkora, Orange, Banana, Arecanut, Potato etc., by area expansion and other measures like procurement of quality planting materials such as tissue-cultured Mandarin Orange. Hatkora, disease-free Banana Suckers and budded or grafted plants. Introduction of new fruit crops like Kiwi and Avocado are envisaged through systematic trial plantation. For the benefit of the vegetable growers the Department proposes to construct RCC water tanks and provide roofing materials like Galvanised Corrugated Iron (GCI) and High Density Poly Ethylene (HDPE) sheets for harvesting rain water in orchards and nurseries.

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The Department also proposes to provide plant protection equipment, manures, fertilisers, seeds and seedlings at rates subsidised by 50% and take up various extension works like training, awareness campaigns, seminars and disseminate information on modern management of orchards and nurseries and other aspects of horticultural development.

13.1 The strategic location of Mizoram and its rich but untapped potential of agro-forest resources is ideally suited for establishment of a viable border trade with Bangladesh and Myanmar as envisaged in the Mizoram Accord. Honourable Members may recall that with the Prime Minister's clearance, the Chief Minister visited Bangladesh from 27th to 29th April, 1999 to explore possibilities of border trade with Bangladesh and re-opening of the Karnaphuli river route which at one time had facilitated large scale border trade between the people of Mizoram and those of neighbouring Bangladesh before Independence. The response of the Bangladesh Government has been positive. As a sequel to this visit, a Trade Delegation from Federation of Bangladesh Chamber of Commerce and Industries (FBCCI) visited Mizoram in October, 1999 and signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Mizoram Chamber of Commerce (MCC) for the promotion of Indo-Bangladesh border trade. The initiatives taken by the Chief Minister for starting border trade with neighbouring Bangladesh and Myanmar have been well received by the Government of India and I am happy to note that things are moving in the right direction in this regard. The required infrastructure for border trade is being built up at Zokhawthar and Khawnuam on the Indo-Myanmar border with Rs.200 lakhs sanctioned by the Ministry of Commerce. 140.92 acres of land has been acquired free of cost at Khawnuam and a suitable site for construction of land-custom station has been identified at Zokhawthar.

13.2 My Government will continue to pursue a policy of new initiatives for marketing of ginger and other cash crops and seek remunerative prices for local producers.

14. My Government will continue to accord high priority to construction, improvement and maintenance of road communication as these are pre-requisites for progress and development. Several key bridges and buildings at various locations including Additional Secretariat Building at Aizawl and Mizoram House at Vellore have been completed during the current year. The progress of on-going works which include, amongst others, Auditorium at Aizawl, 200-bedded Lunglei Civil Hospital Phase I, Saikuti Hall at Lunglei, additional MLA Hostel at Aizawl, Boys and Girls Hostel at Lunglei DC's office Complex Phase I and II at Lunglei is satisfactory.

The Government of India has entrusted the construction of 2 new National Highways - NH 44A (Sairang-Mamit-Manu Road) and NH 150 (Seling-Tipaimukh-Kohima Road) to the State PWD. 4.50 kms of formation cutting of Sairang and Lengpui stretch of NH 44A have been completed at a cost of Rs. 200 lakhs. Investigation and survey of NH 150 have been started. The Aizawl-Thenzawl-Lunglei and Bairabi-Zamung roads will be upgraded to National Highway standards through World Bank assistance and works are expected to start shortly. Further, Rs.224.10 lakhs and Rs.541.48 lakhs have been sanctioned by NABARD for taking up works on the Aizawl - Reiek - Lungdar (40 kms) and Rawpuichhip - Mualpui (90 Kms) roads respectively and the works are in progress.

15. My Government will further intensify its efforts to bridge the power resources gap. Towards this end, the Teirei Mini Hydel Project (3 MW) has been completed and commissioned on 16th October, 1999. The power resources gap will be narrowed down to some extent with the commissioning of the Tuipang and Kau-Tlabung Small Hydel Projects with a total installed capacity of 6 MW(3MW+3MW) shortly. Serlui 'B' Hydel Project (12MW) is also on the pipe-line. The Detailed Project Report (DPR) for the Kolodyne Hydel Project Phase I (120MW) has also been handed over to our State Government on 22nd February, 2000 by the Central Water Commission. DPR for the Bairabi Hydel Project (80 MW) is also expected shortly while DPRs for Kolodyne Hydel Project Phase II (400MW), Tuivawl Hydel Project (48MW), Tuirini Hydel Project (60MW) are expected during 2001. The process of obtaining the necessary clearances for the Heavy Fuel Oil Generating Plant (20 MW) at Bairabi, to be funded from the Non-Lapsable Central Pool of Resources, is in progress. This power project is expected to be commissioned within the shortest possible time and is expected to reduce the short term power deficit in the State substantially. Apart from these power generation projects, the Power and Electricity Department also undertakes construction of transmission networks, augmentation of transmission sub-stations, systems improvement to regulate voltage and to reduce transmission and distribution losses, renovation and modernisation of Diesel Hydel Generating Stations at Tuirivang, Khawiva, Serlui 'A' and Tuipui. In addition to these, there are various approved schemes of the Central Electricity Authority (CEA) for improvement of Sub-Transmission Sub-Stations and augmentation of revenue collection. Several new Sub-Station Schemes for improvement of the availability and quality of power at various locations are also being implemented. The progress of rural electrification is good and, as of date, about 98% of the villages have been electrified.

15.2 My Government has been constrained to revise the power tariffs effective from 1st March, 2000 and the additional revenue realised therefrom will contribute substantially to the efforts to mobilise additional resources. I appeal to the people of Mizoram to support this measure in the best interest of the State .

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16.1 My Government will continue with its policy of encouraging private entrepreneurs in setting up viable industrial units dependent on locally available raw materials. The Department of Industry has continued its efforts to develop the tea gardens and industry under the scheme of Development of Tea Industry, 144 hectares of land has been covered under new plantations with plants and seedlings raised by the Department in its own Tea Nursery at Biate. 325 families of Biate have been adopted by the Department for scientific and better management of their tea gardens. During the current year, 47 hectares of land will be added to the existing plantations. The Department plans to raise another 10 lakhs tea seedlings during the next financial year. Active steps have been taken for implementation of the Industrial Growth Centre Project at Luangmual. This project costing Rs.15.00 crores will be funded entirely by the Government of India. A suitable land is being identified for establishment of an Export Promotion Industrial Park (EPIP) which will house export-oriented industrial units. The project cost is estimated at Rs. 10.00 crores which will be provided by the Government of India. My Government will strive to keep pace with emerging new technologies and bring the State at par with more advanced States particularly in the field of electronics and information technology (IT). An IT policy of the State Government is on the anvil.

16.2 For optimum utilisation of locally available raw materials, the possibilities of setting-up bamboo based industries are being explored by the Department of Industries. A delegation has been sent to Taiwan to explore the possibility of importing appropriate technology for bamboo processing units. An internationally reputed consultancy agency, namely, International Network for Bamboo and Rattan (INBAR) is being employed for undertaking necessary studies and to develop a bamboo sector development Action Plan for Mizoram.

17. My Government is making efforts to provide gainful employment to the unemployed and under-employed in the rural areas by implementing various poverty alleviation programmes under Centrally Sponsored Schemes through the Rural Development Department. Besides the ongoing Centrally Sponsored Schemes, the Department is also taking a number of steps to improve the economic condition of the rural people by way of undertaking schemes like Rural Housing and New Land Use Policy. Under the Rural Housing Scheme, 6770 families are proposed to be assisted during the current year. The total outlay under the New Land Use Policy (NLUP) during the current year is Rs.1467.00 lakhs while Rs.393.00 lakhs is earmarked for the next financial year. The Social Education Programme provides construction of community halls with a view to creating durable community assets. During the current year, Rs.150.00 lakhs has been provided under this Programme.

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Attempts are being made to provide higher allocation under this Programme. 8 (eight) new Rural Development Blocks are proposed to be created during the next financial year.

17.2 As many as 831 houses have been constructed for the poor families in rural areas under Indira Awas Yojana (IAY). Expenditure of Rs.333.33 lakhs has been incurred under Employment Assurance Scheme (EAS) during the current year for generating gainful employment to families below poverty line in the rural areas. Rs.214.68 lakhs was spent under Jawahar Rozgar Yojana and Jawahar Gram Samridhi Yojana as well. The Department has also successfully implemented other Centrally Sponsored Schemes like Swarnjayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana, Border Area Development Programme and National Programme on Improved Chulhas.

18. My Government is committed to provide preventive, curative, promotive and rehabilitative health services to the people. Under the Minimum Needs Programme, the Health Department has undertaken construction of 30 bedded Community Health Centres at Vairengte, Sakawrdai, Saitual and Mamit. Of these, the Centre at Saitual has been completed and inaugurated recently. Construction of 9 Primary Health Centre buildings are also being taken up as a spill-over scheme and 10 new Sub Centres have been established. Under Hospital Programmes, establishment of a State Referral Hospital is being taken up vigorously and the Government of India has recently sanctioned Rs. 10.00 crores from the Non-Lapsable Central Pool of Resources for the current year. Construction of a 16-room paying Cabin Building at Civil Hospital, Aizawl, has been completed. Construction of a 50-bedded hospital building at Serchhip and the 200-bedded Civil Hospital building at Lunglei is making good progress. Efforts will be intensified towards completion of these on-going projects. The various National Health Programmes are also being implemented successfully.

19.1 It is a matter of pride that Mizoram has topped the literacy percentage as well as the Educational Development Index (EDI) in the country. The people in Mizoram, in general, and the Education and Human Resources Development Department, in particular, should feel deservedly proud of these achievements. The literacy percentage of the State now stands at 95% and efforts will be intensified to achieve total literacy. My Government is keenly aware of the need for qualitative human resources development of which education is the primary input. Therefore, far from resting on our laurels, we shall endeavour to further improve the quality of education in our State. The efforts of the Education and Human Resources Development Department will therefore be geared up to achieve these broad objectives including infrastructural improvement of educational institutions, teacher training facilities and teaching-learning aids.

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A tentative allocation of Rs. 21.43 crores for construction and renovation of school buildings has already been approved by the Planning Commission under the Non-Lapsable pool of Central Resources. Efforts have also been made for effective promotion of Hindi in the State. 99 new posts of High School Hindi Teacher and 107 new posts of Middle School Hindi Teacher have been created under CSS during 1999.

19.2 I am happy to inform you that the Government of India has agreed to set up a Central University in Mizoram. The Bill for this purpose has been passed by the Rajya Sabha and is expected to be taken up by the Lok Sabha shortly. The Government of India has agreed to allocate Rs. 25.00 crores for development of infrastructure for this new University from the Non-Lapsable Central pool of Resources. Establishment of a Central University in Mizoram will meet a long-standing demand and will be a fulfilment of an important clause of the Mizoram Accord of 1986. It is proposed to establish an Engineering College with Central assistance for which the Government has already acquired a suitable plot of land at Durtlang. It is also proposed to establish a co-educational residential Science College in Aizawl. Construction of the Directorate building of the Department has been completed and formally inaugurated on 17th December 1999. Other construction works for infrastructural improvement are also progressing well. The All India Council for Technical Education has accorded permission for introduction of Computer Science and Engineering Courses at Mizoram Polytechnic, Lunglei and Garment Technology and Beauty Culture and Cosmetology Courses at the Women Polytechnic Aizawl from the new academic session.

20. Mizoram is rich in flora, fauna and bio-diversity which must be preserved and protected. The major thrust of the Environment and Forests Department will continue to be raising of forest plantations. It gives me great pleasure to recall that a very novel programme called GREEN MIZORAM where people of all walks of life enthusiastically participated in planting of different species of trees throughout the State was organised successfully. Approximately 99108 trees have been planted under the programme. I am sure this will play a significant role towards ensuring people's participation in the conservation of forests.

21. My Government will continue its steps to improve the public transport system by augmenting its existing fleet of buses. Inter-State Bus services connecting Aizawl and neighbouring States is operated regularly and addition of new routes is also under active consideration. The Transport Department has collected a revenue of Rs. 241.34 lakhs upto December 1999 through bus fares, license fees and road tax. 2 Recovery Vans and 1 Ambulance have been purchased with the assistance of the Central Government under National Highway Patrolling Scheme.

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The Railway Out-Agency with its computerised services continues to provide Railway reservation facilities on various routes throughout the country. The Government of India has allotted a quota of 2 berths each in the AC 3-Tier on the New Delhi - Howrah Sector and AC 2-Tier on the New Delhi-Guwahati Sector for Mizoram.

22. Adequate supply of drinking water for the people, both in urban and rural areas, will continue to receive the attention of my Government. During the current year, under the Rural Water Supply Programme, 86 habitations have been provided with safe drinking water upto the end of January, 2000. The Greater Saiha Water Supply Scheme which was implemented under Urban Water Supply Programme has been commissioned in February, 2000. Rs. 5.00 crores is being released by the Government of India from the Non-Lapsable Central Pool of Resources for implementation of the Greater Champhai Water Supply Scheme. Implementation of the Integrated Project of Aizawl comprising various schemes like Greater Aizawl Water Supply Scheme Phase II, Sewerage Scheme, Storm Drainage Scheme, Solid Waste Management Scheme and Water Treatment Scheme estimated to cost Rs. 176.55 crores is being implemented and this will provide further relief in the sector. In addition to Rs. 4.00 crores released last year, Rs. 20.00 crores have been released recently from the Non-Lapsable Central Pool of Resources for this Project. Under Accelerated Urban Water Supply Programme, Saikang, Darlawn and Saitual Water Supply Schemes are also being taken up by the Department.

23. My Government shall continue to take steps to ensure that there is no shortage of essential commodities through timely procurement. It is a matter of satisfaction that there has been no shortage of foodgrains and there is sufficient stock of rice in the State. 13 new Fair Price Shops under public Distribution System(PDS) have been opened during the current year. This will further improve the system and ensure easy accessibility of foodgrains to the common man. Contour survey of the site for the LPG bottling plant at Mualkhang has been completed and the IOC Ltd. is expected to start construction works shortly. In view of the great demand for cooking gas, my Government has approached the Government of India for release of new LPG connections to meet this demand for which the dealer network is also being expanded suitably.

23.1 The Department of Animal Husbandry and Veterinary has been implementing various schemes and programmes for augmentation of livestock and introduction of improved breed of animals and birds. A dairy plant with a capacity of 10,000 litres per day is being commissioned at Aizawl shortly. A smaller plant with 5000 litres capacity per day is also being set up at Lunglei under Centrally Sponsored Schemes.

50 Dairy Cows and 26,957 Chicks have been distributed to local farmers at subsidised rates. 750 piglets of pure exotic blood have been sold to farmers for breeding. The Department has also imported 120 piglets and 20 calves from Australia for foundation stock. It is proposed to distribute the progeny of these imported animals at subsidised rates to local farmers as part of the Department's programme to augment production of pork and milk in the State. Livestock and poultry farmers are also provided feed transport subsidies to enable them to procure animal feeds at cheaper rates.

23.2 The Government of India has approved two projects submitted by the Government for establishment of a modern animal feed plant with a capacity of 50 tonnes per day and a piggery village estimated to cost Rs. 23 crores and Rs. 19.25 crores respectively. Another project for establishment of a poultry village submitted by the State Government is under consideration of the Government of India.

24. My Government is committed to the upliftment of women, children, physically handicapped, mentally retarded and old age persons and strengthening of voluntary organisations. Assistance to the extent possible will continue to be extended to them. Efforts to tackle social evils are also being taken up in earnest. The Mizoram Social Defence and Rehabilitation Board has been constituted and made functional. Voluntary organisations like Young Mizo Association (YMA) and Mizo Hmeichhe Insuihkhawm Pawl (MHIP) are also given financial assistance for promoting and strengthening the social defence services.

25. My Government attaches great importance to the judiciary and will continue to improve and develop the infrastructural facilities of the State's judiciary. Construction of District Court Building at Aizawl is in good progress and is expected to be completed during the next financial year. The first phase of construction of District Court buildings at Saiha and Kolasib as well as the main building of the High Court at Luangmual will also be taken up. We are also keenly aware of the need to strengthen the machinery for redressal of the grievances of the consumers. To address this aspect, State Level Commission as well as District Forum have been put in place and for their effective functioning various voluntary Consumer Organisations are being strengthened. Following the reorganisation of the districts, new District Fora will be set up in each new District Headquarters. We lay special emphasis on the proper handling of Court Cases in the various Departments, Special cells have been created in each Department with a Nodal Officer to effectively monitor all the court cases pertaining to their respective Departments. Two Workshops on handling of court cases have been conducted to further streamline the handling of such cases in the various departments.

26. My Government has extended composite cash loan to 1796 Government employees and another 624 families for construction of houses. Slum Development Schemes are also taken up with financial assistance from the Government of India and HUDCO. Under the Scheme of 50 Years India Independence Celebration Programme, HUDCO has recently sanctioned Rs. 38.50 lakhs for the creation of Tuikual Model Slum and Nisapui Model Village. Under Urban Poverty Alleviation Programme, 400 persons were given training in various trades under Swarna Jayanti Shahari Rozgar Yojana. Under Urban Wage Employment Programme, the Department has identified 52 urban areas in Aizawl Town where families below the poverty line will be given wage employment with a provision of Rs. 179.59 lakhs. Under Integrated Development of Small and Medium Towns (IDSMT), my Government has constituted a State Urban Planning Committee and Town and Development Committees for Bilkhawthlir, Thenzawl, Serchhip and Hnahthial. Construction of Sanitation Office building at Aizawl is completed while construction of District Office at Ramhlun Veng, Market buildings at Bawngkawn and Vaivakawn is in progress. The Local Administration Department had successfully conducted the 14th General Election to the Village Councils in December, 1999.

27. My Government continues to attach due importance to the effective implementation of the Total Prohibition Act. All out efforts have been made towards the realisation of this by strengthening the Excise Force and launching awareness campaigns throughout the State. The Government is also deeply concerned with the menace of drug trafficking and its abuse which has assumed great proportions. Serious efforts are made to control this menace by maintaining strict vigil throughout the State including the Indo-Myanmar border. 160 drug traffickers were nabbed and large quantities of intoxicating drugs seized during the last one year. I am happy to say that Voluntary Organisations and the Churches have extended their active co-operation in tackling this menace.

28. My Government, besides endeavouring to protect and promote our proud tradition and indigenous culture, is promoting informal education by giving aids to rural libraries. For the first time in Mizoram, the Department of Art and Culture had conducted a Workshop on Production Oriented Theatre in collaboration with the National School of Drama during 3rd November, 1999 and 2nd December, 1999 in which 27 youth had successfully completed the Certificate Course.

29. The importance of cash crop plantations as a measure for conserving soil and water, apart from its commercial expediency, has long been recognised. During 1999 - 2000, the Department of Soil and Water Conservation has planted 31 hectares of Large Cardamom, 20 hectares of

Areca nut and 19 hectares of Rubber thereby providing employment to 59 families. 26 quintals of Coffee seeds are being distributed to farmers and cash crop nurseries are also being raised in 8 Territorial Divisions of the Department.

30. The Fisheries Department released and stocked 45 lakhs of quality fish seeds in 13 major rivers of the State for enhanced production of riverine fish. The Department further distributed 25 lakhs of fish seeds to private pisciculturists at 50% subsidised rates and has also organised training for them at various places. 6 nursery tanks at Tamdil and 4 rearing tanks at Zawlnuam Fish Seed Farm have also been constructed apart from renovation of 75 hectares of private fish ponds.

31. Recognising its role in the improvement of the economic and social standard of the people, my Government is determined to strengthen the cooperative movement in the State. The Cooperation Department has so far registered 2900 Cooperative Societies throughout the State which are mostly engaged in the field of production, procurement, marketing and distribution of agricultural produce and essential commodities. The Mizoram Urban Cooperative (MUCO) Bank alone has disbursed Rs. 11.62 lakhs as short-term loan to various individuals, traders and churches and has also disbursed Rs. 43.46 lakhs under National Scheduled Castes & Scheduled Tribes Finance & Development Fin. Corporation (NSFDC) to various individuals. The Mizoram State Cooperative Marketing and Consumers' Federation Ltd. (MIZOFED) have installed extension points of LPG with 500 connections at Ngopa, Khawzawl, Lungdar East, Thingdawl, Kawlkulh, Thenzawl and Tuipang. Through MULCO, 9,03,300 litres of milk have been procured and distributed to consumers in Aizawl Town at reasonable prices.

32. The Taxation Department has mobilised additional resources by earning a revenue of about Rs.590.80 lakhs as on 31st January, 2000. It is further expected to collect revenue of Rs. 190.00 lakhs annually from the local Sales Tax which has now been levied on a few items of notified goods with effect from 1st November, 1999. The Directorate of Institutional Finance & Small Savings has been able to collect Rs.4.67 crores through various Small Savings Schemes, of which, 75%, that is, Rs. 3.50 crores will accrue to the State Exchequer.

33. Blessed with natural scenic beauty and an ideal climate throughout the year, Mizoram has good potential to develop its tourism industry. To translate this potential into reality and to cope with the demands of foreign as well as domestic tourists, my Government will continue to strive for excellence in developing its infrastructure.

21,618 tourists visited the State during the year. The Department of Tourism has embarked upon marketing of Mizoram tourism at the national as well as international level. It has also participated in Travel and Tourism Fairs at Calcutta, Ahmedabad, Mumbai, New Delhi and at the International Tourism Borse (ITB) at Berlin, Germany with the purpose of selling Mizoram as a tourist destination. The possibility of developing adventure tourism has also been probed and accordingly river rafting has been identified for promotion to attract tourists.

34. Development of Sports and Youth Services will continue to form an integral part of our programme to promote and stimulate the youth to undertake sports activities. The Department of Sports and Youth Services has spread its umbrella by opening two new District Offices at Kolasib and Champhai. I am happy to say that Mizoram has successfully hosted the Junior National Judo Championships at Aizawl in which we bagged 3 bronze medals. Mizoram won a bronze medal in the National Taekwondo Championships at New Delhi. My Government, realising the inadequacy of infrastructural facilities in the field of sports and youth services, has drawn special attention of the Government of India for infrastructural development in this field. I am happy to inform you that the Union Minister of State for Youth Affairs and Sports has approved many of our projects during his recent visit to Mizoram. Among these, a 100-bedded Sports Authority of India (SAI) Hostel estimated to cost Rs. 2.50 crores, Special Area Games (SAG) Centre at Lunglei and a 100-bedded Hostel estimated to cost Rs. 3.51 crores deserve special mention.

35. The Department of Printing & Stationery has made great strides during 1999-2000. New District Offices have been inaugurated at Champhai and Kolasib. 8 units of R.C.C. staff quarters are being constructed at Chawnpui, Aizawl, with an amount of Rs. 150.00 lakhs. The Government Press is being modernised by procuring state-of-the-art printing equipment.

36. The 1999 General Election to the 13th Lok Sabha was successfully conducted in the month of September, 1999 in a free and fair manner without any untoward incident. As per the instruction of the Election Commission of India, Special Revision 1999 and Summary Revision 2000 of the electoral rolls with 1st January, 1999 and 1st January, 2000 respectively as the qualifying dates were conducted and the electoral rolls have been computerised satisfactorily.

37. The Autonomous District Councils have played a significant role in the economic development and upliftment of the people in the Councils' areas and my Government will continue to help them and encourage them to

accelerate the pace of development in the District Council areas. It is a matter of satisfaction that General Election to the Mara Autonomous District Council and Bye Election to the 15th Lawngtlai AOC Constituency of the Lai Autonomous District Council have been conducted successfully in a free and fair manner.

38. In order to facilitate smooth transaction of the increasing workload, the Aizawl Treasury was bifurcated by formally opening the Aizawl North Treasury on 28th January, 2000. Consequent upon the trifurcation of Aizawl District, Sub-Treasuries at Champhai and Mamit have been upgraded to full fledged Treasuries.

39. My Government is committed to the welfare of Ex-Servicemen who have braved all odds and made sacrifices in the defence of the country. Honourable Members may recall how the people of Mizoram had stood solidly behind our gallant soldiers during the Kargil conflict. A committee to raise funds for the relief and rehabilitation of the martyrs and victims of the conflict was constituted and it gives me great pleasure to inform the House that the people of Mizoram had generously contributed in response to the appeal of the Committee. To cater to the requirements of Ex-Servicemen and their families, Sainik Rest House has been constructed at Lunglei at a cost of Rs. 43.00 lakhs and is now ready for occupation. My Government continues to provide stipendiary, medical and financial assistance to children and widows of Ex-Servicemen.

40. I would like to reiterate that my Government is fully committed to work steadfastly to implement its policies and programmes and fulfil its assurances to the people of the State. I have full faith in the ability and resilience of the people of Mizoram and I am, therefore, confident that with their cooperation, we will overcome challenges and march towards further progress and prosperity. I have covered only a few aspects and given a brief outline of the major policies and programmes of my Government. I sincerely hope and trust that all these issues will be discussed in greater detail in the best interest of the people of Mizoram during this Session.

I wish your deliberations all success.

Ka lawm e,

Jai Hind.