

Speech of Shri A.K. Antony, Chief Minister, Kerala

50th National Development Council Meeting on 21st December 2002 at New Delhi

Honourable Prime Minister, Deputy Chairman, Planning Commission, Union Ministers and my colleagues from other States,

I join my colleagues in thanking the Government of India and the Planning Commission for convening this meeting of the National Development Council to discuss the draft Tenth Plan. Of course, it would have been better if we could have completed discussion on this before the beginning of the financial year and incorporated the suggestions in the final Plan. I still hope that the important issues raised here would be considered in all seriousness and necessary modifications made in the Plan, though a large number of important suggestions made by my State and others in the 49th NDC meeting called to discuss the Approach to the Tenth Plan has not found its place in the Plan document.

This NDC session is a historical milestone as it is the golden jubilee meeting. We can be proud of this living symbol of India's federal polity which has survived the test of time and has made many a valuable contribution to forging the development agenda of the country. Let me repeat the suggestion I made last time to have more frequent meetings of NDC and more detailed discussions so as to ensure genuine dialogue and real consensus.

While sharing the optimism of the Plan, somehow I feel deeply disturbed by some of the recent developments in certain parts of the country, which challenge the secular fabric of the nation. Development is a dividend of peace and national unity. More than tools and techniques and developmental fads and shibboleths, it is the spirited feeling of oneness of the nation and active participation of every citizen in the development process that can take the nation to new heights. This is the message of the Father of the Nation which we need to remember today. It is still not too late to reaffirm our faith in a socially united and economically vibrant India.

I congratulate the Planning Commission for the well-written Plan document, which makes a good analysis of the present problems and suggests a wide range of solutions. But often the grand suggestions are not fully translated into action plans and many an action point does not get the budgetary support it deserves. A stark example is the treatment meted out to 'Ayurveda' which perhaps is India's best bet in this globalized context by virtue of the unique comparative advantage we have. It gets only a measly allocation of Rs.150 Crore and this includes homoeopathy as well. Thus the critical congruence of policy, plan,

programme and budget is mostly missing.

One cannot escape the feeling that a large number of schemes are just continuations of the old schemes with new names and most of them do not address the development problems in their complexity; they are based on conventional prescriptions.

The growth target is admittedly stiff and this should motivate all of us to strive harder to achieve it whatever be the obstacles. I am all for a faster rate of growth which alone can make India stand up proud in the comity of nations. The Mid Term Economic Review expresses doubts about providing the Gross Budgetary Support required for the Plan. It seems to undermine the Plan in the very beginning itself.

A firm and total commitment to the Plan is required from the Government of India and all of us.

For the first time targets have been disaggregated state-wise. Though more consultations could have been held, I welcome this wholeheartedly and I assure you that we would do our best to attain them.

It is with great hope that we endorsed the Tenth Plan as a Reform Plan. And, like charity, reform should begin at home. In the last one year or so there has not been any evidence of serious reform at the level of the Government of India, to reduce the fiscal problems or to improve governance or to address the core issues of development facing the country. Unfortunately, reforms have been taken in the narrow sense of disinvesting public sector units. It appears that we are taken in only by the slogan of withdrawal of Government from certain areas while ignoring the critical fact that this withdrawal is justified on the ground of freeing resources and energies to concentrate on more important functions like reduction of poverty and bringing about human development with social justice. The Plan document is replete with market oriented phraseology; but is severely wanting in a passionate commitment to the priority areas of health, education and poverty reduction.

In spite of our strong pleas, the Central Government is continuing to take up development programmes in functional areas which are earmarked for States and even for local governments. In the new context, the Central Government should concern itself more with being a proactive facilitator rather than a direct doer of things with which it is not functionally related. I feel it is time that we take up a functional review to get clarity on who should be doing what. This is all the more relevant since the Constitution mandates a five-tier government structure for most of the country.

I am constrained to repeat my complaint that local governments have been given the short-shrift even in this Plan document. It is sad that the Planning Commission, which once was the champion of decentralized planning is oblivious to the constitutional assignment of planning to Local Governments and the District Planning Committee. Local governments, especially Panchayats have been degraded to the level of community based organizations and NGOs playing marginal roles of advocacy, promotion and social mobilization with little or no role in planning and development. Nowhere in the Plan document does District Planning Committee figure. In no sector is there any clarity about the role of the three tier Panchayat Raj institutions; there are only general statements. It is unfortunate that even ten years after the constitutional amendment we are continuing this neglect which tantamounts to disregarding one of the basic features of the Constitution.

It is not yet late to correct this anomaly. In fact governance and development reforms should start with decentralization. The only sustainable reforms are those which are taken up from below. Local governments have a traditional niche in development especially in providing basic minimum services and in promoting local solutions to development issues by bringing together the various factors and actors. Allocation of functions and resources to local governments and building their capacity is the most important challenge of the reform plan, and this has not even been recognized. In spite of reports of Committees constituted by the Planning Commission itself, the Centrally Sponsored Schemes, other than some schemes of the Ministry of Rural Development, largely ignore the role of local governments. At least a partial remedy can be attempted by spelling out clearly the roles of local governments in the implementation of those schemes which fall in their area of responsibility.

Another method of stifling local governments is the creation of parallel organizations and set ups on the basis of Government of India directives. In the Health sector there are several agencies at the district level, which exercise the functions which are in the legitimate domain of local governments. And recently instructions have been issued to set up Forest Development Agencies.

May I use this occasion to welcome the initiatives of the Prime Minister and the Government of India in having a critical introspection on the failure to institutionalize decentralization in the country. I request the Prime Minister and the Planning Commission to seize the spirit of consensus and push ahead with further Constitutional amendments to strengthen local governments. While doing so I would urge Government of India to hold

detailed consultations with those States which have done pioneering work in this field. While amending the Constitution it should afford flexibility to States to have their own variants of the decentralized governance system. For example, Kerala is in need of a District Government covering urban and rural areas rather than just the District Panchayat. Similarly as the State has large Village Panchayats and relatively small District Panchayats, area-wise, the necessity of the intermediate tier is open to question.

In spite of the historical decision of the NDC in 1996 to transfer Centrally Sponsored Schemes, not much has been done in this Plan. Of course I can understand the logic of Centrally Sponsored schemes in certain areas of national priority or in areas where States do not have the capability. But even in such schemes I would prefer the model followed by the Ministry of Agriculture, in allowing flexibility to the States to prepare their own programmes within a broad framework.

While scanning through the Plan document I find that there are 275 Centrally Sponsored Schemes with 127 of them having a five-year allocation of less than Rs.100 crore; it is very difficult to justify the existence of most of these schemes. At the same time, transferring responsibility for continuing Centrally Sponsored Schemes without transferring resources all of a sudden also can not be accepted; for example in Family Welfare the Government of India have withdrawn support to the scheme for Rural Welfare Centres and Post-partum Centres. This would cost the State around Rs.200 crore during the next five years. I would request the Planning Commission to review all such cases where responsibilities have been passed down without a commensurate share of the resources, putting a burden on the States' finances.

Another potentially dangerous tendency is the so called reform linked and demand based allocation for which huge funds have been set apart - nearly Rs.45,000 crore for the Tenth Plan. Past experience shows that a substantial chunk of such funds get allotted without any transparent norms using bureaucratic or political discretion. This is a fundamental violation of the spirit behind the Gadgil Formula. In a federal polity fiscal decentralization has to be totally above patronage and should be based on absolutely transparent norms. It is a reform that is urgently required in our methods of financing.

Talking of fiscal reforms the State has taken several measures to contain its fiscal deficit especially the revenue deficit. The Medium Term Fiscal Framework has been approved and it is being followed while deciding the expenditure pattern both Plan and non-plan. However I would like to draw attention to an accounting fallacy which characterizes all

grants to local governments as revenue expenditure irrespective of their end use. As Kerala is devolving one-third of its State Plan resources to local governments this has created a big problem. We have evidence to show that local governments use nearly 60% of the grant for creating infrastructure. Therefore some sort of corrective is required; otherwise the accounts will not reflect the real situation.

I warmly welcome the decision of the Ministry of Finance to lower the interest rates on RIDF. This may be followed up by enhancing the allocation under RIDF to double the existing ceiling. Since RIDF is project-based creation of infrastructure, it will serve the interest of planning automatically.

At the same time interest rates of national financial institutions like HUDCO and NCDC are unrealistically high even though they are guaranteed by the Government. It is necessary to bring them on par with the real interest rate or else it will add to the burden of the State and even create distortions, these institutions should be encouraged to lend more liberally without Government guaranteeing to projects sponsored by State agencies which are by themselves capable of generating the revenue stream required to pay back the loan.

The role of Banks and other credit institutions in the development of a State needs clarity. My State generate a higher order of savings and all financial institutions including the insurance Companies are benefited. It is only proper that they invest substantial funds in the State. For this innovative methods of financing have to be developed. A suggestion I would throw up for discussion, is to fund infrastructure creation which requires a large investment in a short period of two or three years, and then get back the amount as annuities from the State Plan over a period of time.

This brings me to the issue of Central assistance. As has been pointed several times in this forum the 70:30 proportion of loan and grant needs a review and as the first step a 50:50 composition would be more appropriate. Similarly the interest rate of 11.5% needs to be substantially reduced in keeping with the general trend falling which the books of accounts of the State and Central Government would never balance.

The Plan document shows the inequitous distribution of externally funded projects in the country. It is good that Government of India is now more liberal in allowing States to access donor assistance based on viable projects and local reform initiatives. The next step should be to review the pattern of assistance. It would be better to pass on assistance on the same terms and conditions except in the case of capital projects likely to generate an income stream direct or indirect.

The State's fiscal health is directly linked to the economy of the State. In these days of liberalized international trade, extreme price fluctuations often hit the farmers hard. We have experienced such price crashes in the recent past in the case of coconut, arecanut, rubber, coffee, tea etc. May I suggest that a national policy be framed to face such shocks mainly by rescheduling loans, providing temporary relief to the workers through wage employment and food for work programmes and other mitigating measures. The constitution of a Fund for plantations is welcome. The scheme may be brought into effect without delay.

Now that the WTO regime is in operation, decisions related to export and import, particularly in agriculture, often have tremendous ramifications for regional economies. It is possible that the full impact cannot be fore-assessed by Central Government agencies. I would request Government of India to evolve a practice of regularly consulting States whenever such decisions are taken. It will certainly enrich the quality of such decisions and make them serve national interest better.

The fundamental purpose of our planning has been to reduce poverty. I am afraid we are becoming complacent by patting ourselves on our backs by relying too much on the latest NSSO poverty figures. I am not convinced about these figures of poverty. For example, in the case of Kerala, rural poverty is shown as 9.38%.

In a State which has 10% SC/ST population and a large population of traditional fishermen, artisans and workers in declining traditional industries like coir, this figure simply goes against both intuition and reason. As if to add insult to injury, now the Government of India has called for a census to identify people Below Poverty Line with the caveat that the BPL percentage of the population should not be 10% more than the NSSO figure. Certainly this would make the census skewed.

I am happy at the shift to a basically non-monetary index system. But here again a uniform set of criteria has been prescribed for all States by Government of India. States have their own anti-poverty programmes which are implemented by different departments and local governments and for this the State needs to have poverty assessment based on locally relevant criteria. It is impractical and unscientific to follow a common set of factors for the whole country. I would stress the importance of allowing States the freedom to decide the factors, which should go into the poverty index.

It is time that we revisit our definition of poverty which is more than three decades old. No longer can poverty be defined just on the basis of calorific requirements. It has to be linked

to realization of a set of entitlements and this set itself would broaden as the nation grows. Otherwise the gains of growth would never percolate to the poor. This is all the more true in the present situation where gains of liberalization have not flowed evenly to the different sections of the population. Right at the beginning, we have to realize the fact that whatever be the advantages of liberalization and globalization, they tend to flow to those sections of the population and those parts of the country which are capable of using them to best advantage. The inequalities which are generated can undo the gains.

It is well understood that for poverty to come down, employment opportunities have to increase. Other than the low-end wage employment - self-employment combination which has guided poverty reduction policies from the late 70's nothing new has been introduced. In a country where the economy is still dominated by agriculture, there is need for investment particularly in rain-fed farming so as to achieve some sort of pro-poor growth.

The Plan document openly admits that the devolution by the Central Finance Commission for operation and maintenance is inadequate. This is a complaint which we have been raising for several years now. I request the Ministry of Finance and the 12th Finance Commission to take note of the fact and come out with a bold devolution directly linked to closing the maintenance deficit, particularly in infrastructure which are of direct relevance to the poor. In fact asset management needs to be construed as part of development expenditure. Plans prepared without reference to the existing stock of assets and their upkeep requirements would be just isolated exercises missing the development continuum. May be for some more time the distinction between Plan and Non-plan may have to be kept but the definition of Plan needs to be enlarged. In fact planning for proper upkeep of assets is important as planning for new assets.

Now I would focus on certain sectoral issues.

A large number of development sectors particularly those related to social development, poverty reduction and natural resource management require convergence of resources and services. Unfortunately this is missing in the Plan. Though the write up mentions the need for such joined up functioning it has not been operationalized in the plans. Unless this is done we would be spending on schemes without achieving on plans. I would suggest that the Planning Commission may go into specific programmes and indicate clearly the process of convergence.

As far as the health sector is concerned the programmes do not take care of second generation issues particularly those related to aging population, change of disease profile

and the advance of technology in medical equipment and R & D. We can not afford to wait for five years to address these issues. Necessary flexibility *maybe* provided to the States to incorporate these concerns by modifying the scheme guidelines. The Allopathic sector shows several vertical schemes. These may be dismantled and funds given according to norms to States after prescribing a framework for addressing specific issues.

In the context of the expanding urbanization of the country it is necessary to think of an institutional mechanism to provide primary health care in urban areas. All our past efforts have not made much headway. The Tenth Plan should explore this more systematically and try out field level implementation, at least from the second Annual Plan.

As regards Ayurveda, it certainly needs to be boosted and what is most urgently needed is for the Government of India to come out with a programme for standardization and for creating centres of excellence by upgrading existing centres to international levels. States which are in the forefront of Ayurveda like Kerala need to be given special incentives to further improve their capacity and even to build the capacity of other States.

Outside the pale of formula Ayurveda lies a vast reservoir of indigenous medical knowledge particularly among the tribal communities. This needs to be authenticated and propagated; but before that the intellectual propriety rights of tribals have to be fully protected against possible exploitation. I am glad to inform you that Kerala has taken an important step in this matter by patenting "Arogya Pacha" a rejuvenative tribal herbal medicine, with the community getting a significant share of the profits.

In the case of education too the focus is still on coverage which may be relevant to a large part of the country. But States which have achieved coverage need to concentrate on quality. This aspect has been touched upon but needs greater elaboration. I would suggest that the Sarva Siksha Abhiyan be made more amenable to adaptation according to State specific needs and to promote local innovations. This opportunity may be used to build the capacity of Panchayats by getting them to plan and implement the scheme so that primary education can be used as an entry point to push decentralization. Also the SSA funds could be earmarked for quality aspects and the infrastructure component funded from the wage employment programmes as was attempted under Operation Black Board.

I feel that the Central Government has an important role to play in vocational education, technical education and higher education; -it has to go beyond giving grants or preparing schemes. It needs to design core modules which are in sync with the requirements of the

skilled employment market. Out-dated courses and syllabi plague the higher education sector and the Central Government needs to channel the resources required for their modernization using the best international expertise available.

In the entire education sector right from primary school up to university education the role of information and communication technology needs to be properly explored and operationalized. Here again a Central initiative with the participation of the States would be more relevant.

I am glad that the Tenth Plan recognizes the importance of sports. I would request Government of India to assist the leaders specially even while trying to broad base the development of sports in the country. The support arrangements should provide for a package approach suited to the States' requirements. In order to boost creation of sports infrastructure a formal tie up with the wage employment programmes is required. Necessary modifications in the guidelines may be made. The sustained achievements of Kerala in the last two decades in the field of sports particularly in athletics needs to be recognized and its talents nurtured by providing infrastructure and special incentives. Certainly there is a strong case for establishing a National Sports Academy in Kerala. In the field of Youth Affairs I support the concern of Government of India but all initiatives should be implemented through the State Government and the proposed Youth Development Centres should be an integral part of the Block Panchayat. Similarly Nehru Yuvak Kendras could follow the Kerala example where they have been accredited as implementing agencies of the Plan projects of local governments.

I strongly support the importance given to the gender aspects of development. Unfortunately the Women Component Plan tends to be a post-facto administrative and academic exercise. Gender elements need to be incorporated in the planning process itself and gender sensitive projects have to be formulated under every scheme. I would request the Planning Commission and the Department of Women & Child Development to ensure that every relevant centrally sponsored scheme has provision for a gender sensitive component. Only then will the gender budgeting be more real. In order to ensure that the budgets get spent properly, gender auditing and monitoring of gender indices are very important. I am happy to inform you that Kerala has made an important beginning in this respect by earmarking 10% of the local government plans for preparation of a women component plan through a bottom up participatory process. And the Kudumbashree programme is organizing all poor women in the State into a network of CBOs capable of

exercising the demand pull.

In the context of successful self-help ventures with the involvement of women there is an urgent necessity to strengthen Rashtriya Mahila Kosh. For the last 10 years it has delivered only about Rs.100 crore. This needs to be multiplied manifold in the Tenth Five Year Plan. The fund may be restructured to provide separate windows for incubation of micro enterprises, transfer of technology, development of entrepreneurship and improvement of marketing.

I am unable to understand the reduced share for rural development programmes particularly in comparison with the Eighth and Ninth Plans. In fact what is required is a substantially enhanced allocation to reduction of poverty especially when there is greater likelihood of the poor being impacted adversely by globalization, at least in the beginning. Production-oriented programmes need to be combined with social safety nets. But strangely enough the National Social Assistance Programme has been passed down to the States without any resource support.

The Plan document is quite ambiguous about land reforms and this indicates government's waning commitment to this important reform. In an agrarian economy land reforms to abolish feudal systems are absolutely essential to unleash productive forces; the example of China, Japan and South Korea illustrate this point.

While we support targetted PDS we cannot agree to the dismantling of universal PDS. In a State like Kerala which is food-deficient universal PDS has to continue for more time. Also the idea of leaving procurement to the State agencies within and outside the State can not contribute to greater efficiency. What is required is reforming the Food Corporation of India and not just withdrawing from the responsibility. Providing food security, next only to personal security, is the most important precondition for development.

Coming to the socially disadvantage groups I may point out that the shrinking of the public sector would hit the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes most. The need for affirmative action to enable them to close the gap is as relevant now as it was at the time of independence - perhaps even more relevant. Even the private sector should be persuaded to give them employment as part of their social responsibility. I feel that greater emphasis should be given to human and social development. Using the twin engine of high quality education and health a paradigm shift in the development of disadvantaged groups is called for. Special monitorable indicators are required to watch their progress. Under no circumstance can they be allowed to slide back.

Just as we have Special Component Plan and Tribal Sub Plan it is necessary to have component plans for the disabled and the destitutes. I would suggest that at least 3% of the Plan is set apart for the disabled and at least 20% of the anti-poverty funds be earmarked for destitutes. It is the duty of the state to ensure the basic quality of life for these groups of people. In the case of the disabled, the focus should be on capacity building and for designing appropriate coping mechanisms for which a network of institutions could be entrusted with the task and to do extension work to carry their expertise to the field level. The destitutes need direct support of a higher order and quality than now.

The section on agriculture presents a very good analysis of the issues confronting India's agriculture. But the solutions recommended in the form of schemes are quite stereotyped. But for Macro Management in Agriculture the other centrally sponsored schemes appear too small to make any effect. What is called for is a twin focus on rain-fed farming especially in the backward and tribal areas and on high value agriculture especially organic farming, floriculture and other aspects of horticulture. Support for rehabilitation of plantations including coconut is also additionally required. In the case of fisheries, provision of costly facilities like dredging equipment for harbour maintenance would have been more appropriate for the Central Government.

I am quite in agreement with the initiatives chalked out under forest and environment. I would suggest that redefinition of tribal rights vis-a-vis forests be given special priority. It is unfortunate that in the name of national interest, we have usurped the age old rights of tribals in forests. It is their right to life which is being taken away, I urge the Prime Minister to take this as a special priority agenda and sort out the issues.

Kerala has a long coastline and the Central government has some responsibility in protecting the coastal boundaries of the nation against sea erosion. Unfortunately assistance is not forthcoming these days. Since the protection work on the seacoasts calls for massive investment I seek Government of India support.

It is heartening to note that a community-based approach is being advocated for rural water supply and sanitation. Investment in this sector has several beneficial returns particularly to the poor. But frequent changes in policy can be harmful. I feel that this needs to be avoided. The launching of 'Swajala dara' is most welcome. But unless we are careful the more developed panchayats and community groups would corner the so-called demand based assistance. Here again transparent norms and considerations of equity

need to be formally embedded in the programme. Sanitation has to be linked to public health and implemented as a holistic programme.

The institutional options in urban development are quite weak. Nagarpalika institutions have not been given the role they deserve in urban management. Still the approach is one based on official delivery. Urban development needs huge lumpy investment and this calls for long-term institutional finance at relatively low interest rates. HUDCO has to focus on this. As regards urban poverty reduction there is greater need for converging the existing schemes. For employment generation in urban areas the capacity building component has to be strengthened in order to tap the skilled labour market.

Urban solid and liquid waste management is now the basic issue in urban development. To tackle this problem on a sustainable basis it is necessary to harness massive resources by tapping the market. The Central Government could function as a clearing-house of information on technology, management practices and funding options.

In the field of industry I welcome programmes like Agricultural Export Zone, market access initiatives, and technology upgradation fund. I request a proper selection of locations based on potential and need. While I agree that every effort must be made not to waste precious budgetary resources on unviable public sector units, I feel that disinvestment in industries which are profitably run or can be turned around, even in non-strategic areas, may be deferred. It is time to analyze the experience of the disinvestment so far and draw lessons from it. Disinvestment should be seen as the last option and there should be ample scope for general public sector reform to afford opportunities for revival and survival in a competitive environment. In respect of traditional industries particularly handicrafts, coir, handloom and sericulture, there is need for greater investment in technology upgradation and in marketing. In the present international scenario these products can have competitive advantage.

The energy scenario has not really improved in spite of the first phase of reforms. In addition to concentrating on reducing the losses of State Electricity Boards there has to be emphasis on diversifying the energy portfolio and improving technology to achieve efficiency in generation of power.

The Approach Paper gave hope that there would be substantial stress on information technology and biotechnology, the promising sunrise areas of the economy. Similarly, tourism was expected to be given special importance. But I must confess my disappointment. Both in information technology and biotechnology, the core infrastructure and

manpower development needs Central support. Similarly, in tourism greater investment is called for in protecting heritage sites and in promotional activity. In all these three sectors both the Central and State Governments need play only the role of an enabler and facilitator. But this certainly requires more investment than now indicated.

IT industry will be sustainable only if the internal requirement increases. This can be achieved only if there is widespread use of IT applications for which computer literacy is a must. I am happy to inform you that Kerala has launched a big drive to achieve universal computer literacy in two districts to bridge the digital divide, I request the Planning Commission to study this innovative programme and provide necessary support for expansion.

Coming to Transport, it is necessary to open up new areas through high quality connectivity. It is not the existing pattern of metropolitan location but the potential for even development which should be the main criterion for expansion of the road network particularly the super highways. Here I strongly feel that Kerala has been unfairly neglected. A similar neglect is in evidence in the case of the massive Rural Roads programme where Kerala is being penalized by a definitional issue on what a Village is. The statistics published by the Planning Commission show that in the last 30 years the road density of the State has increased only by about 20%. There is a well-established need for proper, connectivity of interior habitations. I have raised this in several fora and once again I request you to go by empirical evidence and set right the mistake of fact.

In the case of railways also the State has high density of traffic. Investment, especially in doubling of railway lines and electrification requires high priority. With the kind of traffic, which is expected once the bottlenecks of railway travel are removed, the economic returns would be comparatively higher.

Natural calamities badly upset our plan calculations and badly pull us back. States which are affected require special support not only for immediate amelioration but also for full restoration of assets and even for the absolutely essential preventive works. But unfortunately the existing guidelines are interpreted narrowly by Government of India to keep out capital expenditure. This is quite harmful to the Plan and may be reconsidered. The argument to reschedule Plan programmes is not practical, at the midway stage.

Planning and plan implementation require a lot of capacity building, more so, if one expects changed attitudes and enhanced performance, focussing on outputs and outcomes. But the Plan does not spell out how this is to be done. This lacuna must be

filled up through a series of initiatives like earmarking of scheme funds for training, dissemination of best practices and networking of institutions of excellence. Kerala has launched a Modernizing Government Programme to implement governance reforms in a co-ordinated way to make government people-friendly and to make development pro-poor. Such initiatives may be supported.

I would like to conclude by drawing your attention to a procedural issue. There should be a system for following up suggestions made by States in NDC meetings. For major items sub committees can be constituted to go into details and come out with recommendations within a reasonable time frame. For other issues, official Committees can go into each item and come out with comments and suggestions. This will make NDC a vibrant body. In these days of pluralistic federalism there is greater need for collective ideation and consensus building for which NDC is the ideal forum.

I wish the Tenth Five Year Plan all success. I commit myself and my State to striving hard to attain the broader goals and specific targets of the Tenth Plan which I feel should be a combination of human development plan, economic development plan and governance improvement plan.

Thank you,

JAI HIND