

First Communist Government Formed in India in Kerala*

***Statement of Policy issued by E.M.S. Namboodiripad
on April 5, 1957, after taking oath as Chief Minister
of Kerala***

I have just now been sworn in and taken charge as Chief Minister. So have my colleagues, Messrs C. Achutha Menon, K. C. George, K. P. Gopalan, T. V. Thomas, P. K. Chathan, K. R. Gowri, T. A. Majeed, Joseph Mundasseri and Dr. A. R. Menon. Another colleague of ours, Sri V. R. Krishna Iyer, will take charge in a few days.

We realise that we are undertaking a heavy responsibility. The administration of a State, which is called the "Problem State", is a task which is not easy for anybody. Furthermore, most of us are relatively inexperienced in administrative matters. We have also to work within the framework of a system which includes several regulations and procedures which are not to our liking.

Despite these unfavourable circumstances, however, we hope to face these difficulties and go forward in discharging the tasks that are ahead. There are two factors which give hope and confidence in this respect.

The *First* of these two factors is our realisation that it is not as individuals, but as representatives of a great movement which is as old as nearly a quarter of a century, that we are undertaking this responsibility. It gives us great moral courage and self-confidence to recall that we have behind us, the sacred memory of thousands of martyrs who laid down their lives for the cause; also that there are hundreds of thousands of Party workers who have done and are still doing their utmost to build the movement in whose name we undertake this responsibility. It is as a symbol of our humble revolutionary homage to all of them that we did offer, this

morning, flowers at the final resting place of our departed leader, Comrade P. Krishna Pillai. In the name of our dear departed Comrade who was the first to raise the banner of our Party and of the organised working class movement in Kerala; in the name of the Martyrs who laid down their lives in the various struggles beginning with the Kayyur heroes and ending with the heroes of the Mahe struggle; we pledge ourselves to see that nothing will stop us from fulfilling the great responsibility that we have now undertaken. We are determined to show the same spirit of self-sacrifice in removing all the obstacles that stand in the way of our duty and shall, in this respect, emulate the example shown by our departed Comrades.

The *Second* factor which gives us self-confidence and courage is the large number of greetings which I and my colleagues have received during the last few days from all sections of the people. Those who have sent such greetings come from all castes, creeds and political affiliations and include among them personal friends, colleagues in public work and the well-wishers of ourselves as individuals and the Party as a whole. These greetings stand as a proof to us that we are undertaking this responsibility not in the name of our party alone, but in the name of all men of goodwill who are desirous of building a new democratic and prosperous Kerala.

I take this opportunity to thank all those friends and well-wishers who have given us self-confidence and courage by sending these messages of greetings. I take this opportunity also to assure them, as well as to assure the voters of Kerala who gave us an absolute majority in the legislature, that I and my colleagues will individually and collectively do all that is in our power to fulfil our tasks, viz., the undertaking of the first steps towards the building of a new and prosperous Kerala.

Our Party has placed before the people a blue-print for the building of such a democratic and prosperous new Kerala through its Election Manifesto. I would like to make it clear that it would be our endeavour to see that this programme is fully implemented.

Certain interested quarters are going about saying that the programme that we have outlined in the Election Manifesto is an

impracticable programme, that we ourselves realise now that it cannot be implemented and that, therefore, we are no more popularising that programme.

There is no truth in this propaganda. We adhere to that programme. Our Ministry collectively and every Minister individually will make our utmost efforts to take all possible legislative and administrative steps to rapidly implement every item in that programme.

We are under no illusion that this programme can be very easily implemented through orders issued by the Government one fine morning. We hope that the people too will have no such illusions. There are some items in the programme which can immediately be implemented through Government orders; still others require some time, but can be implemented through Government orders. There are certain items in the programme which can be implemented only through the process of drafting bills, introducing them in the legislature and getting them adopted through discussions and debates in the Select Committee, etc. Since this latter category involves some time to get the legislation through, some items in the programme may require the issuing of certain emergency regulations giving temporary relief to the people. Similarly, there are subjects on which detailed discussions are necessary either with the other parties and sections in the State or with the Central Government. It is only after these various procedures are adopted one after another, that the programme as a whole can be implemented.

All these procedures, however, will not stand in the way of the programme being implemented. Every item in the programme can be gradually and step by step implemented, if we get the support and cooperation of the other parties and sections in Kerala, as well as of the Central Government, in doing so. We have no doubt on that score.

In order that this general position may be made clearer, I will now proceed to examine the major items included in our programme.

1. Programme of Development

We have included in our Manifesto a 16-point programme of development. This programme was prepared in view of the actual conditions in Kerala which has several characteristic features, such as high density of population, a great degree of unemployment and backwardness in industrial and agricultural development. No item in this 16-point programme has become a target of criticism except the first which concerns the "raising of the allotment to Kerala in the Second Five-Year Plan up to Rs. 200 crores".

The seven-point programme which we have outlined for finding solutions for the coir, handloom, cashewnut and fishing industries has also not been subjected to serious criticism.

It is, therefore, quite feasible for us to take the following measures in order to have these programmes of development properly and rapidly implemented:

Firstly, we will convene a conference of representatives of all parties and organisations in Kerala, as well as individuals who are experts in such matters, in order to discuss the question of an agreed programme of development for Kerala to be undertaken during the period of the Second Five-Year Plan. In preparing this programme, care should obviously be taken to keep the special features of Kerala's economy in view.

Secondly, the decisions of the above conference should be brought to the attention of the Central Planning Commission. Discussions should be organised with the Commission with a view to fitting the programme, prepared for Kerala, into the framework of the all-India Plan. If it becomes necessary to make some modifications in this programme in the light of such discussions, such modifications should be made.

Thirdly, when the programme, prepared as described above, starts getting implemented, it will be necessary to organise Planning Boards at different levels in order to help and advise the Government in reviewing the implementation of the Plan. These boards should have adequate representation of all the parties and sections of people, as well as individuals who are experts in such matters.

2. Financial Resources

Many people say that the above-mentioned plans of development will founder on the rock of financial difficulties. This apprehension, however, has no basis in reality. For,

- (a) There are several institutions and enterprises which are already under the ownership and management of the State; making their management more efficient will help the Government in realising more revenue out of them.
- (b) Again, there are some enterprises which are today under private ownership but can be brought under public ownership; this would help to not only make their management more efficient and beneficial to national interests, they can also be used as another source of income for the State.
- (c) Furthermore, there are several items of taxation which are, according to the Constitution, within the jurisdiction of the State Government, but yet are not today tapped. The levying of such taxes will help the Government in enhancing the income without increasing the burdens of taxation on those sections of the people who are not in a position to bear it. There is nothing that stands in the way of the Government and the people of Kerala jointly tapping these resources and enhancing the financial resources of our State.

It is true that the tapping of these sources will have to be supplemented by certain vital changes in the policy now being pursued by the Central Government.

For example, it is in Kerala that a programme of development is essential more than anywhere else in the country. It is, however, here that it is being carried out less than anywhere else. Furthermore, the allocation of resources between the Centre and the States is today not organised in such a way as to help our State to obtain sufficient resources for the carrying out of developmental as well as non-developmental activities, while Bengal and certain other jute-producing States are getting a part of the Centre's income from the jute industry, no such provision is made with regard to the Centre's income from such products of Kerala as coconuts, pepper and rubber.

As important as this neglect of Kerala's problems is the policy pursued by the Centre with regard to certain types of property. For instance, the Centre is not prepared to discuss the question of ending foreign domination in such a vital sector of the economy as the plantations on the sole consideration as to whether such a step will benefit Kerala from a financial and economic point of view. They take the stand that plantations should not be nationalised, even if by such a single step Kerala can get several crores of rupees to be used for its development. Similarly, the Centre shows the tendency to oppose such measures of taxation as fall on the shoulders of wealthy people, even though they help our State to tide over its financial difficulties.

We will do our utmost to have the policy of the Central Government modified in these respects. In doing so, we shall use to the utmost all the powers that are conferred on the State Government by the Constitution; we would similarly adhere strictly to the limitations imposed on the State Government by the Constitution. I appeal to all sections of the people in Kerala to give us their support and cooperation in our effort in this direction.

3. Peace in Industry

One of the most essential pre-requisites for the successful operation of the Five Year Plan is that the relations between the employers and employees should be friendly and cordial. It is in the interest of the employees, the employers and of the country generally to see that every industrial dispute is settled as and when it arises, that strikes and lock-outs are avoided as far as possible and that the process of production goes on uninterruptedly.

The main obstacles in the way of such an atmosphere in the industry are that the employers are reluctant to recognise the organisations of employees; that, even when they recognise them, they reduce such recognition to a mere formality and that they are reluctant to concede the legitimate demands of the employees with regard to the wage and the salary scales as well as conditions of work. Our Government will do its utmost to see that a change is brought about in this attitude of the employers.

We are sure that, if such a change is brought about in the attitude of the employers, the employees and their organisations will be prepared to so arrange the employer-employee relations that there will be peace in industry. However, since it is likely that some employers have no such confidence, I would like to utilise this opportunity to make it clear that we, on our part, will try to bring about such an attitude on the part of the employees.

As a beginning in the direction of working for peace in industry on the above lines, the Government will take steps to convene a tripartite conference of the representatives of trade unions, of the employers and of the Government. Apart from such a conference at the State level embracing all industries, we would also take steps to convene separate tripartite conference for individual industries.

Just as the above-mentioned tripartite conference in the private sector, so for the public sector, we would take steps to organise discussions and consultations between the representatives of managements and trade union representatives in order to find solutions for industrial disputes.

While taking steps to see that the legitimate demands of the employees of both the public as well as private sectors are realised, it is necessary to make the employees realise the vital role that they have to play in bringing about efficiency in production and management, thereby making the Five-Year Plan a success.

The employees and their organisations should realise their responsibility in bringing to light and overcoming the irregularities, inefficiency and corruption either in the management or in production. They have also to realise their responsibility in bringing about very effective technical improvements in production and management. At the same time, the employers and the Government should create the necessary pre-requisites for enabling the employees and their organisations to fulfil their responsibility in this respect. To this end,

1. The employers and the Government should recognise all existing unions;

2. The Government should offer its good offices in bringing about the unity of different unions in those industries where there are more than one union, on the principle of "one union in one industry";
3. In those industries where such unification of unions is not thought possible, the basis should be laid on which industrial disputes can be handled. How this should be done should be discussed at the tripartite conferences whose decisions should be incorporated in a new trade union law to be adopted;
4. "Works Committees" should be organised in every industrial enterprise and they should have wide powers in regulating and controlling the conditions of work in the respective industries;
5. Management Councils should be organised in enterprises in order to help managements in bringing about efficiency in the enterprises as well as to familiarise the employees with the financial and other problems facing the enterprise. Such councils should be adequately represented by the representatives of employees.

While regulating the employer-employee relations in the industrial field on the above lines, the Government will try to take steps to regulate the wage and salary scales, as well as working conditions, of the agricultural labourers, middle-class employees including the non-gazetted officers, etc.

4. Agrarian Reforms

It is acknowledged by all that the agrarian question in our State is rather complicated. This question will, therefore, require consultations with the various sections of the people concerned for working out the details of agrarian reforms. Certain broad lines of policy have already been worked out which can provide the basis for such discussion. These are the lines of policy laid down by the Land Reforms Panel of the Planning Commission. They have secured the support of such all-India parties as the Congress, the Communist Party and the PSP as well as of several organisations representing the peasantry. Therefore, the above

mentioned consultations need not take a long time, but can be finished relatively quickly. Within a short and definitely-fixed time-limit, we expect to prepare one or more bills fixing fair rent, giving fixity of tenure to the tenant, fixing a ceiling on landholdings in keeping with the peculiar conditions of Kerala, distributing surplus land above the ceiling fixed, giving such safeguards as are legitimate for those small landholders who stand to lose by the above-mentioned reforms, etc. Since the peasants require some immediate relief while the above-mentioned reforms are being worked out, it will be necessary to bring in emergency legislation staying all evictions.

5. Government and People

I would like to draw the attention of the people to something which is common to the above-mentioned lines of action, as well as to several others which are not explained in this statement. That is the question of the relations between our Government and the organisations of various sections of the people.

The programme which we have outlined for the development of Kerala is one which touches every aspect of the life of the people of Kerala. Our Party has its own distinct views and definite proposals on each of them. At the same time, we require full and detailed consultations with all sections of the people who are connected with every one of the items included in the programme; only such consultations with the organisations of the people will enable us to work out our programme in its detailed and final form.

For instance, as I have already indicated the development programmes of Kerala will be made the subject-matter of consultation with all political parties, mass organisations and individuals or groups of experts. Similarly, we will try to find solutions to the problems of industrial labour through tripartite conferences and have agrarian problems solved through consultation with all these sections of the people who are connected with that problem. It is as a basis of such consultations that the party's manifesto has made certain proposals on the above-mentioned subjects.

The same approach is made by us with regard to education, medical aid, culture, etc. We would concretise and finalise our programme in the field of education only on the basis of consultations with the organisations of teachers and students, and it is for such consultations that we would take the proposals made in the Manifesto as a working basis. So, too, shall we take the proposals made with regard to medical aid for consultations with doctors and its proposals regarding the cultural field for consultations with cultural workers.

I am giving below some of the major problems for which solutions have to be found through such consultations and the broad lines on which we propose to initiate the discussions.

(a) *Unemployment* A full and permanent solution for this problem cannot obviously be found under the present set-up. But a partial solution for the problem of rural unemployment can be found by carrying out the programme of fixing a ceiling on landholdings and distributing the surplus land above the ceiling as also the available Government lands. Similarly unemployment in the sectors of small and cottage industries can be partially solved through the machinery of co-operative organisations in these fields. Partial solution can also be found for the problem if the agricultural and industrial development plans that we have in view are implemented. There would, of course, be sections of people who will not get relief through any of these measures. That being so, the question will arise: is there any feasible way of giving such sections of the people employment opportunities and if so, what? This will have to be discussed in the Planning Conference envisaged above.

(b) *The Place of Malayalam Language* The broad policy that we have adopted is to make Malayalam the language of administration right up to and including the work of the State Legislature and of the State Secretariat, as well as the language of education right up to and including university education. There are, however, questions such as how much of these can be immediately implemented, which of them

will take some time, which of them are today facing certain technical difficulties and how to overcome them, etc. On all these questions, consultations will have to be organised with the sections of the people concerned.

- (c) *Local Self-Government*: There should be elected organs of administration at every level side by side with the official organs if democratic institutions are to grow strong in our country. But what exactly should be the form of such elected organs; should there be taluk boards at the taluk level and district boards at the district level; or is it necessary to have only village panchayats; what should be the relations of local self-government institutions at various levels among themselves and with the official organs of administration- these are questions which require further consultation.

To facilitate such consultations, the Government should give all help and encouragement to such of the people's organisations as already exist and are in a position to fulfil these tasks. At the same time, such organisations should be created in those fields and for such sections of people where such organisations do not exist. The Government will consider it as one of its tasks to help the emergence of such organisations.

6. A Decent Administration

If the above-mentioned items of our programme are to be carried out, it is necessary to put an end to the evils of corruption and injustices that continue in the administration and to create a good and decent administration.

We have no illusions that it would be an easy task to bring about such a change in the administration. We know that considerable improvement will be registered in this respect only if we wage a constant and uncompromising struggle against those evils that have become deep-rooted not only in the present system of administration but in the whole social order. We pledge ourselves to look upon this as one of our major tasks. At the same time, I would like to inform the people that the Government's attention will be drawn to the following three tasks connected

with it. I would also appeal to the people to help us with suggestions and comments on how to carry out each of the three tasks given below.

Firstly, it should be made part of the consciousness of the entire people that it is the responsibility of every citizen to expose every single action taken by those in authority—from Ministers down to the village officials—which are against the accepted rules and regulations as well as justice; to draw the attention of those in authority to these misdeeds and to help the taking of prompt steps against them. It is the task of every organisation and every individual, who is interested in justice being done, to raise their voice against every single action taken by any official by way of bribery, nepotism and other evils. So, too, is it the task of the higher authorities to make prompt enquiries and to take appropriate steps against whom such complaints are made. To create this consciousness among the people and to bring about a corresponding change in the attitude of Government officials—this is a task in which a very important role has to be played by the organisations of Government employees.

Secondly, the present mode of functioning and procedures of business of Government departments from the Secretariat of the State Government down at every level, are such as encouraging, rather than putting an end to, several evils in the administrative set-up. The gulf that exists between the administrative machinery and the people, the red-tapism that makes for undue delay in carrying on business, the facilities that are available to certain sections to influence those in authority—these are factors that lay the basis for the evils in administration. How to put an end to this state of affairs, how to work out such modes of functioning and procedures of business as to make the business of administration more efficient and more just—this is a question to which the Government will pay its immediate attention and start appropriate discussions.

Thirdly, it is necessary to bring about an order and system in the personal life and official activities of the Ministers themselves. It will prove a big obstacle in the way of a good and

decent administration if the impression is created that the relatives, friends, colleagues in public work, etc., of the Ministers can exert a good deal of pressure on them. Each of us will do our best to see that such an impression is not created. This, however, is inadequate. It is equally necessary to evolve certain rules of conduct which are clear and capable of strict enforcement in order to guide the activities of the Ministers. Whatever discussions we hold among ourselves on this question will be made known to the people. At the same time, I request the people to give their advice and suggestions on how this is to be actually implemented.

I do not propose to further prolong this statement which is already long enough. I am closing this with an appeal to all men of goodwill belonging to all political parties and sections of the people to help us in carrying out the programme outlined above. In doing so, I deem it necessary to specially address those parties which will be functioning in the legislature as opposition as well as to those parties who are not in the legislature but are fighting our Government from outside the legislature.

I would like to tell them that we would welcome every step they take by way of criticising our Government, pointing out the mistakes and inadequacies in the bills that we introduce and in the executive measures that we undertake; bring out the injustices that we, Ministers, individually or the Government as a whole, perpetrate. This is certainly the responsibility of the parties and organisations of the opposition. At the same time, I would remind them that their criticism should be such as to help us in correcting our mistakes and that they should offer us their support whenever we do something which is good and beneficial to the people.

I may remind them that this is the manner in which the Communist Party functions in the Central Parliament and in the State Legislatures of those States where our Party is in the minority. The greatest example of this attitude of ours is the support that we render to the Congress Government in the matter of its foreign policy and to certain aspects of its internal policies.

In the Travancore-Cochin State Legislature, too, our Party supported the land reform measures introduced by the PSP and later the Congress Government which we thought were good and beneficial to the peasantry, so far as they went. I hope that these parties which are in opposition now will adopt towards us this same attitude which we adopted towards them when they were in Government.

I have no doubt in my mind that, if the other parties adopt this attitude, the new Government will be able to take the first steps towards building a democratic and prosperous new Kerala and to carry forward the struggle for it.

Trivandrum,
5.4 1957