



Government of Assam  
অসম চৰকাৰ

# VOTE ON ACCOUNT



## Budget Speech 2021-22

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*Speaker Sir*, as I rise before you and this August Assembly to present my Vote on Account Budget, 2021, I would like to commence by invoking the following verse from Bhagavad Geeta;

***Karmanyevadhikaraste  
Ma Phaleshu Kadachana,  
Ma Karmaphalaheturbhur  
Ma Te Sangostvakarmani***

These words of wisdom, which have guided us through the millennia, are as relevant and thought provoking today as they were when Lord Krishna spoke to Arjuna at the Battlefield of Kurukshetra.

Sir, I have been fortunate enough to present five full budgets of our Government led by our Honourable Chief Minister Shri Sarbananda Sonowal. Bhagavad Geeta speaks about *Karma and doing the right thing for the right reasons without fear or favour and without attachments to rewards*. As our Government completes 5 full years of its tenure, today is perhaps the right moment to reflect upon our promise of making Assam '*Videshi Mukh, Durneeti Mukh, Xantraxwad Mukh, and Pradhushan Mukh*'.

To the people of Assam, our *Janata Janardan*, we gave our commitment to bring in '*Parivartan*' in all spheres of our public life and governance. Sir, hand on my heart today I can, with conviction, say, that this Government has tried to deliver good governance and keep our promises to our people without fear or favour, and God and the people of Assam are witness to our endeavours.

This August House may recall that we introduced a 'White Paper' on Assam's financial health on 3<sup>rd</sup> June, 2016. Sir, it is no secret that we inherited a state with depleted finances and barely enough in the coffers to even meet the salary expenses of the Government. While, on the one hand, the budget of the state was inflated beyond means, on the other hand it was completely disconnected from fiscal governance and revenue earnings. The total expenditure as a percentage of the budget was just about 56% in the year 2015-16 with the end result being that the total expenditure for the state, hovered between Rs.30,000 crore and Rs.42,000 crore. Critical areas of public spending and crucial infrastructure expenditures had to be parked. A state of stagnation was seen in the state's own revenue generation and there was a parasitic dependency on the Central Government to make ends meet. Sir, the truth about our fiscal health was as stark as it could be. But this Government, led by Hon'ble Chief Minister of Assam, Shri Sarbananda Sonowal, dared to have a vision and a roadmap to bring back Assam's glory and forged ahead with determination and grit, ensuring we walk the talk. Our success and our commitment to the welfare of the people of Assam is an ode to the spirit of the men and women of Assam who have inspired and motivated us to deliver against all odds and hardships. Today we celebrate that eternal spirit of Assam and its people!

Rupkonwar Jyoti Prasad Aggarwala had said, and I quote,

***Xokti Putra Moi  
Bhakti Bukut Loi  
Mukti Prayaxi Hoi  
Arjun Moi, Gandhari Moi.  
Moiyei, Dhananjay – Mrityuk Korisu Joi  
Moye Axomor  
Moye Bharator  
Moye Deka Lora Agnimoy!***

Sir, before I proceed into details of the Vote on Account budget, I would like this August House's indulgence to briefly touch upon the macroeconomic scenario of our state and our nation.

Sir, with immense pride I would like to emphasize that our State has seen a steady rate of growth which has been consistently higher than the national average. Our Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) rose from Rs.2,02,080.85 crore to Rs.2,48,796.15 crore between the years 2016-17 to 2019-20 at constant prices. This annual growth rate stood at 7.71% against the national annual growth rate of 6.11% in the same period. At current prices, the GSDP rose from Rs.2,54,382.36 crore in 2016-17 to Rs.3,51,317.77 crore in 2019-20 at an annual growth rate of 12.7% against an All India Growth Rate of 10.72%. Sir, during the same period, the per capita income of Assam rose from Rs.66,330 in 2016-17 to Rs.90,692 in 2019-20.

Moving on, I would now like to reflect on the state of our revenues and shed some light on our sources of funds that form the foundation of our budget. Sir, I would also like to dwell upon the impact of the Union Budget and the grants accorded therein in the light of our state's fiscal situation. In its final report, the 15th Finance Commission, has recommended Rs.20,601 crore as our state's share in Central Taxes for 2021-22. This includes a grant of Rs.1,075 crore for the construction of embankment-cum-road on the periphery of Majuli and Rs.300 crore for the comprehensive development of the Kamakhya temple. Furthermore, Hon'ble Finance Minister of India has also significantly enhanced the revenue deficit grant to states this year in the Union Budget which will boost our finances even further. Sir, in addition, the Union Budget has given several special considerations for Assam which I

would like to briefly highlight - 1,300 kilometres of additional national highway road infrastructure amounting to Rs.34,000 crore and a provision of Rs.1000 crore for the welfare of tea garden workers for our state and West Bengal. On behalf of our state, I express our gratitude towards Hon'ble Prime Minister and Hon'ble Finance Minister for this generous allocation.

Sir, our Government, in the past 5 years, has tapped into a larger pool of resources from the Central Government by the way of increased funding under Centrally Sponsored Schemes and Externally Aided Projects grants (EAPs). It is worth mentioning here that we received Rs.10,444.07 crore on account of Centrally Sponsored Schemes from Government of India in the year 2016-17, which has gone up, to Rs.16,101.54 crore in the year 2019-20. This has helped us majorly in increasing our pool of expendable resources. During the same period, our receipts on account of Externally Aided Projects grants have gone up from Rs.516.21 crore in 2016-17 to Rs.1,606.08 crore in 2019-20. In this context, the major Externally Aided Projects under which our Government has sourced funding are Assam Urban Infrastructure Investment Project (AUIIP), Assam Agribusiness and Rural Transformation Project (APART), Assam State Road Project and NDB funded Assam Bridge Project to name a few.

Sir, we were the first state to ratify the historic Goods and Services Tax (GST) Bill, which subsumed five major taxes namely, VAT, CST, Entry Tax, Luxury, Amusement and Betting Tax. This consolidation has enabled a paradigm shift in the taxation structure of the State. Our State has played a key role as a member of the GST Council and has received a favourable compensation package from the Central GST portion at an annualised growth rate of 14%. Assam was also able to negotiate under the umbrella of special exemptions meant for the North East and Hill States especially for our industries.

Here, it will be amiss of me if I do not elaborate on the success that our Government has had in generating revenues within the state. Due to the sincere efforts of the State Government, the major revenue earning departments have consistently yielded positive results, with the state's own revenues now making up about 26% of the total revenue receipts. During the year 2019-20, the State's own tax revenue generation stood at Rs.16,529 crore. Sir, our tax revenues have seen a steady increase from Rs.12,079.56 crore in the year 2016-17 to Rs.16,528.69 crore in the year 2019-20, at an 8.16 % compounded annual growth rate.

Sir, the non-tax revenue income has also seen an increase, mainly on account of the receipt of arrears due as royalties, on various accounts from the Government of India. Sir, our Government has relentlessly pursued the matter of royalties owed to our state from oil companies, and thus far, we have been able to obtain about Rs.7,756 crore as oil royalty arrears between the years 2016-17 to 2019-20. Here again, I would like to thank our Hon'ble Prime Minister for his personal intervention in this matter.

Sir, now I would like to shed some light on the journey of the State and initiatives taken by our Government during my tenure as the Finance Minister. Sir, the macroeconomic stability of the State, the need for stimulating economic growth and Government expenditure on critical infrastructure and social security have been the mantras I have tried to live by. Our Government has engaged in prudent and sound fiscal management, which has resulted in keeping in check the fiscal and revenue deficit during the last 5 years. I am honoured to state today that side by side with stringent fiscal management, our Government has managed to give an enhanced budgetary outlay year on year; from Rs.83,017 crore in the year 2016-17, to Rs.99,453 crore in the year 2017-18, Rs.1,08,490 crore

in the year 2018-19, Rs.1,19,720 crore in the year 2019-20 and Rs.1,22,341 crore in the year 2020-21. This has meant a 47.37 % increase in the budgetary outlay over the 5 years of our Government. Sir, these numbers reflect our Government's commitment to ensure the state's economic development. Sir, Assam has to realise its potential and take her destined position as a progressive state. The dream of a "**xujola, xuphola, xashya-shyamola Axom**" has been paid a lip service to for many a decade, but no longer. A vibrant Assam is a reality today. Here I would also like to emphasize on the fact that our Government has not been simply increasing the outlays but has also ensured a higher utilization of those budgets. Sir, in 2019-20, we were able to achieve a budget utilization of about 68% which is a significant improvement over earlier years. This means that the actual expenditure made has grown almost twofold, from Rs.41931.32 crore in the year 2015-16 to Rs.81,088 crore in the year 2019-20, during 4 years of our Government. Speaker Sir, I seek to underline the emphasis that the government has placed on confirming to the certification for utilization of public financial resources. For the first time in the recent past, for the financial year 2016-17 out of a total of 1863 original drawals, 1839 utilization certificates have been submitted to the Accountant General (AG) which makes up 98.71% of the drawals. Similarly, for the financial year 2017-18, 2031 utilization certificates have been submitted to AG against a total of 2267 drawals, which comes to nearly 90%. I would like thank the Accountant General of Assam for enabling us to ensure this high level of compliance.

Sir, here I would also like a moment to highlight the fact that in the last 5 years, we have increased our expenditure envelope manifold. The carving and designing of this envelope has also undergone a dramatic shift. Sir, under the able leadership of our Hon'ble Chief Minister, our Government has focused on asset and value creation, rather than simply

increasing revenue expenditure. This can be evidenced by the mention in the Auditor General's report on the state's finances in the year 2018-19, that our capital expenditure has undergone an increase from Rs.6,001 crore in 2016-17 to Rs.13,501 crore in 2019-20, a doubling of spend in the last 4 years.

Speaker Sir, during past four years, Finance Department has also been undertaking systematic reforms to underpin our commitment to better governance, increased transparency and to improve the ease of doing business. We have introduced the Integrated Financial Management Information System (IFMIS) which encompasses online budgeting, online budget distribution and resumption, re-appropriation, e-ceiling management, online salary bill and e-budgeting on a single platform. Furthermore, we are working rigorously towards the full-fledged implementation of electronic approvals of administrative approvals and financial sanctions in the state. The Computerised Treasury Management Information System (CTMIS) has brought in effective automation of all the treasury functions wherein the salary bills and other payments are now processed online without the need of physical movement of files between various Departments. As on date, Sir, and my Cabinet Colleagues will acknowledge, processing of budgets and payments have become much simpler and efficient. And last but not the least, Sir, this initiative has helped us make the entire process of ceiling management and payment release shorter and more transparent, and has thus helped us avoid the end of fiscal rush in the month of March every year.

Sir, another key reform introduced by the Finance Department is the implementation of eGRAS (Government Receipt and Accounting System), which is a common collection portal for the State of Assam for collection of all revenue deposits in the state exchequer. Citizens, tax payers can now pay their taxes, fees, fines and other dues to the Government



through this portal online and generate a receipt thereof. This, Sir, has been a major reform to ensure ease of doing business, so that the ordinary citizen, tax payer does not have to wait in long queues for payment of their dues.

Sir, our Government has always had this vision of bringing the Government closer to the people. With this philosophy in mind, we have opened and operationalized 21 new sub-treasuries in the State to allow for greater accessibility to citizens.

Sir, in the direction of increasing transparency and improving the ease of doing business in the domain of public procurements, our Government has undertaken visionary reforms. The Government has focused on the effective utilization of Government e-Market place (GeM) portal to facilitate and support procurement requirements of various Departments. As of today, the active number of buyers stands at 131 and the active number of sellers stands at 12791. Speaker Sir, with a total transaction volume of 1926, the current value of total procurements done through GeM for Assam, stands at Rs.400.64 crore. It is worthwhile to mention here that the World Bank has chosen our state as one of the only five Government entities in the World for their programme in handholding for replication of best practices in public procurement from South Korea.

Furthermore, acting upon the vision of '*Durneeti Mukh Asom*' set forth by our Hon'ble Chief Minister, Shri Sarbananda Sonowal, our Government has enacted the Assam Public Procurement Act, 2017 to ensure complete transparency, expediency and efficiency in the process of public procurement. The rules to implement this act have also been notified in September last year. Sir, it is indeed a matter of pride for all of us that Assam is a pioneering state in this area, being only the fourth state in the country to have a dedicated law for

public procurement. We are also taking necessary steps to build capacity of the state government officials to implement the Act in letter and spirit and also to enhance public access to procurement information.

Hon'ble Speaker Sir, 2020-21 has been unprecedented in the history of mankind. The COVID-19 pandemic not only threatened the lives and health of all of us, it also resulted in a never witnessed before lockdown across the globe including India, which impacted our GDP growth in the negative. Assam too faced adverse growth figures, especially in the first two quarters of this financial year and our revenue targets were affected. Our State, however, exhibited exemplary resilience and financial adroitness. I am justifiably proud of the fact that we did not make any deductions in the salaries of our Government employees, as had been the case with some other states, and also ensured a timely disbursement of their pensions.

Speaker Sir, I think my colleagues in this House will agree that the last 12 months have been a test for all of humanity- mentally, emotionally, physically and financially. One of the biggest challenges of my public life has been the leadership I had been called upon to give in the management of this pandemic. Our Government, to tide over this storm, adopted the three 'T's' as our strategic tool- Test, Trace and Treat. Our continuing emphasis has been on infrastructure creation, including ICU and ventilation facilities, strengthening the skills of our frontline manpower, embracing and adopting COVID-19 management protocols and best practices, and motivating and energizing on ground delivery. I feel a great sense of achievement and pride in the team of men and women who have tirelessly delivered our successful containment of this pandemic. I would also like to thank the people of Assam for working with us to generate mass awareness on

'COVID appropriate behavior'. Sir, this has been probably one of greatest moments of satisfaction for me in my entire public life, and I would like to thank the doctors, paramedical and nursing staff, enforcement departments, district administrations, health department and NHM officials. While the role of doctors and nurses has been critical in saving lives, the services rendered by the other healthcare staff were no less important in ensuring the functioning of the facilities and they are the unsung heroes in the true sense. I must also mention that many answered to the call for being engaged temporarily to meet the emergent need for more laboratory technicians, data entry operators, cleaners, ward boys and girls at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. The people of Assam are grateful for the services rendered by all of them during the darkest hour. As a result, our State has consistently maintained a high COVID- 19 recovery rate of 98.73% and one of the lowest mortality rates at 0.50% which has been nationally and globally acknowledged. Sir, our Hon'ble Prime Minister in his recent visit to Sivasagar had also expressed his appreciation for our management of COVID-19..

In this context, I would like to highlight that to finance our fight against COVID-19, we received a grant of Rs.72.73 crore for the year 2019-20 from Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. In addition, we received Rs.182 crore recently for the year 2020-21 for Covid-19 management. Further, for the rollout of first phase of the vaccination programme for our frontline workers, Government of India has provided a grant of Rs.2.46 crore. I would like put on record our gratitude to the Government of India for their support in this regard. Sir, in addition, we have also received funds amounting to Rs.4.99 crore and Rs.8.36 crore from the Development of North Eastern Region (DONER) Ministry and GIZ India for management of COVID-19. Speaker Sir, I would also like to impress upon this August House that our Government allocated an additional

Rs.760.00 crore for the Prevention and Management of COVID-19 Pandemic to the General Budget grant of Rs.6126 crore allocated to the Health Department.

Speaker Sir, Covid was a difficult time. The number of active cases was rapidly increasing but the resources were scarce. At such a critical time, citizens of Assam stood firmly behind us. They not only provided moral support but also made generous financial contribution of Rs.116.89 crore to the Assam Aarogya Nidhi in a very short time span. I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to all the donors who stood by us in this crisis. At the same time, I would also like to inform this August House, as well as the people of Assam, that by God's grace, we have not had to touch this fund so far. The entire fund has been kept intact and we will utilize it with utmost prudence to fight Covid in the coming times.

Here, I would also like to highlight that during the course of the year, we have been able to set up 1000 ICU beds and 4500 regular hospital beds, and a provision of 1408 ventilators and 4541 oxygen cylinders for the fight against the pandemic. These basic infrastructure enhancements have not only helped in our fight against the pandemic but shall also be useful adjuncts to our existing health care infrastructure in the days to come. Speaker Sir, at this moment, however I would like to underline the fact that our fight against this virus or the recovery from the challenges posed by this pandemic is far from over. The time has still not come to let our guard down. We have to remain alert and we have to proactively prepare and manage the next phase of the fight against the disease. Vaccination drive to cover our population and give them a reasonable safety net is our next objective with a provision of 6.6 lakh vaccine doses. I am happy to inform this August House that more than 1.15 lakh doses inoculations have been conducted till date. In parallel, the fight to keep further waves of this virus from appearing in our state continues.

Sir, the founding principles of our Constitution emphasized inclusive development and economic progress and this has been a cornerstone of our Government's policies. We have also been guided by Deendayal Upadhyay's concept of Integral Humanism. Sir, under the umbrella of our Honourable Prime Minister's vision of '**Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas**' our Government has taken forth these guiding philosophies into the domain of governance and each and every budget that I have presented in this August House has been a reflection of these objectives and aspirations.

Sir, in the last five years, under the leadership of Hon'ble Chief Minister Shri Sarbananda Sonowal, we dreamt and aspired for transformational change and development and thus introduced various flagship schemes aimed at the holistic development of our state and we named this **Astadash Mukutar Unnoyonee Maala**. We started the practice of taking up 18 flagship schemes each year, taking inspiration from the 18 chapters of **Bhagvad Gita**. Each year we kept to our promised objective of inclusive, aspirational development and ensured that the composition of these flagship schemes remains dynamic, reflecting equitable and transformational Assam. I would now like to highlight some of the noteworthy achievements of these flagship schemes.

## **1. WOMEN EMPOWERMENT**

Speaker Sir, the father of our Constitution Babasaheb Ambedkar said, "*I measure the progress of a community by the degree of progress which women have achieved*". A society which fails to empower 50% of its population cannot aspire to inclusiveness or progressive development. Our Government has thus ensured affirmative action to ensure women have a greater role in the development journey of our state. To this objective, we have launched several notable schemes under the banner of **Astadash Mukutar Unnoyonee Maala**:

## **1.1 Orunodoi**

Speaker Sir, in my previous year's budget, I had stated that the most effective way of lifting millions of our people out of poverty is by making substantial income transfers at one time. Sir, in order to help our mothers and sisters, especially the ones who belong to the economically weaker sections of our society, our Government launched the ambitious *Orunodoi* Scheme in the last budget. This Scheme has adopted the Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) platform, to extend direct financial benefit to these vulnerable and marginalized women in our communities. *Orun – odoi*, speaker sir, has literally given these women a ray of hope, symbolized by the rising Sun. With the active support of banks, money has started flowing into the bank accounts of more than 17,25,590 beneficiaries till date. This is an unprecedented development milestone achieved by our Government, which has had multiple benefits – economic empowerment, financial literacy, extension of nutritional support and, above all, taking development to each and every home and hearth.

Speaker sir, as stated earlier, Orunodoi is a dynamic scheme which attempts to cover the economically deprived sections of our society. It is possible that a section of people, who are otherwise eligible, have not been included under this scheme at present due to target related limitations. We are working on this and would like to expand this target further, to include more beneficiaries under the ambit of Orunodoi, to make this ambitious scheme more inclusive in days ahead. Furthermore, in line with the overarching objective of this scheme, other standalone welfare schemes may be subsumed under Orunodoi. We also propose to increase the net benefits under this scheme in coming times, to give a monthly payout of up to Rs. 3000. However, this goal cannot be achieved overnight. It will require meticulous planning and implementation in a phased manner.

## **1.2 Arundhati Gold Scheme**

Sir, to all those who have contributed to the shine of this well-intentioned scheme, named after *Arundhati* – a bright nakshatra in our skies, I would like to reiterate again on this occasion the economic justification of this Scheme. When a daughter enters her married life, it is with dreams and hopes for a future and the Blessings of her parents as she starts a new chapter of her life. Our Government introduced the *Arundhati* Gold Scheme, with the philosophy that every daughter in our state, even from the economically underprivileged background, has some means to support herself in this life's journey. The Scheme allows for 1 *tola* gold, later replaced by Rs.40,000, to be directly transferred to the beneficiary girl entering into matrimony, whose family's annual income is below Rs.5 lakh. Sir, I take immense pride in announcing before the House that 1815 young women and their families have benefitted from this innovative Scheme and the total expenditure has been Rs.726 lakh till date. While we are proud of this commendable achievement, we also acknowledge that much needs to be done to expand the beneficiary base under this scheme. In coming times, revenue department shall take necessary steps to spread mass awareness about this scheme so that more and more newly-weds can avail benefits under this scheme.

## **1.3 Kanaklata Mahila Sabalakaran Yojana**

Sir, Mahatma Gandhi said that the true India resides in our villages. Our country and state cannot achieve economic glory till our rural hinterlands join this journey of growth and development. Speaker Sir, to this effect our Government has also realized that until and unless the women in our villages are empowered, our economic ambitions will remain unfulfilled. The *Kanaklata Mahila Sabalakaran Yojana*, named after the 16-year-old inspirational brave heart and freedom fighter

*Birangana Kanaklata* of our state, aims to financially empower Self Help Groups (SHGs) by giving one time grant of Rs.25,000 and to provide capital subsidy of Rs.50,000 per SHG on bank loans. Sir, this Scheme has truly revolutionized the rural economy with 1,99,705 Self Help Groups benefitting from this grant. The total utilized amount for this Scheme is Rs.287.74 crore. This has vastly exceeded our initial target of reaching about 1 lakh Self Help Groups. In addition, 67,837 Self-Help Groups have availed bank loans with 3% interest subvention. This, Speaker Sir, is truly a remarkably achievement which our Government is justifiably proud of!

## **2. INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT**

Sir, infrastructure is the foundational bedrock of development, and a pre-requisite for transforming an economy, and a key driver of a higher rate of growth. In the last four years, our Government has undertaken a concerted and progressive campaign to reshape the nature of expenditure in our Budget from a revenue focus to an emphasis on capital expenditure. Between the years 2016-17 and 2019-20, our capital expenditure has gone up from Rs.6,001 crore to Rs.13,501 crore. This has been achieved primarily through a multitude of schemes launched under the banner of our flagship schemes – *Astardash Mukutar Unnoyonee Maala*.

### **2.1 Asom Darshan**

The poet Mitradev Mahanta eulogized our state in his immortal poem thus:

*Siro Senehi, Mur Bhaxa Jononi  
Aai Dhanya, Punya Haat Pavoni  
Prakoti Porox, Roxe Amol Komol  
Chanchal Hodi – Jole Dhale Porimol*

Assam is indeed a paradise of unparalleled natural beauty! Speaker Sir, our state can be a leader in the tourism industry



if we can unlock our potential. The **Asom Darshan** Scheme, which we launched as one of our flagship programmes with the stated objective of making Assam a tourist destination of choice, has made significant progress in this regard. The pillars of this Scheme are (a) grant of annuity to *Devalayas*, (b) improving key infrastructure of places of religious, scenic and historic interest and (c) to improve the connectivity to these places of interest. Sir, under this scheme we have transferred Rs.10.00 lakh as the 1<sup>st</sup> installment to 915 institutions consisting of a mix of temples, *Xatras*, *Namghars*, mosques, churches and *Gurudwaras* to improve their infrastructure and amenities for the pilgrims.

Speaker Sir, **Mahapurush Srimanta Sankardev**, the Guardian Saint of Assam established the institution of *Namghars* as the focus of our communities. For centuries *Namghars* have survived joining the greater Assamese society in a unified, celebratory spirit. I am happy to inform that we have transferred Rs.218.9 crore to 8,756 *Namghars* till date to develop their infrastructure and facilities. In addition, 128 kilometres of roads have been built to connect these *Namghars* to the outside world. I am also proud to note here that, as committed during my previous year's budget, the Rs.188 crore project for development of *Batadrava Than* was launched by the hands of Hon'ble Home Minister of India in December 2020.

In times ahead, we intend to expand Asom Darshan scheme to include each and every *Namghar* of the state. I am also of the view that the spiritual places belonging to our tribal communities need to be developed to protect their indigenous culture and traditions.

## **2.2 Asom Mala**

Speaker Sir, roads are truly the arteries of a nation's health, wealth and progress. Roads join people and bring communities together. A milestone in development of Assam

has been achieved with the recent launch of Asom Mala by Hon'ble Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi on 7th February 2021 at Dhekiajuli. Sir, our Government introduced the *Asom Mala* scheme to have an exponential impact on the development and growth trajectory of our state and unify our hearts and minds. This programme will improve the State Highways (SH) and Major District Roads (MDR) network in the next 15 years. It will provide inter-linkage between National Highways and rural roads with high speed corridors, booting economic growth. The programme strives to bring the State road infrastructure at par with comparable Southeast Asian economies. It is unique in its emphasis on effective maintenance through continuous field data collection and its linkage with the Road Asset Management System (RAMS). Initially, 890 kms of roads network are being taken up with funding from State Government and two Externally Aided Projects i.e, namely, Assam Secondary Road Network Improvement Project and Assam Road Network Improvement Project. The financial outlay is Rs. 8210 crore. Under the aegis of this Scheme, we have sanctioned 343 kilometres of roads, out of which a pilot of 26 kilometres of roads have been completed with an expenditure of about Rs.150 crore and about 55 kilometres of road construction is in progress.

### **2.3 Uttaran Scheme**

As every member of the House will appreciate, since 2018-19, the Uttaran Scheme has been a key enabler in fulfilling the needs and aspirations of the people of our constituencies and to bring us, the public representatives closer to our constituents. Under this scheme 124 'signature' projects in 124 constituencies across the state were launched. Of these, 6 projects have already been completed namely Sidli LAC, Udalguri LAC, Jagiroad LAC, Dhing LAC, Nagaon (Sadar) LAC and Dibrugarh LAC.

## **2.4 Conversion of 1000 Timber Bridges into RCC Bridges and Construction of Rail Over Bridges**

Sir, for long Assam has lagged in all-weather connectivity because of the network of timber bridges that span our state. With a view to mitigate this gap in infrastructure, our Government undertook the long felt need of converting the dilapidated timber bridges into permanent RCC bridges and to build new RCC bridges as a critical priority. I would like to inform this August House today that so far work on 2041 bridges has already started of which we have completed work on 870 bridges which is a remarkable achievement of this Government.

## **2.5 City Infrastructure Development Fund (CIDF)**

Sir, as we modernize, increasingly the urban centres become the nerve centres of our national life and engines of economic growth. The City Infrastructure Development Fund (CIDF) is part of our Government's endeavour to ensure that we harness the power of our towns and cities and build durable assets such as public parks, landmark roads, district libraries, stadiums etc., which will allow for balanced development and quality of life for our citizens. We have now rolled out this Scheme in six cities with population more than 1 lakh and 8 second tier towns with populations exceeding 40,000 across the state. The City Infrastructure Development Fund has created sustainable assets worth Rs.11.16 crore so far across these urban centres, and assets worth a further Rs.710.45 crore are under construction in these cities and towns. Administrative approval for 187 projects amounting to a total of Rs.775.40 crore has been accorded under this programme.

## **3. TEA TRIBES WELFARE**

Speaker Sir, who amongst us has not been bewitched by the beauty our tea gardens and the flavour and aroma of Assam tea! Tea export from Assam is a major foreign exchange

earner and has also for long been the backbone of our state's economy. There are approximately 60 lakh people belonging to the Tea Tribes of Assam. For long, these communities have been at the margins of our national life. Sir, the Father of our Nation, Mahatma Gandhi propounded the concept of "Sarvodaya" or "rise of all" as the edifice of a modern Indian nation state. Shri Deen Dayal Upadhyay emphasised the principle of 'Antyodaya' which literally means the "rise of the last person" Shri Upadhyay further said "***The measurement of economic plans and economic growth cannot be done with those who have risen above on the economic ladder but of those who are at the bottom,***". The two pillars of Sarvodaya and Antodyaya thus have been at the heart of our Government's economic development and social welfare programmes which have been implemented for the upliftment of our tea tribe brothers and sisters.

### ***3.1 Welfare Schemes for Tea Tribes and Adivasi Community***

Speaker Sir, in my each and every budget, I have continuously increased the number of welfare schemes for our tea tribes and Adivasi community. Sir, in order to provide assistance to the students belonging to the tea tribe communities for their higher educational ambitions, our Government, under the "*Simon Sing Horo Scholarship Scheme*" has offered Rs.10,000 as a one-time support to all students from these communities who had passed HSLC and HSSLC examinations. A total of 2,051 students have so far benefitted from this scheme from 2019 to date. For encouraging the entrepreneurial spirit among the tea tribe and Adivasi youths, our Government has provided a one-time grant, under the scheme "*Swahid Dayal Das Panika Swaniyojan Achoni*", amounting to Rs.25,000 to any eligible young person to support them in setting up small entrepreneurial activities. Under this, 11,090 beneficiaries have availed seed money with a total outlay of Rs.277.25 lakh during the year 2019-20.

Speaker Sir, connectivity, both physical and digital still remains a major constraint in the tea garden areas. To address this infrastructure gap, our Government has undertaken the distribution of smart phones to 11,858 of line sardars. Furthermore, the state Public Works Department has initiated the construction of 896 kilometres of paver block roads in tea garden labour lines out of which 625 kilometres have already been completed. These activities have received tremendous appreciation from the beneficiary communities.

### ***3.2 Affordable Nutrition and Nourishment Assistance Yojana (ANNA Scheme)***

Sir, we are very aware and cognizant of the fact that some of the most concerning data on nutrition come from the tea garden areas. As a progressive and inclusive Government, we have been at the forefront of our efforts to address this gap. Sir to this effect we have introduced the Affordable Nutrition and Nourishment Assistance Yojana (Anna Scheme) which aim to provide rice at a rate of 1 rupee per kg which was later turned into free rice for all beneficiaries under National Food Security Act. Our Government has thus gone beyond the mandate of the National Food Security Act stipulated provision of Rs.3 per kg rate for subsidized rice. It gives me immense pleasure to inform this House that 58,85,289 families have benefitted under this scheme and the total amount of subsidy value under this scheme is Rs.767.98 crore. This measure has gone a long way to provide substantial basic nutrition to our tea tribe brethren.

### ***3.3 Wage Compensation For Pregnant / Temporary Workers Of Tea Gardens***

Sir, to address the challenges and risks faced by our women in the tea tribes community during pregnancy and post natal period and to ensure access to adequate ante natal and peri-natal care, our Government has introduced a one-time

payment of Rs.12,000 to each pregnant woman in the garden areas so that she can better take care of herself without compromising her livelihood. Sir, I would like to inform this August House that 47,520 pregnant workers have benefitted from this scheme, involving an expenditure of Rs.32.74 crore. In coming years, we will also ensure that each tea estate has a self-sustained crèche having all the necessary facilities so that the women folk can go to work without worry.

### **3.4 Assam Chah Bagicha Dhan Puraskar Yojana**

Sir, financial exclusion and the 'weekly cash cycle' have been long associated economic menace within the tea tribe communities. Our Government has taken the ambition of breaking these cycles of economic deprivation as a priority and has initiated several proactive measures. Today 7.3 lakh bank accounts of tea garden workers have been opened through our initiatives. Further, to ensure that these accounts do not go dormant, we have introduced the *Assam Chah Bagicha Dhan Puraskar Yojana* using Direct Benefit Transfer. Through this direct route of reaching the beneficiaries, and with the support of banks, we have released Rs.382.41 crore in phase 1 and phase 2 to all eligible tea tribe community members, in two installments of Rs.2500 each. Around 7.5 Lakh beneficiaries have received these amounts into their accounts. Furthermore, Rs.231.14 crore have been transferred in a third tranche of Rs.3000 each. The impact of this scheme is multi-dimensional, and therefore, it not only promotes financial inclusion but also supports creation of a social security net for the tea garden workers through revolutionary schemes like Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana and Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana.

## **4. SOCIAL SECURITY**

The International Labour Organisation defines Social Security as the protection that a society provides to individuals

and households to ensure access to health care and to guarantee income security, particularly in cases of old age, unemployment, sickness, invalidity, work injury, maternity or loss of a breadwinner. Speaker Sir this aspect of economic security had been neglected for long in our state. To address this long felt need our Government has introduced multiple initiatives to provide a public provision to the most vulnerable sections of our society. I would now like to describe the progress of our government in this critical sphere of governance –

#### **4.1 Immediate family assistance to widows**

Sir, to provide social security to the family that has lost its sole bread winner, our Government introduced a scheme to provide immediate family assistance to widows of Rs.25,000. Any woman below 45 years of age who has lost her husband is eligible for this onetime compensation under this scheme.

#### **4.2 Indira Miri Universal Widow Pension**

Sir, as a supplement to the one time grant to widows below 45 years of age, our Government has gone a step further and introduced a monthly pension of Rs.250 under the Indira Miri Universal Widow Pension. Our mothers and sisters can avail of this benefit until they attain an age of 60 years, after which they come under the ambit of our old age pension. Sir, it is a matter of personal contentment for me, that we have been able to help 1,69,930 women who have lost their husbands. We have extended total benefits amounting to Rs.40.94 crore in the year 2020-21 alone.

#### **4.3 Deen Dayal Divyangyan Pension Scheme**

Sir, a hallmark of a compassionate society is ensuring that our *Divyangyan* have the first right over our resources and are protected and cared for. Our Government has introduced the *Deen Dayal Divyangyan Pension Scheme* to

provide a monthly stipend of Rs.1,000 to our Divyang brothers and sisters. Till date, 1,60,612 beneficiaries have been provided assistance under this scheme amounting to a total sum expended of Rs.96.36 crore. As announced by the Hon'ble Chief Minister of Assam Shri Sarbananda Sonowal yesterday, we also intend to take up a special inclusion drive for Divyangjan to facilitate their inclusion in MGNREGA. We will assign this responsibility to a dedicated officer at district Level and issue special job cards to each such household. Approximately 1 lakh families of Divyangjan will be covered in the 1<sup>st</sup> phase of this initiative.

#### **4.4 Universalisation of Old Age Pension**

Speaker Sir, our scriptures say,

*“Abhivadan Shilasya  
Nityam Vriddhopasevinah,  
Chatwari Tasya Vardhante,  
Ayur Vidya Yasho Balam*

*(For those who are humble and who always serve the elderly, four things in their life steadily increase: life span, wisdom, fame and power.)*

As a society, it is our bounden duty to care for our elders. A society that abandons its elders cannot stake its rightful place as a humane and cultured society. Our Government has initiated several sweeping legislations and schemes to benefit our elderly parents and grandparents. We have introduced a pension scheme that covers each and every senior citizen in our State irrespective of their economic status entitling them to a monthly pension of Rs.250, except Government pensioners and those already covered under PRANAAM Act. A total of 12,56,698 beneficiaries have availed of this pension and the total outlay for this pension scheme stands at Rs.774.48 crore in the year 2020-21. We also see



that many of our senior citizens do not have anyone to look after them in their sunset years. In coming years, the Government should set up old age homes at each district headquarters for taking care of such senior citizens.

## **5. EDUCATION**

Late President Dr. Abdul Kalam said, and I quote, "*Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world*". Education shapes a nation's present and future. As a civilisation India has always laid emphasis on knowledge or *Gyan*. Sir, it is further said that the best form of investment a nation can make is investment in its youths. Assam, along with the rest of India, is at the cusp of a demographic dividend, the realisation of which is contingent upon our making sincere efforts to empower and educate our youths. To this end, universalization of secondary and higher education in Assam is a sine-qua-non for a bright and prosperous future for our state.

### **5.1 *Pragyan Bharati***

Speaker Sir, our Government, with an objective of promoting Secondary and Higher education, has announced several benefits including ensuring a provision for admission fee waiver for students with parental incomes of less than Rs.2 lakh. A total of 17,84,890 students have taken advantage of this fee waiver to further their higher education ambitions. Our Government has also announced distribution of free texts books to students till under graduate level. There are currently 1,08,83,914 beneficiaries under this free text book scheme. In parallel, our Government has announced free uniforms to our students in Government schools till class VIII; this scheme has now been rolled out to include all students enrolled in Government Schools up to class X at a cost of Rs.700 per year per uniform. 44,32,368 students have benefited under this scheme so far. In times to come, we also intend to provide a monthly

allowance to cover the food and transportation expenses incurred by students attending schools and colleges.

Furthermore, our Government has announced a subsidy of Rs.700 per student per month to be paid for 10 months in a year, irrespective of the economic status of the students, on their mess bills for the students staying in hostels of Government/provincial colleges and universities. This has benefitted 13,414 students.

With a view to promote education of the girl child, a scheme has been introduced to provide scooties to all girl students who secure 1<sup>st</sup> division or above in their Higher Secondary exams. A total of 23,245 Scooties have till date been distributed. We would like to continue this scheme, which acts as an enabler, in the times to come.

These cumulative efforts, on the part of our Government I sincerely believe, will usher in a new dawn for the children of our state, who are our future.

### **5.2 *Bidya Lakshmi* Scheme**

Sir, a large number of our young people cannot access higher education for the fear of their family's descent into debt to ensure that their children have the opportunity of a satisfactory education. Sir to mitigate these scenarios, the *Bidya Lakshmi* Scheme was launched in our state. This scheme, launched in my Budget of 2016-17 facilitates educational loans up to 10 lakh to State Government employees at 4% State Government interest subvention. So far, Rs.37.60 crore worth of loans have been approved covering 575 student beneficiaries.

### **5.3 *Abhinandan***

As a one-time gesture, our Government took a decision to deposit Rs.50,000 in each and every loan account of students of our state. This is aimed to act as a subsidy for each and every educational loan sanctioned till 2020-21. Under

this Scheme, a total of Rs.32.59 crore has been deposited into 5,799 accounts.

#### **5.4 *Tejasvi Navadhitamastu Edu-Infra Funds (TNEIF)***

Sir, to optimize the benefits of education for our students, emphasis on fit for purpose infrastructure of our professional colleges and universities has to be a priority. To fulfill our Government's commitment of investing in human capital development, we introduced a special grant under the name of *Tejasvi Navadhitamastu Edu-Infra Funds (TNEIF)* with a capital outlay of Rs.576 crore divided into three tranches for the infrastructure development of 35 institutions.

Sir, here I would like to share with my colleagues in this August House the example of Gauhati University which has been allocated Rs.25 crore under TNEIF scheme. Gauhati University has utilized this grant money to build accommodation facilities for two teaching departments and a convention hall. Furthermore, the University has started work on upgrading its laboratories to state of the art facilities. The University has also developed a University Networking System by laying underground fiber optic cables that not only serve their students on site, but is also helping the University to expand its online classes and enabling distance learning. This is but a small example of how this scheme is enabling the furtherance of our goal of expanding knowledge based society in our state.

Speaker Sir, here I would again like the indulgence of the House to place another example where *Tejasvi Navadhitamastu Edu-Infra Funds (TNEIF)* has helped in transforming an institution. Our Government had sanctioned Rs.100 crore each (total of Rs 300 crore) for Gauhati Medical College, Assam Medical College and Silchar Medical College for the development of infrastructure in these medical colleges. Till date, our Government has spent Rs.284.03 crore from this grant across the three medical colleges for procurement of state-of-the-art

equipment that is Cath-Lab, 3 Tesla MRI at GMCH, C-Arm X-Ray machines, High end Ultra Sound Machines, Anaesthesia Workstations, Digital Mammography and other essential equipments for better and prompt diagnostic and treatment services for our citizens.

Speaker Sir, as promised during my previous budgets, we have established five new universities, namely, Bhattadeva University at Pathshala; Rabindranath Tagore University at Hojai; Madhabdev University at Narayanpur; Sri Sri Aniruddhadeva Sports University at Chabua, Dibrugarh; and Shrimanta Shankardev Cultural University in Majuli. We are in the process of establishing Veerangana Sati Sadhoni University in Golaghat and Veer Chilarai University in Golakganj. Going forward, we would also like to establish an Agriculture University in the Barak Valley to cater to the needs of farmers in this region.

### **5.5 Provincialization of Teachers**

*Gurur Brahma, Gurur Vishnu,  
Gurur Devo Maheswarah  
Gurusakshat Parabrahma  
Tasmai Shree Gurave Namah!*

I bow my Head in Obeisance to each and every teacher in our society, for in their hands and care lies the future of our nation and state. The welfare of our teachers has always been a matter of greatest importance for our Government. Sir, our government has provincialized services of 16,508 teachers / tutors / non-teaching staff and a total of 13,217 asst. teachers across elementary, secondary and higher education sectors, adding up to a total of 29,725 jobs across the state. The House will agree with me that the approach to the provincialization process needs to be changed now. Going forward, provincialization of schools and colleges must be need-based.

Education Department is working to develop the revised criteria which will take into consideration the societal needs. This rationalization will benefit students as well as society at large. Additionally, a total of 33,993 teachers have been recruited during the past five years of our government.

## **6. HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE**

Sir, health is truly wealth and as a responsible Government, we have taken our moral duty to ensure preventive and curative care for all our citizens with due importance. Adequate provision of affordable and quality healthcare to our population has been a priority and to this intent, our Government has launched two major flagship schemes, which I would like to highlight before this August Assembly :

### **6.1 Cancer Care**

I am happy to announce that the implementation of the Assam Cancer Care Program has progressed significantly. Our vision of making available the best cancer care treatment in Assam is on the verge of being realized. The Cancer Care Centres at Guwahati, Dibrugarh, Barpeta, Diphu, Tezpur, Lakhimpur, Jorhat, Mangaldoi and Kokrajhar are scheduled to be fully functional by September 2021. In fact, the 1<sup>st</sup> phase of up-gradation of the State Cancer Institute at Guwahati is scheduled to be completed within this Financial Year itself. Apart from the construction work and installation of state of the art equipment for diagnosis and treatment, a comprehensive Human Resources action plan is being implemented in the form of training and hiring of doctors and nurses so that these centers are fully functional immediately after the construction activities are completed. The preparatory works for the Cancer Care Centers at other locations have also been carried out. It will be of great satisfaction when cancer patients and their family members no longer have to travel outside the State at great emotional and financial cost, and can get the best

treatment in their home State itself. Speaker Sir, I am not aware of any other state government which has undertaken this level of comprehensive cancer care programme. As I stated, once functional, these cancer hospitals at different tiers will benefit lakh of our cancer patients not only from Assam but also from the entire Northeast. Given the mammoth size of the programme, we would like to invite Hon'ble prime minister to inaugurate all these facilities at once from one platform.

## **6.2 Atal Amrit Abhiyan**

Sir, in budget 2016-17, we launched this landmark scheme named after our illustrious Prime Minister late Atal Bihari Vajpayee. This scheme aims to provide affordable and quality treatment for select serious ailments to the economically weaker sections of our societies. This is a cashless health assurance scheme for families with annual income below Rs.5 lakh. Sir, it is a matter of great pride and satisfaction for me personally that today my fellow citizens are receiving world class free treatment for six critical diseases as well as ICU packages, trauma care, critical care, pediatrics and pediatric surgery and bone marrow transplantation in the Best-in-Class super-specialty public and private sector hospitals within and outside the state.

Sir, in FY 2019-20, we launched the Vistarita Atal Amrit Abhiyan, an expanded version of the original scheme to cover the following specialties:

- (a) ICU Packages
- (b) Trauma
- (c) Critical Care Paediatrics
- (d) Paediatric Surgery
- (e) Japanese Encephalitis & Acute Encephalitis Syndrome
- (f) Supplementary Packages

So far, a total of 1,45,220 people have availed benefits under this scheme, of which 4,860 been covered under the *Vistarita Atal Amrit Abhiyan*.

Here, I would also like to mention about the benefits received by our citizens under the Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana which is popularly known as 'Ayushman Bharat' scheme. PMJAY was launched by Hon'ble Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi, on 23rd September, 2018. This scheme provides comprehensive coverage of upto 5 lakh Rupees per family per year for secondary and tertiary care treatment. Under this scheme, a total of 1,50,973 beneficiaries have received cashless treatment till date. It gives me immense satisfaction that, under these two schemes, we have been able to serve the people of our state in their hour of need.

**6.3** When we took on the challenge of taking the health sector facilities to a higher level, one major constraint was the number of vacancies in various posts in the Health & Family Welfare Department, particularly that of doctors and faculty members of Medical Colleges. Not only there was an overall scarcity of doctors, but even the recruitment process took time due to the numerous recruitment processes of many departments that had to be done by APSC. To overcome this issue, the State Government set up the Medical & Health Recruitment Board. This initiative has paid rich dividends since the Medical & Health Recruitment Board has made recommendations to 1412 doctors and faculty members on fast track basis since 2018. This has enabled the Department to advertise the vacant posts at regular intervals which has enabled the new pass outs to apply for the posts without waiting for long. It is also expected that the ongoing selection process for the posts of Inspector of Drugs and Food Safety Officers will be completed soon, thereby strengthening the regulatory mechanism in this domain also.

## **7. RURAL DEVELOPMENT**

Speaker Sir, Assam being primarily an agrarian economy, primacy of the rural economy and development of the agriculture sector is central to uplifting her people out of poverty.

One of the key enablers for driving the growth in this sector is the expansion of low cost institutional credit in parallel with the development of other necessary infrastructure.

### ***7.1 Assam Farmers Credit Subsidy Scheme (AFCSS) 2018***

Under this scheme, Government of Assam decided to deposit 25% of the total amount repaid by the farmers or Rs.25,000, whichever was less, per such account. I am very happy to share with the August House that a total of 1,39,130 farmers benefitted under the scheme, and we, from our side, released an amount of Rs.164 crore. Speaker Sir, this ambitious scheme has enabled our farmers to access institutional credit all over Assam by de-clogging the credit flow. Also, this has, for sure, upped the credit culture amongst the farmers.

### ***7.2 Financial Incentives For Farmers Using Kisan Credit Card (KCC)***

With a view to steer the growth of formal credit in the rural economy, our Government initiated the activation of the hitherto inactive *Kisan Credit Cards*. To facilitate this process, a one-time cash incentive of Rs.10,000 was given to each farmer for renewing their inactive *Kisan Credit Cards*. As a result, today the State boasts of having 11,82,640 active *Kisan Credit Cards* with a total outlay of Rs.48.16 crore in the form of one time incentives which has been received by our farmers in the year 2018-19.

### ***7.3 Zero interest on Crop Loans***

Sir, we have followed a multi-pronged approach for the development of formal agrarian credit. One major scheme in



this regard has been the introduction of 100% interest subvention on agricultural loans on select short term crops up to a maximum of Rs.2 lakh. I take immense pride in informing the Assembly that 10,06,305 farmers with a cumulative total loan value of Rs.5,978.73 crore have benefitted from this scheme.

#### **7.4 Chief Minister's Samagra Gramya Unnayan Yojana**

Sir, the Chief Minister's *Samagra Gramya Unnayan Yojana* is one of the most ambitious multi-sectoral schemes of our Government which aims to double our farmers' income within a period of 5 years. For this, a mega mission society was convened with a governing council chaired by our Hon'ble Chief Minister.

For the benefit of our Agriculture sector, under the Chief Minister's *Samagra Gramya Unnayan Yojana*, we distributed 9,135 Tractors with a total expenditure of Rs.454.53 crore.

For the financial upliftment of the youths of our State and to make them self employed, our Government, through the '*Ghare Ghare Pukhuri Ghare Ghare Maach*' scheme under the Fisheries vertical of the Chief Minister's *Samagra Gramya Unnayan Yojana*, provided training to beneficiaries and in parallel distributed Rs.60 lakh to them to initiate them into pisciculture as a means of livelihood

Further under this Scheme, we have developed 444 sports fields in the rural hinterland of our state with a total outlay of Rs.66 crore.

In the Veterinary sector, we have launched several projects like special intervention for livelihood and employment generation for youths in livestock sector in Bokakhat LAC, Sootea LAC, Jalukbari LAC and Majuli LAC. Similarly, we have launched an integrated dairy value chain in Sitajakhala dairy cluster in

Morigaon District. A special mention should also be made here of the Mini milk processing plant and other activities under Kannayeka Bohumukhi Pam, Jamuguri hat in Sonitpur District which is truly revolutionizing the rural economy of our state.

**7.5** Speaker Sir, we had also announced another important scheme, namely *Assam Adarsha Gram Yojana*, to transform rural Assam. Although this scheme could not take off due to the CAA protests followed by the Covid-19 crisis, we have already made the financial resources for implementation of this scheme with the field level functionary. With the support of our Hon'ble MLAs and the Deputy Commissioners, we will implement this scheme in the years to come.

#### **7.6 Efforts to strengthen the Gaon Panchayats**

While our government has taken significant steps for increasing the human resources available at Gaon Panchayat level, we are also working towards increasing public participation in the development process. As a part of this, we intend to set up Farmers' Clubs, Mahila Clubs and Sports Clubs at each Gaon Panchayat. Going forward, each Panchayat would also have a library with reading room and computer facilities. This would create appropriate environment for our rural youths to prepare themselves for their lives and careers ahead.

### **8. YOUTH EMPOWERMENT**

Sir, Swami Vivekananda immortalized the potential of youths power in his famous quote - *All power is within you: You can do anything and everything*. Sir our young have the power of transforming our nation and our society as forces of all that is good and noble. Our Government is committed to harnessing this youths power for our society. Towards this end, we have introduced the scheme of SVAYEM on which I would like to elaborate.

### **8.1 Redesigned Swami Vivekananda Youth Empowerment Yojana (SVAYEM)**

Sir, we introduced the *SVAYEM* scheme taking Self Help Groups as the foundation for youths empowerment and economic development. Further, learning from the shortcomings of the original *SVAYEM* scheme, we introduced the concept of Redesigned *SVAYEM* with the aim of raising the quantum of financial provision within this scheme to Rs.50,000 per beneficiary member of a Self Help Group. We have also taken up a mentorship and training programme to handhold them in their journey of entrepreneurship. Our goal is to inspire and encourage the youths of our society to become job providers rather than job seekers.

Sir, I would like to inform the members of this August Assembly that recently the first tranche of Re-SVAYEM has been initiated and the response has been extremely gratifying. 1,42,790 beneficiaries have received the first tranche of Rs.30,000 totaling to an amount of Rs.433.36 crore. At the same time, we have ensured that the financial health of the lenders has been taken care of, by a valid process of scrutiny of the credit worthiness of the beneficiaries. Sir, this scheme is in itself a testimony to our belief in the youths of Assam and our determination to mobilize this positive energy, as it juxtaposes access to funding with augmentation of skills for our young entrepreneurs.

We understand that certain groups that currently fall under 'Category A' are not eligible for receiving benefits under this scheme. Here, I would like to appreciate these youngsters for coming forward and enrolling themselves. To them, I assure that this scheme will continue to exist and we will do our best to provide entrepreneurial training and other support so that they can progress to Category A+ and receive benefits under the redesigned *SVAYEM* scheme.

## **MAJOR INITIATIVES**

Respected Speaker Sir, apart from the flagships schemes that I just highlighted, this Government has also instituted major initiatives in a variety of sectors. I would now like to apprise this August House of the achievements made under some of these major initiatives.

### **9. Revenue and Land Management Sector**

Land is a primary and scarce resource and its effective management forms a central focus of any public administration. Land is also one of the primary tool for fruitful economic development. I would also like to reiterate our commitment to “*Jaati, Maati, Bheti*” and a momentous achievement of our Government has been the emphasis on giving permanent land rights to the landless of our state. Every member of this August House has been a personal witness to this effort. I would like to place on record that our Government has, in its 5 years tenure, given 3,35,108 periodic *pattas* / allotment certificates, which underlines our sincerity in making good our promise to our citizens, thereby achieving the noble cause of giving land to the landless. Here, I would like to express our gratitude towards Hon’ble Prime Minister of India for taking time out of his busy schedule to grace the occasion of ceremonial distribution of land *pattas* and allotment certificates which was held in the last month.

#### **9.1 Mobile Phones for Gaon Burahs**

Panchayats form the backbone of our devolved system of governance and *Gaon Burahs* have been integral to the success of this system. In appreciation of the critical role of *Gaon Burahs* we had announced distribution of smart phones to these elders, to enable them to be in touch readily with the District Administration. I am happy to announce that 5,617 mobile phones have been distributed with an expenditure of Rs.3.92 Crore to date.

## **9.2 Formation of new district**

Sir, to facilitate good governance another major initiative taken by us has been the creation of a new District of Bajali to further improve economic activity and for better administrative control.

## **9.3 Relief package for boatmen, restaurant, etc. affected by the opening of Dhola-Sadia and Bogibeel Bridge**

Speaker, Sir I would like to apprise that our Government has allocated Rs.5 crore in the year 2019-20 to rehabilitate those who lost their livelihoods after opening of Dhola-Sadia and Bogibeel Bridges. I would like to inform that 935 beneficiaries have been given one time grants with a total expenditure of Rs.3.3 crore.

## **10. INDUSTRIAL SECTOR**

Sir, industries and associated commerce play a major role in rejuvenation and continued sustenance of economic growth in a modern state. This sector has been a key area of focus for our Government and we have undertaken the following initiatives to encourage the growth of industries and commerce in our State:

### **10.1 Bamboo- New face of MSME industries in Assam**

Sir, to leverage the potential of the ubiquitous bamboo, we decided to establish the State Bamboo Mission. We have spent Rs.6.13 crore so far to create 585 hectares of bamboo plantation in our state through this mission. During this time, we have received regular funding from the Central Government, which, till date, amounts to Rs.7 crore in total.

### **10.2 Geographical Indication (GI) Tag for various Indigenous Assam based entities**

Sir, to optimize the potential of our unique geography and agro-climatic conditions, our Government took up a major

initiative of obtaining Geographical Indication (GI) Tags for various indigenous produce and unique products. I am happy to inform the House today that the process for obtaining GI Tags for ten indigenous unique items, including tea, has already been initiated.

### ***10.3 Sarthebari Bell Metal and Other Handicrafts***

Sir, to give a shot in the arm to our local artisans, we have emphasized on reviving the brass and bell metal industry for which Rs.17.5 crore was earmarked in 2018-19 Budget of which Rs.1 crore has been utilized to support 1918 artisans and workers engaged within this industry.

### ***10.4 Equity Infusion for Expansion of Capital Projects***

To augment the capacity of Assam Petrochemicals Limited, a State owned profitable PSU and considering its growing demand for its products, our Government decided to infuse fresh capital into this corporation. This has raised the total stake of Government of Assam to Rs.177 crore in this corporation in a total asset valuation of Rs.1377 crore.

### ***10.5 Assistance to Cinema Hall entrepreneurs.***

Sir, cinema is an art form close to the heart of every Indian and the Assamese film industry has been a pioneer in this regard in particular. To promote artists and entrepreneurs in this field through Assam State Film (Finance and Development) Corporation, we have provided a subsidy of Rs.4.43 crore to ten cinema halls for their revival.

## **11. EDUCATION SECTOR**

Speaker Sir, continuing our emphasis on the education sector, our Government has made tangible and concerted efforts for the betterment of our education system. Now I would like to dwell upon a few of our major initiatives to augment this sector.

### **11.1 Gunotsav**

Sir, our Government is committed to the cause of improving the quality of Elementary Education for which we launched an assessment campaign under the name of *Gunotsav*. This was conducted in three phases covering all the (then) 33 districts of Assam and covered a total of 34,13,910 students across 46,404 schools. Sir on the basis of this assessment, the Department is has developed a gap analysis and is implementing a programme to building capacities of these schools further.

During the financial year 2019-20, our Government had announced a budget of Rs.219 crore as provision for additional classrooms, partition walls, boys' toilet and electricity in elementary schools as measures coming out of Gunotsav with a target of developing 28,766 Units. Till date, works at 8,938 Units have already been completed.

**11.2** Sir, as per the recommendations of the Committee headed by Professor Srinath Baruah, our Government has taken several reform measures in the Board of Secondary Education of Assam (SEBA). These pertain to major reforms in the conduct of the examination system, application of information communication tools (ICT), and reforming the administration and composition of the Board.

**11.3** Speaker Sir, in the financial year 2019-20, I had spoken about an initiative to bring in legislation to make the learning of Assamese as a compulsory subject in all English and other medium schools up to Class X. Now, I am glad to announce that the Assamese Language Act has been notified and has come into effect from 01-01-2021.

**11.4** Sir in the last budget, our Government had announced a budget of Rs.59.46 crore to raise the wages of the Mid Day Meal Workers by an additional amount of Rs.500 each, per month. So far 1,18,998 cook-cum-helpers have been provided with the additional honorarium as appreciation for their extraordinary services.

**11.5** Sir, for the better capacity utilization of our teachers' strength and to enhance the standard of education of our state, our Government has brought in "*The Assam Elementary and Secondary school Teachers (Regulation of Posting and Transfer), Act, 2020*" to streamline the posting and transfer of teachers of Elementary and Secondary Schools in accordance with objective assessments of requirement of teachers in these schools. This Act has already been notified on 22<sup>nd</sup> May, 2020.

**11.6** With an aim to improve menstrual hygiene among adolescent girl students of the state and with an end objective of having a higher retention of the girl child in school, in 2018-19, I had announced a monthly stipend for purchase of sanitary napkins for girls aged between 12 – 20 years of age in the budget. However, due to various reasons, there have been delays in its implementation. Sir, now I am pleased to announce that the allocated amount of Rs.23.75 crore has been sanctioned this year and the scheme will be implemented shortly.

### **11.7 New Educational Institutions**

Sir, we are not just improving the bricks and mortar infrastructure of our existing educational institutions, our Government has taken up initiatives for development of new institutions to improve the educational infrastructure of the state. Some of the major initiatives are:

- (a) The construction work of 10 Government Law College in Dhubri, Nalbari, Rangia, Nagaon, Diphu, Jorhat, Dibrugarh, Tezpur, Silchar and North Lakhimpur is already in progress and foundation stones have been laid.
- (b) Another significant announcement has been to establish nine Model Women Colleges in minority areas viz. Sonai, Chenga, Batadrava, Jaleswar, Golakganj, Bilasipara, Mangaldai, Hailakandi and Karimganj. The foundation



stones for these have been laid and the same will be fast tracked.

- (c) Furthermore, the construction of 6 (six) new graduate Colleges in Borsola (Sonitpur), Doomdooma (Tinsukia), Majuli, Baksa, Chirang and Udalguri are being expedited. Of these, the college in Tinsukia has already been operationalised and the foundation stones for the rest have been laid.

**11.8** We announced the establishment of seven new Government Colleges in the financial year 2020-21. The colleges at Borkhola in Cachar, Deaithor in Karbi Anglong, Kakopathar in Tinsukia, Katlicherra in Hailakandi have already been operationalised while the colleges at Lahorighat in Morigaon, Samaguri in Nagaon and Majer Alga in South Salmara are in progress.

**11.9** Sir, apart from management of Government educational infrastructure, we have undertaken initiatives to curb the menace of charging exorbitant fees and other malpractices prevalent in the private educational institutions of our state. In this regard we passed "*The Assam Non-Government Educational Institution (Regulation of Fees) Act, 2018*". As per the provisions of the Fee Regulation Act, the Government shall constitute a Fee Regulatory Committee which shall examine and determine the fee structure for any standard or course of study in non Governmental institutions. In pursuance of this Act, the maximum annual fee to be charged by the private educational institutions has been fixed as below :

a. For Pre-Primary and Class I to V	: Rs.27,000
b. For Class VI to X	: Rs.32,000
c. For the Science stream in classes XI to XII	: Rs.37,000
d. For the Arts stream in classes XI to XII	: Rs.32,000
e. For the Commerce stream in classes XI to XII	: Rs.33,000
f. For other stream	: Rs.35,000

## **12. EMPLOYMENT AND COOPERATIVE SECTOR**

Speaker Sir, in the last five years, our Government has taken visionary steps to augment the availability of employment opportunities to the youths of Assam. The confidence of the private sector on the socio-political turnaround and stability is clearly noticeable, and new enterprises and business units are coming up in the state. Some of the laudable achievements are :

**12.1** Since 2018-19, our government has announced an insurance amount of Rs.5 lakh for contractual employees in the event of their untimely death while in harness. Sir, in the current financial year, our government has been able to provide financial benefits to 93 families, up to January, 2021.

**12.2** Sir, as announced in the last budget, we have provided relaxation in age-limit from 38 years to 40 years, for entry into Government services in Grade III and Grade IV vacancies. Sir, we have also abolished the requirement of treasury challans for Grade III and Grade IV posts.

**12.3** Sir, to fulfil our commitment towards the youths of Assam, I have already announced that our government will proactively fill all sanctioned posts in all departments. In this regard, I am happy to announce that in the last financial year, Finance Department has provided concurrence to create 21,447 posts as per 60 proposals and have also given concurrence to fill up 14,353 posts based on 136 proposals received from the departments.

**12.4** Sir, our employees are our assets, and they are pivotal to the future of good governance of our state. In the last five years, we have initiated welfare measures for our employees. Our Government has given utmost importance to the welfare of the Muster Roll workers. We have provided the Muster Roll workers with a revised Minimum Pay Scale. In

addition, we have also extended benefits like inclusion of Health Coverage under Atal Amrit Abhiyan.

**12.5** Speaker Sir, in Budget 2017-18, we had announced compassionate family pension scheme wherein immediate dependent of the deceased employee were allowed to draw the last drawn salary of the employee without seeking any job. Such facility was made available till the date of retirement, had the employee been alive. I would like to inform the August House that this scheme has benefitted 4636 employees so far.

### **12.6 State Level Mega Skill Development Scheme**

Speaker Sir, to empower the youths of our State through proper skill development, I proposed an amount of Rs.77 crore during the Budget year 2018-19 with a target of skilling 50,000 youths each year. I am extremely happy to announce that, so far, 86,000 youths have been imparted skills development training, and an amount of Rs.100 crore has been utilized.

## **13. HEALTH SECTOR**

Speaker Sir, as I reflect on the major initiatives undertaken in the health sector, I would again wish to express my appreciation and gratitude to all healthcare workers for their tenacity and commendable dedication in the battle against the pandemic. Sir, they have been our primary shield against this menace that is COVID-19.

Our Government is committed, to protect the public health, safety and general health and wellbeing of the population of our state. With this vision, our Government has taken up various initiatives.

**13.1** Sir, with a view to provide world class health care services within the state of Assam, our Government committed itself to creating an institute of excellence of the standard of AIIMS. I am happy to state before the House that the first phase of its construction will be completed within its stipulated

deadline of June 2021. The first academic session of MBBS in AIIMS, Guwahati has already started on 12<sup>th</sup> January, 2021 in the temporary campus of the Institute of Paramedical Sciences at the Government Medical College, Guwahati campus.

**13.2** Sir, our Government had also announced a total of seven new medical colleges and two new Dental Colleges in Diphu, Dhubri, North Lakhimpur, Nagaon, Kokrajhar, Nalbari, Tinsukia, Silchar and Dibrugarh, of which the one in Diphu has already been operationalised. Academic sessions will begin in North Lakhimpur from 2021-22 and construction has been taken up in mission mode in the remaining seven colleges. In coming times, we also intend to set up similar campuses at Goalpara, Dhemaji, Morigaon and Karimganj districts.

**13.3** Sir, in the past few years, we have taken several steps to address the issue of our young ones who are suffering from some birth related deformities. We started with Congenital Heart Disease (CHD) Programme and Cleft Surgeries. Taking this forward, with a view to mitigate the financial impact of life-threatening diseases, our government undertook the following pioneering initiatives,

- a. Under the congenital heart diseases scheme approximately 8100 beneficiaries have benefitted by the way of government bearing their costs of surgery along with travel and accommodation costs,
- b. Under the Snehasparsha scheme children below 14 years are given financial assistance for treatment of life impairing and threatening diseases. 560 children have benefitted.
- c. Further, realizing the plight of children with neurological disorders especially cerebral palsy, families are being covered with a one-time financial assistance of 50,000 and 36 instalments of Rs. 2500 each.
- d. Under the Assam Arogya Nidhi financial assistance of up to Rs. 3,00,000 has been provided to 3662 beneficiaries

for treatment of serious diseases over and above the Atal Amrit Abhiyan benefits.

**13.4** Sir, under the Mrityunjay 108 Emergency Referral Services 375509 beneficiaries have received free referral facilities, and we have procured 100 new ambulances to boost the existing fleet which are presently being operationalized.

**13.5** Sir, further in the direction of upgrading the healthcare infrastructure, existing sub-divisional hospitals at Biswanath Chariali, Sonari and Majuli have been upgraded to District Hospitals. Also, we have laid the foundation stone of GNM and Para-medical training institute at Gohpur.

**13.6** Furthermore, since the financial year 2018-19, we have made a sincere effort to make Assam as the Hub of medical education in the North-East. To this effort we had announced a reservation of seats in our medical colleges for the students from other North-Eastern states that do not have a State medical college. Currently the provision for reservation of seats is as follows:

- |                      |   |          |
|----------------------|---|----------|
| a. Meghalaya         | : | 10 seats |
| b. Arunachal Pradesh | : | 2 seats  |
| c. Mizoram           | : | 2 seats  |
| d. Nagaland          | : | 2 seats  |

**13.7** Sir, as a fitting tribute to our teachers engaged in health sector, in financial year 2018-19, we extended the benefit of revised pay scale to all teachers across degree colleges, universities and technical and medical colleges. This has benefitted 2,171 health sector educationists.

**13.8** Our Government had launched a major health initiative namely “*Sanjeevani*- Village Health Outreach Program” in 2018-19, to provide devolved, grass-root level health care for communicable and non- communicable diseases. This encompassed a comprehensive programme of early diagnosis,

screening, referral, follow-up and free medicines for effective treatment of chronic diseases. Sir, today I proudly state before this Assembly that a total of 87,27,431 patients have been treated under *Sanjeevani*- Village Health Outreach Program till January 2021.

**13.9** Last but not the least, in order to provide a holistic suite of options to our citizens and to dovetail our conventional medical infrastructure with AYUSH, we have committed to build a new Ayurvedic College at Dudhnoi, Goalpara.

#### **14. LABOUR SECTOR**

Sir, our Government believes in protecting the dignity and rights of our workmen and women who earn their honest day's work by the dint of their sweat and hardwork. On these lines I would like to highlight a few initiatives taken by our Government.

##### **14.1 *Shram- Gaurav Asoni***

Sir, we have launched this initiative with an aim to identify and improve work conditions, health and quality of life of construction workers. Under this Scheme 4,52,462 workers were registered via focused registration drives and 10,784 workers, belonging to the age group of 18 to 40 years have been extended a benefit of Rs.3,000 to facilitate their annual medical checkup. This is being done on Direct Benefit Transfer mode totaling to an amount of Rs.323.52 lakh. Similarly, a one-time grant of Rs.5,000 has been transferred to 11,754 workers belonging to the age group of 41 to 59 years, totaling to a sum of Rs.587.70 Lakh.

##### **14.2 Financial Assistance for retired staff of Assam Tea Corporation**

Sir, considering that Assam Tea Corporation Ltd. has undergone financial hardships, our Government decided to help its loyal workforce with a pension grant for which we had

allocated Rs.99 crore in the year 2018-19 and the same has been disbursed.

## **15. FINANCE SECTOR**

### ***15.1 Resolution of issues plaguing the Micro-Finance Institutions***

Sir, with a view to address the issues plaguing the micro finance sector, our Government has recently brought the Assam Micro Finance Institution (Regulation of Money Lending) Bill, 2020 for building a healthy atmosphere for their operation and also to safeguard the legitimate interests of our people.

### ***15.2 Incentives for Rural Banks***

Financial inclusion is one of the areas where our Government has been giving maximum impetus to enable the banks to reach out to the people in the remotes areas of our state. To this effect we have launched a scheme to incentivise rural banking. Speaker Sir, with a view to improve financial inclusion in our state we have introduced a grant to incentivise the rural banks to open bank branches and ATMs in unbanked areas of the state. Under this we have provided grants of Rs.3.70 crore to Assam Gramin Vikas Bank as additional share capital.

## **16. HOME**

Speaker Sir, to keep pace with the changes in law and order scenario and ensuring the safety and security of all our citizens, our Government is putting all efforts to adapt to the new environment. The Home and Political Department is increasingly embracing technological upgradation and leveraging them to improve the law enforcement.

**16.1** One of the key initiatives undertaken by this department has been to upgrade the financial status of the men-in-uniform who serve our state in the frontline. A budget

of 12,100 lakh was allocated in the financial year 2018-19 for an increase of wages for the Home Guards. I am pleased to inform this August House that the daily wages of 1,200 beneficiaries within this cohort were enhanced from the existing Rs.250 to Rs.300 per day (for basic trained Home Guards) and Rs.315 per day (for Advanced Trained Home Guards). This has so far benefitted approximately 27,000 personnel in Home Guards.

**16.2** Furthermore, an amount of Rs.400 lakh had been allocated for increase of ration for Police in the Financial Year 2020-21, the target of which has been successfully achieved thereby benefitting 74,175 personnel.

**16.3** Sir, with an objective of promoting engagement of prisoners in productive work, our Government increased the fixed rate of payment of daily wages of skilled female prisoners from Rs.75 to Rs.100 and of unskilled female prisoners from Rs.65 to Rs.80.

## **17. CULTURAL SECTOR**

Speaker Sir, I reiterate, our Government came into power with the promise of protecting the '*Jati, Mati, Bheti*' of Assam, a major part of which is preserving our cultural heritage. With this vision to protect, preserve and propagate the tangible and intangible cultural heritage of Assam so that the basic cultural and aesthetic sensibilities of the people remain active and dynamic, our Government has committed a number of major schemes in line with the said vision.

**17.1** A budget of Rs.500 lakh was announced during the financial year 2019-2020 to provide incentives to the technicians and artists of mobile theatres of Assam. In this regard, in the current financial year 2020-21 a sanction proposal is being processed for providing financial assistance to 974 beneficiaries under the scheme at Rs.50,000 (one-time) per beneficiary.



**17.2** With our commitment to preserve our culture, our Government had committed Rs.1,085 lakh budget in the financial year 2019-2020 for the initiatives for preserving cultural heritage which comprise of 10 schemes. I am happy to inform that the installation of statue of Shri Achyut Lahkar and the work of an auditorium in Goalpara and refurbishment of Rabindra Bhawan have been completed. In coming times, new campuses of Srimanta Sankardev Kalakshetra at Dibrugarh, Silchar, Diphu, Kokrajhar and New Delhi will come up to preserve the rich Assamese culture and to propagate and showcase it to the world outside. As already announced by our Hon'ble Chief Minister Shri Sarbananda Sonowal, steps would also be taken to launch the 'Srimanta Sankardev Mission' to propagate the ideals and philosophies propounded by the great Saint.

**17.3** I am also extremely honoured to state that a budget of Rs.2,500 lakh and Rs.300 lakh was committed in the Financial Year 2019-2020 for the upkeep of Charaideo Maidams and installation of statues of Kumar Bhaskaravarman, Chaolung Siu-Ka- Pha and Maharaj Nara-Narayana respectively. E-tender for the former and proposals for the latter have been prepared.

#### **17.4 Dharmajyoti Scheme**

Sir, with a view to support our pilgrims from our state to undertake visits to holy places, we have increased the subsidy to 75% in the year 2019-20. So far, 13,939 beneficiaries have availed benefits under this scheme.

#### **17.5 Bhasha Gaurav Asoni**

Sir, to protect and preserve the languages of our indigenous people, we launched the *Bhasha Gaurav Asoni* to promote research of individual tribal languages, under the aegis of the *Sahitya Sabhas* of Assam. Till date we have sanctioned Rs.43.20 crore to 21 *Sahitya Sabhas* under this scheme.

### **17.6 Centre of Excellence for Digital Enablement of Assamese Language**

Sir, last year we had announced a common platform for digital enablement of Assamese language. Towards this end, we have constituted a 5 member Committee for designing and developing the required digital platform.

## **18. SPORTS AND YOUTH**

Speaker Sir, the State Government is committed to develop sports and sports related infrastructure and to work for the welfare of sports persons as well as the youths. Sir, we intend to make Assam the sports capital of India.

**18.1** During past five years, Assam has witnessed many important sports events. Our State was a co-host during the FIFA under-17 World Cup held during the year 2017 and we hosted nine matches in the tournament along with the semi final. This event, Sir, has been a resounding success in showcasing not only our infrastructure but also the hospitality for which our State is known. Similarly, we also hosted the 83<sup>rd</sup> Senior National Badminton Championship, 2<sup>nd</sup> India Open International Boxing Tournament and 2020 Khelo India Youth Games. We are looking forward to co-host the 2021 Men's FIH Hockey Junior World Cup later this year. Speaker sir, we were also to co-host the FIFA U-17 Women's World Cup last year but it was cancelled due to Covid19. Nevertheless, we will get the chance to host some of the games during the rescheduled world cup in the year 2022. This progress gives us a reassurance that we are on the right track towards becoming the sports capital of India.

**18.2** I am also happy to inform this August House that, staying true to our promise, we have decided to appoint renowned athlete Hima Das as DySP in Assam Government. This procedure took a bit longer than normal as it required

making an amendment to the law. I thank all my esteemed colleagues here for their support in passing the necessary amendment.

**18.3** As a part of the Government's commitment to establish new educational institutions for sports, our Government had allocated Rs.1,500 lakh budget for the said cause, during the financial year 2018-19. To this effect, we have already established Sri Sri Aniruddhadeva Sports University at Chabua, Dibrugarh. In coming times, we would also like to give special attention to development of traditional sports so that they can be taken to national and international level.

## **19. WELFARE OF PLAIN TRIBES AND BACKWARD CLASSES**

Sir, our Government is committed to a long term vision for fair and equitable growth and development for each and every section of our greater Assamese society. In line with this, we have taken up several notable major initiatives-

**19.1** Our Government announced Ex-gratia payment of Rs.5 lakh each to the next of kin of those brave hearts who lost their lives during the Bodoland agitation in 2018-19 against which we have paid the same to 300 beneficiaries.

### **19.2 Special Grants to VI<sup>th</sup> Schedule Areas**

Honourable Speaker Sir in 2018-19 we had promised a sum of Rs.1,000 crore as special grants to VI Schedule areas over a period of three years. Sir as per our commitment of 2018-19, we released an amount of Rs.160.00 crore to Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council and Rs.86.00 crore to North Cachar Hill Autonomous Council.

### **19.3 Bodo Accord and provision for the Community**

Speaker Sir, we all know that a historic Memorandum of Settlement was signed on 27<sup>th</sup> January, 2020 among all the

factions of NDFB, ABSU, and UBPO. In line with the spirit and terms of Agreement of the Memorandum of Settlement we shall be undertaking specific projects on priority for development of education, industries and building new infrastructure in BTC Areas. Here, I must humbly assert that our government has given topmost priority for implementation of the Bodo Accord which is visible in the vast distance we have covered in a very short period of time at a lightning speed. The Government is now awaiting specific proposals for these from the newly constituted BTC Council.

#### **19.4 Recognition and award of grants to tribal communities**

Speaker Sir, I would like to take this occasion to thank all members of this August House for their support in enacting the Moran, Matak and Kamatapur Autonomous Council Acts, and Bodo Kachari Welfare Autonomous Council Act, thus allowing us to fulfil our promise. Our Government had also decided to provide a fund of Rs.500 crore as a special package for *Moran, Mattak, Chutia* and Ahom communities at Rs.125 crore for each of the communities, for preservation of ancient historical monuments.

### **20. INFRASTRUCTURE IN URBAN AREAS**

Sir, a sustainable and robust road infrastructure is essential to support economic growth in all the emerging sectors of Assam. In this regard, a massive exercise in improvement of roads and drainages in Urban Local Bodies and cities has been undertaken. Currently, 401 kilometres of roads and 43 kilometres of drainag have been completed under this initiative. Additionally, Rs.15.85 crore have already been released to 76 Urban Local Bodies of Assam for payment of energy bills for street lights.

### **21. SOCIAL SECTOR**

Sir, our Government is committed towards the social welfare of our people and towards this end, we have been

conducting mega awareness drives against social evils at the block and district levels.

Sir, we have noticed that the menace of drugs and substance abuse is one of the foremost challenges facing our youths today and to counter this, we have started a campaign under which we have conducted rallies in 9 districts namely, Dhubri, Udalguri, Kamrup, Kamrup (M), Nagaon, Cachar, Hailakandi, Karimganj and Goalpara. This has elicited an encouraging response.

**21.1** Sir, recognizing the importance of Anganwadi workers and helpers in implementing our schemes at grass-root levels, our Government decided to increase the wages of Anganwadi workers by Rs.1,000 and Anganwadi helper by Rs.500 each. This has benefitted about 61,502 Anganwadi workers and 56,008 Anganwadi helpers.

**21.2** Sir, I would also like to take this moment to acknowledge the herculean efforts made by Accredited Social Health Activist (ASHA) workers during COVID-19 pandemic and even during normal times. Recognizing their importance in our zeal to promote health and wellbeing in our communities, our Government decided to enhance their wages. Accordingly, approximately 32,546 ASHA workers have received monthly enhancement of Rs.1,000 since 2018-19.

**21.3** Sir, to address the issue of providing social security to the unmarried daughters of pensioners who do not have any other source of income, our Government took a major initiative in 2018-19 and made a stipend available to them.

## **22. TRANSPORTATION SECTOR**

### **22.1 *Bhraman Sarathi***

Speaker Sir, this innovative scheme of transport department, which provides free transportation for the elderly persons and women in Guwahati, is being implemented by

ASTC. Members of this August House may be aware that the scheme the scheme was launched ceremonially last month, at the hands of Honourable Chief Minister, during which 25 Pink Buses were flagged off for plying on a few specified routes within the city of Guwahati.

### **22.2 *Uberization Scheme***

We envisaged this scheme with the objective of facilitating last mile connectivity. We conceptualized a unique implementation mechanism for this scheme wherein rural youths could be incentivized to take up entrepreneurial opportunities in the transportation sector. This incentive is provided in the form of 10% subsidy, 15% interest free credit and 65% loan for purchase of new buses. ASTC has selected a total of 250 beneficiaries under this scheme till date.

## **23. POWER SECTOR**

### **23.1 *Mukhya Mantri Akashdeep Yojana (MMADY)***

Acting upon the vision of “*Pradushan Mukh Asom*” set forth by our Hon’ble Chief Minister Shri Sarbananda Sonowal, we have successfully implemented Mukhya Mantri Akashdeep Yojana (MMADY) under which more than 34 lakh households were provided 4 energy-efficient LED bulbs of 9 watt power.

### **23.2 *Jyotisman Asom***

In my previous budget speech, I had assured that we will provide free electricity up to 30 units to each domestic consumer. This scheme has benefitted more than 50 lakh consumers at a monthly expense of around Rs.70 crore to the state exchequer.

**23.3** Speaker Sir, with the view to alleviate the woes of our employees in the power sector, our Government announced the decision to contribute to a Pension Trust for employees of Power Utilities. Under this, I am happy to announce that our

Government paid out Rs.950 crore in the last three years to a total staff of approximately 19,000 pensioners.

Sir, so far, I have tried to highlight the priorities and major initiatives undertaken by our Government for a balanced and sustainable growth of the state's economy, placing social justice and equality at the centre of all our Government's work. Sir, I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the people of Assam for the trust that they reposed in our Government and for giving us the opportunity to provide a stable tenure of five years. We have tried our best to serve the people of Assam to the best of our abilities. Before I conclude, I would also like to thank the esteemed members of this House, officers and employees of the State Government for their untiring efforts towards achieving our common vision of peace, prosperity and progress of our state and her people.

Sir, before I present the Vote on Account Budget, I would like to inform the Assembly that the various detailed statements required to be submitted along with the Budget, as laid down in Assam Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management Act, will be submitted at the time of the presentation of the detailed Budget.

Sir, with the above words, I present the interim annual financial statements and demand for grants for the year 2021-22 where the expenditure has been detailed up to the minor head level. To fulfil the obligatory and other necessary expenditure commitments, I seek a vote on account for an aggregate expenditure of Rs.60,784.03 crore for a period of six months from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021 to 30<sup>th</sup> September 2021, well before which, the detailed General Budget is expected to be presented. I now place the demand for grants for the Assembly's consideration.

Speaker Sir, at the peak of Covid-19, we had levied additional cess on petrol, diesel and liquor. Now, the pandemic

has declined to a reasonable extent, the number of patients has reduced and the need for Covid-19 screening centres has also gone down. As such, the expenditure on healthcare sector has substantially come down. Hence, the State Cabinet has decided to withdraw the additional cess and taxes imposed during the Covid-19 period. To refresh the memory of this August House, let me mention that due to imposition of additional cess, the MRP of petrol and diesel had gone up by Rs.5 per litre. Speaker Sir, I am grateful to my cabinet colleagues who agreed to my proposal this morning to rescind this additional cess. Hence, petrol and diesel will become cheaper by Rs.5 per litre with effect from midnight tonight benefitting lakhs of consumers across Assam. Similarly, the additional cess imposed on various liquor categories during last year, averaging around 25%, has also been withdrawn. Speaker Sir, as I come to the end of the final budget presentation of this Government, I find myself reflecting on this journey that has brought us to this moment. Very often, I am asked why I seem to be a man in a hurry; why do I seem like someone who wishes there was more than 24 hours in a day!

Sir to those who have questioned this pace and the intent, I would say, it is a choice I have made, my team has made, - to be alive, to live life in this moment and to make every moment count. Benjamin Franklin said - "Lost time is never found again."

Sir, there is never a good time, there is only one time of reckoning and it is – NOW!

Every day that has passed in the last four years and nine months, as a Government, we have made choices and decisions that have defined how we want to be remembered, what impact our actions will have in the days to come for the future of our state. Only a fortunate few amongst us have the opportunity, in our lifetimes, to make choices and decisions that do in-fact influence, in a great way, the trajectories of millions of lives.



Sir, we have consciously taken decisions to ensure we leave a legacy- a legacy of hope, of peace and of progress. And as I stand before you, I believe it is a moment of truth for this Government led by Hon'ble Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal – let history judge us for the work we have done, in the way we have dedicated our Government to protect, preserve and unite our history, culture, people and traditions. These last five years have seen the dreams and aspirations of millions of our youths- men and women -take shape with programmes like Svayem, Orunodoi, Kanaklata Mahila Sabalikaran Yojana, Pragyan Bharati and Chief Minister's Samagra Gramya Unnayan Yojana. Our Government's commitment to Antodyaya has seen us ensure no elder or vulnerable is left in our communities without a safety net. We have reached out to the most marginalised in our society and have ensured they become an integral part of this journey of growth and development. Today, our Tea tribe brothers and sisters are co-partners in the digital revolution; our farmers have access to the latest technology to support their work in the fields. Today financial inclusivity is not just an aspirational word for these communities, it is a part of their daily lives. Be it Cancer Care, or Atal Amrit Abhiyan, our citizens today can access world class healthcare without mortgaging their last parcel of land. We have strengthened the bonds of kinship that binds us all. Bodo Accord and the progress we have made towards its implementation, steps taken for genuine devolution of power to autonomous councils, 6th schedule reforms have all seen success under our Government. Sir, Assam has not witnessed a single communal unrest under this Government -what can be a more glorious tribute to the men and women serving in our administration and to the people of Assam!

Speaker Sir, I am not a soothsayer. I know not what tomorrow holds. I do not indulge in the memories of the past

nor the illusions of the future; to grasp the present and seize every opportunity for progress is what I have done, what our Government has done. We have been inspired by action. We were not willing to lag behind, we were not willing to be reconciled to be always falling behind, that seem to be our fate for long, Action, is what has defined us; to live in the moment, just think about this minute, and do our Best for the people we serve have been our one and only Dharma. Thus, we have used our hands and might, dared to believe, and jointly cast our aspirations to turn our State into a land of hope and dreams; we have strived to serve in a manner that we do not regret, and united our strength to build a future for each one of our fellow citizen that reposed their trust and faith in us. For them, we have served, and we will continue to serve till the last breath!

Here, I cannot but remember these sublime words of my father, poet-lyricist and translator, Late Shri Kailash Nath Sarma reproduce from the 25th song of his book Sahashra Geetimalika :

জীৱন ডিঙা মোৰ  
চপাই ঘাটে ঘাটে,  
জনে জনে সুখিলোঁ  
কি লাগে লোৱা  
ডিঙা মোৰ নাহে  
উভতি আৰু এই ঘাটে।  
এই বাটে জীৱনে মোৰ  
মাগিলে মেলানি,  
এই বাটে নাহোঁ উভতি  
নেপাতোঁ পাতনি,

নবজাবা কামনা বীণ  
আৰু এই ঘাটে।  
ৰূপৰ শিখা মোৰ  
জ্বলি জ্বলি শেষ হ'ব,  
কালৰ আঁচোৰ লাগি  
দেহাও যে অৱশ হ'ব,  
ডিঙা হ'ব খালী  
মনাই কোনোবা ঘাটে।

Speaker Sir, it has been an absolute honour and privilege to have served as a Minister in this Government under the leadership of Hon'ble Sarbananda Sonowal, and to have served my state alongside the members of this August House.

I would like to end today with these rousing words of Poet Ganesh Gogoi as I bow my Head to my motherland and to the people all of us have been fortunate to serve.

স্বৰ্গ বিচাৰি নেযাওঁ জননী,  
আৰু যে স্বৰ্গ নাই;  
তয়েই আমাৰ চিৰ সাধনাৰ  
চৰম লক্ষ্য ঠাই।

Today I carry the Blessings of each Assamese with me as I conclude; I bow my Head in front of each and every citizen of Assam.

***Jai Aai Axom!!***

***Jai Hind!!***

2021

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Printed at the Assam Government Press  
Guwahati-21