

Budget Speech
of
Chief Minister S. Santhirakanthan

I am delighted to submit the first ever Budget, historical indeed, before this House in my capacity as the Chief Minister.

We have assumed office following a democratic election held after re-taking the Eastern Province from the clutches of terrorism. Over the past two decades our Province had suffered due to the cruel war, the lack of visionary political leadership, the fury of nature, and as a consequence, we have been lacking behind others in education, health facilities and infrastructure, besides other facilities.

When we took over the leadership of this society saddled with poverty, war and deprivation, he had to face tremendous challenges. Although obstacles and difficulties exist, the expectations of our people are great. We hope to fulfill these expectations through a pragmatic approach so as to develop the Eastern Province speedily. This Budget is submitted before this House with that intention.

1. Ethnic Harmony

Harmony among all ethnic communities is a necessity for any form of development. We have established a Secretariat for Ethnic Reconciliation and Peace in Batticaloa and are engaged in several activities with a lot of success. They will be extended to the Trincomalee and Batticaloa districts as well.

2. Resettlement

Resettlement of internally displaced persons is taking place in the Batticaloa and Trincomalee Districts. Yet, there are thousands of families of displaced persons who continue to be in welfare centres and the houses of friends and relatives. There are many who had not seen their own villages for more than 20 years. It is our duty to resettle all these persons during 2009. Considering all the problems connected with resettlement we have prepared a Statute to establish a Resettlement and Reconciliation Authority of the Eastern Province.

3. Education

In the Eastern Province, 985 provincial schools are functioning. Another 33 schools are closed as the people in those areas have not been resettled. In addition to these schools, there are another 27 national schools. The total number of students is 328,088. Of these, 305,419 are of Tamil medium while 26,669 are of

Sinhala medium. During this year, we had recruited 1107 Tamil medium teachers and 336 Sinhala medium teachers.

The major problem that has to be faced by us during 2009 is the recruitment of 773 teachers to teach the English language and 231 teachers to teach Science. One avenue open to us would be to recruit English language teachers from amongst Programme Assistants (graduates) and to provide them the required training.

There is another problem in this sector which had not been resolved over the years. Of the 238 Sri Lanka Education Administration Service Officers in the provincial cadre, there are only 70 officers available. In Class I, there isn't a single officer whereas the cadre is 16. In Class II, of a cadre of 67 there are only 22 officers. In Class III, while the cadre is 155, the number available is 48 officers. If the Central Government does not take immediate steps to remedy the situation, we have no alternative other than to establish a provincial education administrative service.

4. Health Service

There are 155 institutions within the Province. In addition, 5 of our institutions were taken over by the Centre. The total bed strength in our institutions is over 4000.

During 2008, the OPD in Valaichchenai, the new ward with 24 beds in the Rural Hospital of Mandur, the Eye Ward in the Trincomalee General Hospital and the wards with 48 beds in the Central Camp Hospital were completed. Selected hospitals were issued with medical equipment.

During 2009, the OPD in the Mavadipalli hospital, the OPD in the Akkaraipattu hospital, the maternity ward in the Kaluwanchikudi Base Hospital, the Dental Unit in Thottama hospital and biomedical units in the Trincomalee and Batticaloa hospitals and quarters for medical staff will be undertaken.

5. Indigenous Medicine

Under the Department of Indigenous Medicine, there is a Provincial Hospital, a District Hospital and 38 Ayurvedic Dispensaries. During 2008, 15 central ayurvedic dispensaries were established. A 'Panchakarma' unit was opened and men's and women's wards with 40 beds were also opened in Kappalurai. A dispensary has also been opened.

During 2009, other central ayurvedic dispensaries will be established. In addition, a herbaria on 18 acres of land and a health resort on 10 acres of land will be established.

6. Agriculture and Agrarian Services

During 2008, around 30,000 acres of abandoned paddy lands will be taken up for cultivation. As an incentive, either seed paddy or ploughing will be made available to these cultivators, free of charge. In addition to this acreage, the regular paddy lands will also be cultivated. Maize will be cultivated in 20,000 acres.

During this year, 25 fruit villages and 25 vegetable villages were established. During 2009, 15 fruit villages and 30 vegetable villages will be established.

During 2008, in the Trincomalee district, 2,000 coconut seedlings were distributed among farmers for home gardening. During the next year, it is proposed to distribute 10,000 seedlings in all three districts of the Province. During 2008, 100 flour milling machines were distributed while the number will be increased 120 during the next year.

7. Animal Husbandry

During 2008, 12 milk villages, 12 goat villages and 10 milk value addition centres were established. During 2009, it is proposed to establish 15 milk villages, 15 goat villages and 15 milk value addition centres in the Province.

8. Industries

All industries that do not come under the purview of the Centre becomes the responsibility of the Province. However, these industries cannot be monitored without the appropriate Statute. This Statute will be brought before the Provincial Council during 2009.

9. Rural Industries

During 2008, 450 youths were given training in handlooms in 52 centres. Similar training in pottery and coir work were given in 80 centres.

10. Rural Development

Annually 400 students undergo training in dress-making in 41 divisions. This programme will continue during 2009 as well. In addition to this, training will be given in livelihood activities such as small businesses, cattle rearing, goat rearing and poultry.

11. Women's Affairs

It is the primary function of the Women's Affairs Division to provide livelihood training to war affected women, that is, to widows and abandoned women. The women are to be trained in handlooms, coir work, leather work and dress-making.

12. Fisheries

To date, priority had been given only to inland fisheries. This was later extended slowly to the sea as well. During 2008, 104 fishing crafts were issued free in the

Batticaloa District. In addition, 17 deep sea fishing vessels were issued in the Batticaloa District. In order that we could involve fully in fishing, it would be necessary to have the Statute passed by the Provincial Council. There are plans to issue another 20 deep sea fishing vessels to the Batticaloa District and to issue similar vessels to fishermen of the other two districts as well.

13. Tourism

A Statute to develop tourism in collaboration with the Centre is under preparation. There will be established a Tourist Information Centre to cater to foreign tourists. Low price comfort centres will be established for national tourists.

14. Electricity

The Electricity Department that existed before had been closed down. Action is being taken to establish an institution to supply electricity. It is proposed to purchase electricity from the Centre and to supply same to the rural areas.

It is further proposed to use firewood and to generate electricity for individual villages. Similarly, it is proposed to supply electricity using solar cells to individual houses.

15. Roads

There are 1100 km of C, D, E roads under the Provincial Department of Road Development. It is the primary responsibility of the Department to surface these roads either with bitumen or concrete. During 2008, 59 km in the Amparai District, 6 km in the Batticaloa District and 33 km in the Trincomalee District were developed.

During 2009, 38 km in the Amparai District, 16 km in the Batticaloa District and 22 km in the Trincomalee District will be developed. The Mechanical Unit of the Department will be converted to a corporation during 2009.

16. Irrigation

The Irrigation Department has responsibility for maintaining 41 schemes and 17 agricultural roads. Of these schemes, Kurangupanchan Murapola and Puluganavi are now being rehabilitated along with several agricultural roads.

17. Land

During 2008, 622 grants under 'Ranabima' were given. In addition, 6245 encroachments were regularized.

18. Social Service

During 2008, work on Elders Homes and Incapacitated Persons Homes were begun in Ondachchimadam, Sathurukondan, Kattankudi, Sainthamaruthu and

Sathunpura. These will be completed during 2009. In addition, "Vaalvosai" and "Dharsanam" in the Batticaloa District and Elders Homes in Dehiyattakandiya and Uppuveli and a Rehabilitation Centre in Varothayanagar will be constructed during 2009.

19. Management Development Training

During 2008, 746 persons obtained training in computing. In addition, 726 persons obtained training in the official languages (that is, Tamil for Sinhalese and Sinhala for Tamils).

During 2009, it is proposed to give computer literacy to 1350 persons and training in the official languages to 800 persons.

20. Skills Development

At present, skills development training is provided in Trincomalee in carpentry, three-wheeler repairs, automobile engine repairs and electrical wiring. It is also proposed to give training in masonry, plumbing, tinkering and painting and to extend the training programmes to the other two districts as well.

21. Environment

The statute for the protection of the Environment is now under preparation. When this Statute is approved by the Provincial Council, legal status would be given to this function in the Province.

22. Printing and Publishing

The printing press that was established some 20 years ago had been treated like a step-child till now. It is proposed to rehabilitate the press and to use it to print text books as well as for other printing work.

23. Government Buildings

The construction of the Governor's office building which was begun in 2008 will be completed during 2009. In addition to this building, a Hostel will be built for members of the Provincial Council and a bungalow for the Chief Minister of the Province.

Hon. Chairman,

During the next year,

CBG will be	Rs. 381,503,000
PSDG will be	<u>Rs. 1,100,142,000</u>
Total will be	Rs. 1,481,645,000

In addition, there will be foreign funding of Rs. 444,000,000 for the education and health sectors.

In addition, I am confident that our own Department of Revenue will collect substantial revenue.

Hon. Chairman,

This Budget has been prepared keeping in mind the speedy development needed to provide a new life to our people and I am confident that this House will approve it.