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GOVERNMENT OF ASSAM

SPEECH OF SHRI PRAFULLA KUMAR MAHANTA CHIEF MINISTER, ASSAM

PRESENTING BUDGET OF GOVERNMENT OF ASSAM FOR 2001-2002

12th February, 2001

Mr. Speaker Sir,



I rise to present the statement of the estimated receipts and expenditures of the Government of Assam for the financial year 2001-2002.

- 2. As the Hon'ble Members are aware, this is the last budget that the present Government, which assumed office on May 15, 1996, is presenting. I take this opportunity to extend my best wishes to all of you and to thank you for your help and co-operation.
- 3. Hon'ble Members may recall that this Government assumed charge at the time when the law and order situation was a cause for great concern and the State was beset with the grave problems of insurgency, terrorism and ethnic violence, apart from devastating floods. All these events had a deleterious effect on the State Finances. The law and order situation in the State has now improved considerably, largely due to the determined and unrelenting efforts of the Government and the whole hearted support and cooperation of the public. The economy is now showing encouraging signs of growth, which has enabled the Government to give increased emphasis to welfare and developmental activities in the State despite its financial constraints.
- 4. Before I turn to the budget proposals, I take this opportunity to briefly apprise the Hon'ble Members about the state of the economy and the performance of some selected sectors.

State Economy:

The economy of the State witnessed a spurt in growth in 1999-2000 after a dismal performance in 1998-99, thanks largely to a breakthrough in the agricultural sector. The Net State Domestic Product (NSDP) for the year 1999-2000 (quick estimate) is estimated to be Rs.25,050.96 crores at current prices and Rs.15,554.71 crores at constant (1993-94) prices. This represents an impressive increase of

15.99 percent at current prices and 8.19 percent at constant (1993-94) prices over 1998-99. In this connection, it may be mentioned that in 1998-99, the NSDP at current prices increased by 6.86 percent, but at constant (1993-94) prices it registered a decline of 2.22 percent over 1997-98.

- though it was achieved after a year of negative growth. Also, much of the increase at the aggregate level can be attributed to the performance of just one sector, viz, agriculture. The challenge is therefore to sustain the high rate of growth in the coming years and also to ensure that other sectors of the economy start contributing significantly to economic growth. That Assam has still a long way to go can be gauged from the fact that the per capita NSDP for 1999-2000 is estimated to be Rs.9,612 at current prices and Rs.5,968 at constant prices. This is much lower than the per capita Net National Product of Rs.15,841 at current prices and Rs.10,151 at constant prices during the same year.
 - 7. The primary sector continues to dominate the State's economy accounting for as much as 46 percent of total NSDP at current as well as constant prices during 1999-2000 (quick estimate). The corresponding shares of the secondary and tertiary sectors are 14 percent and 40 percent respectively.

Prices:

8. The average Consumer Price Index (CPI) (Base 1982=100) for working class population showed a rise of 3.2 percent during the first six months of 2000, i.e. from January 2000 to June 2000, over the corresponding period of 1999. The annual average of CPI for working class population rose by 7.7 percent in 1999 over 1998. On a point to point basis CPI for working class population recorded a marginal increase of 1.7 percent in September 2000 over the corresponding month of the previous year. On the other hand, the annual average Wholesale Price Index (WPI) (1993-94=100) for agricultural commodities increased by 15.4 percent during 1999-2000 over the previous year.

9. Retail prices of some essential commodities recorded an increase in varying degrees in September 2000 over September 1999. While the prices of kerosene oil increased by as much as 57 percent, some other commodities like gram dal (3 percent), small fish (19 percent), goat meat (11 percent), milk (10 percent) and sugar (2 percent) recorded a moderate increase in prices. However, the prices of commodities like rice (-8 percent), atta (-6 percent), moong dal (-2 percent), arahar dal (-14 percent), potatoes (-5 percent), onion (-13 percent), vanaspati (-16 percent), mustard oil (-12 percent) and salt (-3 percent) declined during this period.

Demography:

10. According to the projection of the Registrar General of India, the population of Assam increased to 26.4 million as on October 1, 2000 from 22.4 million as per the 1991 census. The population in the State grew by 24.2 percent during the decade 1981-91 as compared to 23.9 percent for the country as a whole. The density of population in this State as per the 1991 census, estimated at 286 persons per sq. km, was also higher than the national average of 273 persons per sq.km. On the other hand, the urban population of Assam according to the 1991 census was 11.1 percent as against 26.1 percent for the nation. The literacy rate of the State was 52.89 percent which was marginally higher than the all India average of 52.1 percent.

Employment:

The State Government is deeply concerned about the continuing problem of unemployment and has been according the highest priority to the creation of employment opportunities to absorb the vast army of unemployed youths. The problem is being sought to be tackled by adopting a multi pronged strategy to foster economic development, promote private and public investment, and restore peace and normalcy in the State. It is encouraging to note that as per the live register of employment exchanges, the number of job seekers declined from 16,24,021 at the end of June 1999 to 16,18,210 in June 2000.

The number of educated applicants remaining on the live register of employment exchanges at the end of September 2000 was 11.93.135.

12. Considering the alarming unemployment problem, the Government has approved the scheme "Chief Ministers Swa Niyojan Yojana" for providing self employment to the educated unemployed youths over a two year period. Some viable schemes in the fisheries, animal husbandry, dairy, handloom & textiles, industries and commerce sectors have been formulated. Total financial involvement is expected to be Rs.161.79 crores of which the loan component is Rs.91.43 crores. The balance amount of Rs.70.36 crores will be provided by the Government as margin money grants. The amount of margin money for the current year is Rs.35.25 crores. I am glad to inform the House that the Planning Commission has agreed to provide Additional Central Assistance amounting to Rs.30 crores for the current year for the implementation of the scheme.

Annual Plan:

- 13. The State Annual Plan for the year 2000-2001 which was originally approved at Rs.1520 crores was subsequently raised to Rs.1750 crores. Out of Rs.1750 crores, Rs.163.03 crores is for Hill Areas. The balance amount of Rs.1586.97 crores is for General Areas which includes allocations of Rs.172.31 crores under Externally Aided Projects (EAP), and Rs.104.31 crores under the Eleventh Finance Commission (EFC) Award. Out of the General Areas Plan allocation, amounts earmarked for Tribal Sub Plan (TSP) and Scheduled Caste Component Plan (SCCP) are Rs.136.54 crores and Rs.91.23 crores respectively. The Government of India has replaced the existing Basic covering health, elementary education, shelter, drinking water, nutrition and rural roads. The Central share for the current year is Rs.254.57 crores which is 35 percent higher than last year's Central Assistance for BMS.
- 14. During the year 2000-2001, an amount of Rs.69.13 crores has been allocated, covering 39 sectors/ sub-sectors, to Decentralised

Planning in the plains districts of the State. The amount is expected to be fully utilised in the current year. As the size of the Annual Plan 2001-2002 has not yet been finalised by the Planning Commission, the provision for Plan outlay in the Budget estimates for the year 2001-2002 has been made by retaining the sectoral outlays for 2001-2002 at the current year's level. The sectoral outlay will be revised after the size of the Annual Plan is finalised by the Planning Commission.

An amount of Rs.27.32 crores has been provided under Annual Plan 2000-01 for MLAs' Area Development Programme and Untied Funds. The entire amount is expected to be utilised during the year 2000-01. As regards the Non Lapsable Central Pool of Resources, the Government of India has released Rs.37.35 crores and Rs.40.40 crores respectively during the years 1999-2000 and 2000-2001.

Education:

As in the previous years, the State Government will 16. continue to accord high priority to this sector during the next financial year. Under elementary education, steps have been taken for the consolidation and strengthening of schools with the objective of increasing enrolment and curtailing drop-outs. The scheme for the supply of text books at 50 percent subsidised rates to students of lower primary schools is proposed to be continued during 2001-2002. Attendance and special scholarship to ST/SC students @Rs.100.00 and Rs.300.00 per annum respectively will continue to be given to 26,000 students. The scheme for Sarba Siksha Abhijan is proposed to be implemented in Dhemaji, Karimganj, Tinsukia, and Nalbari districts in the first phase. The District Primary Education Programme, an Externally Aided Project, which was initially started in four districts of Assam, viz. Darrang, Morigaon, Dhubri and Karbi Anglong in 1994-95 and was subsequently extended to the districts of Barpeta, Bongaigaon, Goalpara, Kokrajhar and Sonitpur in 1997-98, is presently under implementation. The principal objective of the programme is to provide 100 percent access to schooling facilities to all children in the age group 6 to 11 years, enrolment and retention of all children in schools and reduction in drop outs. Till date, the Government of India has released

Rs.157.87 crores as Central share while the Government of Assam has released Rs.20.57 crores as State share to DPEP. The Eleventh Finance Commission (EFC) has awarded a sum of Rs.10.00 crores as Upgradation Grants for the construction of school buildings, provision of toilets and drinking water facilities over the period 2000-05. In the area of secondary education, the EFC has awarded Rs.9.89 crores for computer training of school children over the period 2000-05. In order to strengthen and upgrade the network of public libraries in the State. the EFC has recommended Rs.5.60 crores for the purchase of books and periodicals. With a view to achieving total literacy throughout the country, the strategy of adult education programme has been changed from the traditional centre based approach to a campaign based approach under the Total Literacy Campaign (TLC) programme. In Assam, the TLC has been taken up in 22 districts. You will be happy to hear that as a result of the State Government's efforts, the literacy percentage of the State has increased to 79 percent as per the 54th Round NSSO, against the all India average of 62 percent.

17. Hon'ble Members are all aware that the Government is committed to the protection, preservation and promotion of the rich cultural heritage of the State. The Government and the public had been seeking recognition of the Sattriya Dance as one of the major dance forms of India at par with dances like Bharat Natyam, Kathak and Odissi. As a culmination of these efforts, the Sangeet Natak Academy finally accorded recognition on November 15, 2000. Another notable development has been the completion of the construction of Kala Guru Bishnu Prasad Rabha Re-recording Theatre by the Jyoti Chitraban (Film Studio) Society during the current year with funds sanctioned by the Government of India under Clause VI of the Assam Accord. With a view providing full and unstinted support to the development of the regional film industry in the State, the State Government has decided to amend the Assam Film Policy, 1992 and the Assam Film Policy Rules. 1994. Under the new dispensation, Amusement Tax collected during first two years of the commercial release of a regional film will be refunded in full without any limit. It would also be worthwhile mentioning that the prestigious Srimanta Sankardeva Award will be

given to Sri Kelucharan Mahapatra, Dr. Bhabendra Nath Saikia, Ustad Amjad Ali Khan and Sri Sonaram Chutia for the years 1997,1998,1999 and 2000. The awards are likely to be given away by His Excellency the President of India in March 2001 at Guwahati.

Acknowledging the need to improve the facilities for Sports and Youth Welfare, the EFC has awarded Rs.10 crores as Grants for Special Problems for the establishment of a Regional Athletics Centre, a Regional Indoor Games Centre, a Regional Adventure Academy for mountaineering and adventures sports, and a Regional Academy for Water Sports.

Health & Family Welfare:

- State Government has achieved commendable 19. improvement in health care and delivery systems in the past few years. In order to improve infrastructure in the health sector, steps have been initiated to complete 20 thirty bedded rural hospitals and 34 primary health centres which have remained incomplete since long due to resource constraints. Many CHCs and PHCs have been repaired and renovated and provided with drinking water and toilet facilities. Under the Externally Aided Project (EAP) IPP-IX, 800 sub-centres have been completed and opened to the public. With a view to providing the people living in remote inaccessible areas with better health services, jeeps and ambulances have been provided to many districts. Provision for mobile dispensary and boat clinics have been made in some places. Hospital Management Committees have been constituted in the district level and sub-divisional level hospitals to improve the management of hospitals, oversee the development of infrastructure, and to provide a mechanism for looking into public grievances. You will be glad to know that the EFC has provided Rs.18 crores as Grant over the period 2000-05 for the establishment of six Regional Diagnostic Centres in the State.
- 20. In the sphere of medical education, steps are being taken to improve infrastructure, diagnostic and treatment facilities. An emergency ward is being created in Guwahati Medical College with an intensive care unit, with assistance from the Non Lapsable Pool of

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Central Resources. Other projects like scheme for water supply to Gauhati Medical College, sewage treatment plant and two hostel buildings with a capacity to accommodate 400 students are presently under construction. In the Assam Medical College, Dibrugarh, construction of the TB and Respiratory Disease Centre and Regional Institute of Communicable Disease are under progress. An ambitious project for the construction of paying cabins in each of the three medical colleges has been taken up. A well equipped 300 bedded hospital and 60 bedded girls hostel is under construction at the Government Ayurvedic College, Jalukbari. A 30 bedded hospital alongwith hostel building is also being constructed at the Jorhat Homeopathic College.

21. Under the family welfare programme, excellent results have been achieved in immunization, neo netal care and health care of women. Immunization under the Pulse Polio Immunization programme has been successfully undertaken and there have been no polio cases in the last two years.

Drinking Water and Sanitation:

to the provision of safe drinking water supply facilities to the 'not covered' (NC) habitations followed by the 'partially covered' (PC) habitations. During the tenure of the present government, 9937 NC habitations and 2238 PC habitations have been covered with safe drinking water till 1999-2000. Another 1500 NC habitation and 3000 PC habitation are targetted to be covered during the current year. In the rural sanitation sector, the State has adopted the national policy to of the desired standards of hygiene and contemporary sanitary practices, and undertaking the installation of low cost sanitary latrines among rural families below the poverty level.

Housing and Urban Development:

- 23. Keeping in view the rapid growth of urban population and the increasing pressure on urban infrastructure, particularly in Guwahati City, the State Government is undertaking several schemes for the development of infrastructure in the City. The Rs.95.80 crores Guwahati Metropolitan Area Storm Drainage Improvement Programme is currently under execution with loan assistance from HUDCO and is expected to be completed within two years. The work on two fly overs at Ganeshguri Chariali and at Ulubari with loan assistance from HUDCO is also underway. The Ganeshguri fly over is expected to be opened to traffic next month. The augmentation of the Kamakhya Water Supply Scheme with Rs.3.00 crores Central Assistance is also being taken up.
- Work on the construction of the multistoried Secretariat building at Dispur was started in the last financial year with funds from Government of India under the award of Tenth Finance Commission. Following prolonged litigation, the work was re-allotted to M/S. Ansal properties and Industries Ltd. in July 2000. While the Government of India has agreed to extend time for completion of the project to March 2001, the State Government proposes to, keeping in view the longer time frame required for implementation of the project, request the Government of India for further extension of time. The Eleventh Finance Commission has meanwhile awarded Rs.20.00 crores for the State Capital Project.
- 25. The Assam Urban Water Supply and Sewerage Board is executing twenty water supply schemes in different towns of Assam. Out of these, six have been commissioned already providing benefits to an estimated 1.6 lakh people. Twelve water supply schemes are also being taken up under Centrally Sponsored Urban Water Supply Programme with 50:50 Central and State share with a target population of 2.83 lakh people.
- As a part of measures to improve its financial position, Guwahati Municipal Corporation has taken up the task of reassessment of holding tax. Another proposal to revise the rate of trade licenses is

presently under process. The Eleventh Finance Commission has awarded a sum of Rs.21.50 crores over the period 2000-05 as local body grant to supplement the resources of urban local bodies.

Hill Areas:

As per the Memorandum of Understanding signed with the Autonomous Councils of the Hill Districts, the budget of the Hill Councils are incorporated in the State Budget after—they have been passed by the respective Councils. Due to acute financial constraints, the State Government has been unable to provide the full requirement of funds as passed by the Councils in the State Budget. However, full provision has been made for salary under non Plan. In the year 2000-2001, an allocation of Rs.163.03 crores was made for the Hill Plan, out of which Rs.70.90 crores was provided through Special Central Assistance. Rs.2.00 crores has been provided for irrigation (AIBP) and Rs.2.56 crores for the Special Employment Scheme. During this year greater emphasis is being laid on the development of horticulture, infrastructure, information technology and environmental protection along with health and water supply.

Welfare of Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribes/ Other Backward Classes:

As in the past, the Government will earnestly endeavour to promote the welfare of scheduled caste, scheduled tribes and other backward classes including tea and ex-tea garden tribes during 2001-2002. During the current financial year, 8172 scheduled caste families and 9598 scheduled tribe families were economically assisted under the 20 point programme by different development departments and State Government undertakings. Special emphasis is being given to the welfare of these communities in matters of health, education, specially education of women, drinking water facilities and village link roads. In the Budget estimates for 2001-2002, funds have been earmarked under Plan for the implementation of development schemes by the Autonomous Councils, namely Bodoland Autonomous Council, Mising

Autonomous Council. Rabha-Hasong Autonomous Council and Lalung Tiwa Autonomous Council.

Welfare of Minorities:

29. The Welfare of Minorities Development Board is executing several development schemes, including training programmes, for the generation of employment. The Assam Minority Development and Finance Corporation, on the other hand, extends loans to persons of notified minorities. During the current financial year, the Corporation will be giving loans upto Rs.50,000 to more than 400 beneficiaries. In order to bring about the socio economic development of the people living in char areas, the Directorate of Char Areas Development is implementing welfare and self employment schemes in agriculture, veterinary, dairy, drinking water facilities, education and cottage industries.

Relief and Rehabilitation:

The State Government is taking all possible steps to provide relief and rehabilitation to the flood affected people. During the current financial year a sum of Rs.101.42 crores has been sanctioned from the Calamity Relief Fund. Relief measures are also being extended to victims of ethnic violence in Kokrajhar, Bongaigaon and Dhubri districts, while ex-gratia grants are being sanctioned to victims of extremist violence, group clashes, etc. During the current financial year, Rs.13.95 crores has been spent so far on GR and RG to victims of ethnic violence. Ex-gratia/ financial assistance amounting to Rs.1.74 crores has also been given to the victims of ethnic and extremist violence.

Agriculture and Allied Sector:

Hon'ble Members will be glad to hear that one of the primary objectives of the Government in the agricultural sector, namely, the attainment of self sufficiency in the production of rice, was achieved during 1999-2000. This sector is under going rapid transformation, thanks largely to the installation of shallow tube wells under RIDF and

ARIASP schemes. During the current financial year, an additional 70,000 shallow tube wells are likely to be installed under the RIDF. With the successful installation of 1 lakh shallow tube wells under RIDF and another 30,000 under ARIASP during 1999-2000 and 2000 2001 in the State, the area under assured irrigation facilities is set to increase to 4.17 lakh hectares. The impact of these schemes is reflected by the fact that the State generated a surplus in rice production in 1999-2000. During 1999-2000, Assam produced 38.61 lakh tons as against 32.55 lakh tons during 1998-99. The annual requirement of rice in the State is estimated at 38.09 lakh tones.

- Efforts are being made to increase the area under double cropping from the present 12.51 lakh hectares to 20 lakh hectares by consolidating the gains in infrastructure development during the current Ninth Plan period. The use of HYV seeds and fertilizers has also increased with improved assured irrigation facilities. In fact, the consumption of fertilizers has doubled to 29.30 kg per hectares during 1999-2000 from 14.20 kg. per hectare at the beginning of the Ninth Plan.
- Wheat and pulses, two other important food-grain crops, are not grown extensively in the State due to unfavourable conditions. During 1999-2000 the production of wheat and pulses was 0.98 lakh tons and 0.71 lakh tons respectively. With an increase in assured irrigation facilities, thrust is being given to the production of these crops during 2001-2002. The Government is also taking up the programme of sprinkler irrigation in areas under oil seed cultivation during the current year to augment the production of oil seeds.
- 34. The dramatic increase in the area under irrigation due to wide spread use of shallow tube wells has fuelled considerable demand for power tillers and tractors. During the Ninth Plan period, till 1999-2000, the Department of Agriculture has distributed 407 power tillers and 120 tractors under Centrally Sponsored Schemes.
- 35. The State has so far achieved 6.60 lakh hectares of irrigable area against its potential of 27 lakh hectares. Irrigation Department is

presently executing 10 on-going major/ medium irrigation projects and 1241 ongoing minor irrigation schemes. Under ARIASP, the Government proposes to complete 141 deep tube well schemes and 81 river pumping stations at an estimated cost of Rs.11.76 crores with a target of 6909 hectares. Till September 2000. 75 deep tube wells and 32 river pumping stations were completed with a potential of 3580 hectares. During 2001-2002. 66 deep tube well schemes are proposed to be completed. The Government has also been implementing schemes with funds from the Non Lapsable Central Pool of Resources. Till October 2000. 86 ongoing minor irrigation schemes were completed at an estimated cost of Rs.11.21 crores resulting in creation of an additional potential of 12,745 hectares.

- 36. The Department of Fisheries is executing a number of schemes to augment the production of fish in this State from its present level of 1.6 lakh tons against the present annual demand estimated at 2.64 lakh tons. These schemes also aim at the socio economic upliftment of SC/ST people including provision of self employment. The major schemes presently under implementation are for development of farmers' ponds, development of community tanks, demonstration projects, development of beels and open water fisheries, besides technical manpower development and support to Assam Agriculture University for research activities.
- 37. In the Animal Husbandry and Veterinary sector, priority is being given to the improvement of the quality of livestock so as to increase the production of milk, meat, eggs and milk products. Through World Bank assistance, schemes have been implemented for the artificial insemination of 1,15,601 cattle. The Dairy Development Department has been engaging itself with the procurement of rurally produced milk at remunerative prices and the distribution of clean wholesome milk to urban consumers through town milk supply schemes. The Department is also implementing a massive milk production scheme, viz., Milk Village Scheme, all over the State, and a 100 percent Central Sector Scheme, viz., Integrated Dairy Development

Project in the hilly and backward areas of the state comprising ten districts at a total cost of Rs.12.6 crores.

Poverty Alleviation Programme:

- The State Government has been according the highest 38. priority to alleviation of rural poverty and upliftment of the quality of life of the rural poor. Since the problems of poverty and unemployment are closely interrelated, stress has been laid on the creation of sell employment and wage employment opportunities through restructured Swarnajayanti Gram Swarojgar Yojana (SGSY). programmes like Jawahar Gram Samridhi Yojana (JGSY) and Employment Assurance Schemes (EAS). Importance has also been given to the Indira Awas Yojana (IAY) for providing dwelling houses to the homeless, shelterless people. During 1999-2000, Rs.442.22 crores, including a State share of Rs.54.67 crores, were released for these schemes. This fund was used for assisting 1152 self help groups and 5502 families under SGSY, and for the creation of Rs.132.86 lakh and Rs.148.52 lakh mandays of employment under JGSY and EAS respectively. As many as 37,743 dwelling houses were constructed and 16,804 houses were upgraded under IAY. During the current financial year, up to the month of September 2000, 48 self help groups and 505 families were assisted under SGSY, 11.80 lakh mandays were created under JGSY while 41.64 lakh mandays were created under EAS. Moreover 16,165 dwelling houses have been newly constructed and 7,701 dwelling houses have been upgraded under IAY. Special programmes in the Central Sector under SGSY have been launched for boosting the production of Eri and Muga Yarn (Golden Thread Scheme).
- 39. The Eleventh Finance Commission has awarded a sum of Rs.233.40 crores over the period 2000-2005 as local body grants to supplement the resources of the rural panchayats.

Roads and Bridges:

40. The Government is aware that roads are critical for development more so in the case of remote, backward and land locked

areas like the North East. Consequently, despite severe funds constraint, the State government has been releasing substantial funds for the development of roads and bridges. With a view to giving a boost to the construction of roads and RCC bridges in the State, the Government has been availing loan from NABARD under the RIDF Schemes. So far, loans have been taken for the construction of 44 bridges under RIDF-II, 13 bridges under RIDF-III, 39 bridges under RIDF-IV. 43 bridges under RIDF-V alongwith six arterial rural roads with a total length of 110.10 kms. Until December 2000, 50 of these bridges had been completed.

- Under ARIASP, the State Government has taken up rehabilitation of 738 kms of roads and 209 bridges against the total allocation of Rs.273.50 crores for rural roads. So far 80 bridges and 132.82 kms. of roads have been completed and an additional 60 kms of roads and 25 bridges are likely to completed by the end of March 2001. The remaining works are expected to be completed by December 2001.
- The implementation of the Indo Bangladesh Border Roads and Fencing Project in Dhubri and Karimganj districts is continuing, and till date, 147.74 kms of fencing, 83 bridges, and 110.48 kms. of roads have been completed. The Phase-I of the Project is expected to be finished by March 2001.

Flood Control:

The problem of floods is endemic in many parts of the country, but nowhere is the problem more acute and persistent than in the State of Assam. Floods during the year 2000 caused 59 breaches due to erosion and 12 public cuts in both the Brahmaputra and Barak Valleys, besides causing widespread damage to cultivable and homestead lands, communication, life and property. The Brahmaputra Board, which was established by the Government of India to tackle the flood problem and draw up a master plan, has so far undertaken project formulation and prepared project reports for Dehang, Subansiri, Pagladia and Tipaimukh projects. While Pagladia Dam Project has been agreed to be taken up during the 9th Plan, earnest efforts are being

made to persuade the Government of India to take up the remaining mega projects.

During the current year, emphasis is being given to completing 74 ongoing schemes at various stages of implementation besides constructing 3 km of new embankments and 10 anti-crosion schemes under the State Annual Plan. The State Government also receives Central Loan Assistance for the execution of flood control schemes in the Central Sector. Due to the continuing efforts of the State Government, the Government of India has agreed to change the funding pattern from this year and has sanctioned grants instead of loans for the remaining period of Ninth Plan. This funding pattern envisages a 90 percent Central: 10 percent State share with the entire Central share being in the form of grants. The Government of India has been funding 25 schemes with a total estimated cost of Rs.64.91 crores since 1998-99 under the Non Lapsable Central Pool of Resources.

Power:

- 45. In consonance with the policy of the Government of India and recent developments in some States, Assam's power sector is on the threshold of an ambitious reforms and restructuring programme. The Government has approved a policy which, inter alia, envisages the setting up of an Assam Power Corporation to take up all the functions of transmission function will remain in the public sector, the generation sector route. The Assam Rural Electrification Corporation is proposed to in the rural areas. To determine electricity tariff in a rational and Commission (SERC) is proposed to be set up which could be expanded to a three member Commission in due course.
- Funds are expected to be available under the Accelerated Power Development Programme, after the State Government signs a MOU with the Government of India, for expenditure on energy audits.

transformation capacity which is expected to go a long way in cutting down transmission and distribution losses. To address the hydel thermal imbalance in the grid it is proposed to complete the 100 MW Karbi Langpi Hydro Electric Project on a war footing. The State Government also proposes to implement the 90 MW Amguri Combined Cycle Power Project and 120 MW Coal-fired Borgoloi Thermal Power Project through the independent power producer (IPP) route with the aim of increasing the power generating capacity in the State.

Industries and Commerce:

- 47. The Government has strived hard to implement the various promotional schemes for industries in the State and has achieved considerable success in this regard notwithstanding numerous constraints. The NE Policy announced by the Government of India, supplemented by the State Industrial Policy, 1997 has evoked a good response from private investors, particularly in industries burdened with a high incidence of Central Excise Duty like paints, cosmetics and detergents. Commercial production of the Assam Accord Refinery at Numaligarh has commenced. The State Government has contributed Rs.1.35 crores as share capital in the current financial year raising the total equity holding of the State Government in Numaligarh Refinery Ltd to Rs.89.82 crores.
- 48. Infrastructure in the area of Information Technology has been considerably strengthened with the commissioning of two international gateways by the Software Technology Park of India (STPI) at Borjhar and NEDFI at Guwahati. The Government has also started the implementation of the scheme for the introduction of Information Technology in schools in each assembly constituency at the cost of Rs.2 lakh per constituency. Moreover, computers are being installed in each District Industries Centre (DIC) in order to strengthen the standard of administration and improve efficiency at the field level.
- Hon'ble Members may be aware that two Border Trade Centres have been sanctioned by the Government of India at Sutarkandi

and Mankachar respectively. Another growth centre at Chaygaon is being sanctioned by Government of India at a cost of Rs.25 crores. The State Government also proposes to set up a Food Processing Park at Sonapur at an estimated cost of Rs.5.60 crores with assistance from Government of India. With a view to strengthening infrastructure, the Government of India has also sanctioned the setting up of two Industrial Infrastructure Development Centres (IIDC) at Dolgaon and Bhomoraguri respectively.

Handloom and Textiles:

- 50. Assam has a weavers population of 17.16 lakhs against 14.09 lakh looms. However, inspite of such a large number of weavers. handlooms from Assam have yet to make an impact in the market as only about 2 lakh out of the estimated 17 lakh weavers are commercial weavers. The Government is therefore planning to bring more weavers under the commercial fold through the implementation of State Sector and Central sectors schemes. The Government of India has sanctioned 360 project package schemes. Till December, 2000, 13,100 weavers have been covered under this scheme. During the same period workshed-cum-housing assistance has been provided to 272 weavers. A new insurance scheme to provide social security to the weavers has also been introduced in collaboration with the Government of India. In the area of marketing, you will be happy to hear that besides catering to the national market, ARTFED has also started exporting from this financial year and it has so far exported Rs.1 crore worth of goods. Moreover, an Urban Haat is proposed to be constructed by AGMC Ltd. with Government of India assistance.
- varieties of silk i.e. Eri, Muga, Mulberry and Tasar. Apart from various schemes under State Plan, efforts are also being made to provide self employment through the production of Muga and Eri under a special SGSY project being implemented in partnership with Central Silk Board in eight districts of Assam. The Project is estimated at Rs.18.73 crores and will benefit 2650 families.

Transport and Tourism:

- The Inland Water Transport is operating 49 ferry services in the Brahmaputra Valley and 24 in the Barak Valley. With the implementation of the Protocol on Inland Water Transit and Trade between India and Bangladesh, the commercial cargo services to Bangladesh as well as other States of India via Calcutta is in operation. The construction of a river terminal at Badarpur has been taken up with NEC funds at an estimated cost of Rs.3.75 crores. Deeply concerned with the rapidly deteriorating financial health of Assam State Transport Corporation (ASTC), the State Government is exploring various possibilities including a package for revival. A critical component of such a package, namely, a Voluntary Retirement Scheme for 2000 employees entailing a cost of Rs.55.00 crore has been prepared and submitted to the Government of India for their consideration.
- Tourism has immense potential to generate both employment and income with minimal investments. The Government has therefore decided to make tourism a major thrust area. Twenty major projects entailing an expenditure of Rs.4.73 crores over the last 4 years for the improvement of tourist facilities have been completed. These include upgradation of tourist lodges at Kaziranga and at Bordoloni Bird Sanctuary and wayside facilities at Rowta, Nalbari, Bokakhat, Moran, Jagiroad, Biswanath Chariali, Chandubi and Kamakhya. During the current year, twenty two projects with a total estimated cost of Rs.7.38 crores are under implementation. Notable among these are upgradation of tourist facilities at Pabitora and Bhalukpung, creation of wayside facilities, construction of Yatri Niwas, projects for the beautification of Guwahati along the Brahmaputra river front, integrated development of infrastructure at Pilgrim Tourist Centre at Kamakhya, sound and light show at Talatal Ghar and at Srimanta Sankardeva Kalakshetra. In order to give a boost to the Tourism Sector, the Government has, in principle, decided to encourage private sector investments in tourism infrastructure and services.

Police:

- 54. After setting up of the Unified Command, considerable success in containing insurgency has been achieved by Assam Police. To increase the efficiency of the force, steps for modernisation have been undertaken by providing upgraded weapons, sophisticated security equipment, better mobility, modern communication equipment, and upgraded facilities for the Forensic Science Laboratory. In this connection, Government of India has allocated Rs.38.7 crores for the modernization of Assam Police over a period of five years, for which a five year perspective plan has been prepared.
- 55. The Eleventh Finance Commission has awarded Rs. 24 crores by way of Upgradation Grants for the police administration over the period 2000-2005 for the construction of police station buildings, setting up of mobile forensic science units, purchase of weapons and equipments, and provision of facilities for women police personnel. During 2000-2001, an amount of Rs.45.00 crores has been released till expenditure. The Government as reimbursement of security related security related expenditure have recently been revised with effect from like expenditures on Home Guards, POL used by State Police, Village Police, NSA detenues, and rehabilitation of surrendered militants.

Institutional Finance:

business run and smooth flow of institutional credit is vital for economic development of the State. However, it is a concern that the flow of and the banks in particular are not adequate. Even though 1302 bank branches were functioning in the State as on 30.6.2000, the credit-deposit ratio for scheduled commercial banks and regional rural banks together was 34.1 percent only against the all India average of 57.6 percent as on the quarter ending June 2000. Since the low level of

Institutional credit has grave implications for the economy, the State Government has been regularly taking up the matter in different high level banking for a and urging the bank authorities to take effective measures to increase the flow of credit in the State.

State Finances:

- length about the chronic financial problems of the State Government in my previous Budget Speeches since 1996-97 onwards. With the growth in expenditures continuing to outstrip the growth in receipts, the financial scenario remains a concern. Although the State's tax and non tax revenue collections have increased considerably in recent years, the unabated growth of non Plan revenue expenditure has caused acute fiscal imbalances. The rampant growth of non Plan revenue expenditure can be attributed to mounting expenditure on salaries, wages and pensions, increase in expenditure on account of debt servicing, growing dependence of State public sector undertakings on budgetary support from the Government, and heavy expenditure on the maintenance of law and order and counter-insurgency.
- Non Plan revenue deficits and fiscal deficits have continued to persist and cumulate year after year. What is particularly worrisome is that the revenue deficit is being increasingly financed through borrowings. Since heavy borrowings eventually result in mounting debt servicing obligations, incremental borrowings insidiously lead to higher revenue expenditures and increasing revenue deficits. It can thus be seen that revenue deficits and borrowings are strongly correlated and tend to feed on one another.
- The continuing imbalance between expenditure and receipts has not only generated severe fiscal stress but has also engendered a cash flow problem, which has compelled State Government to rely heavily on drawals against the Ways and Means and Overdraft Facility of the RBI. Regular resort to ways and means advances and overdrafts from the RBI without possessing the

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wherewithal to liquidate the same has resulted in repeated monthly suspension of payments on the State Government account.

- 60. Notwithstanding the magnitude and complexities of the fiscal situation confronting the Government, we have through prudent financial management and enforcement of fiscal discipline effected a significant improvement in the financial position of the State. This is brought out by the revised estimates for the current year which indicate a sharp drop in the estimated deficit on current transactions and in the closing balance for the current year. As you are all aware, the State Government is presently in the process of implementing fiscal reforms. It is hoped that these reforms will start bearing fruit in the coming years and will enable the State Government to restore its financial health.
 - 61. Hon'ble Members are aware that the Eleventh Finance Commission had visited the State in May 1999 to assess the financial requirements of the State Government. The State Government had hoped that the Eleventh Finance Commission would take into account the special needs and problems of the State while formulating its award. Unfortunately, the much awaited recommendations of the Eleventh Finance Commission have turned out to be a bitter disappointment. Instead of recommending substantially higher Non Plan Revenue Grants to the State to meet the widening gap in the non Plan revenue account. the Commission has slashed the Grant to a meagre Rs. 110.68 crores for the entire award period of 2000-2005, as compared to the Rs.712.03 crores awarded by the Tenth Finance Commission (TFC) for the period 1995-2000. All other Special Category States and even some non Special Category States have been awarded substantially larger Grants. The Eleventh Finance Commission (EFC) has also recommended the transfer of Rs.12,362.05 crores as Share of Central Taxes to Assam over the period 2000-2005. Although this represents a 75 percent increase over the Rs.7,064.14 crores awarded by TFC, the share of Assam in the net proceeds of all shareable Union taxes and duties has declined to 3.28 percent from 3.42 percent awarded by TFC. The EFC has also awarded Rs.132.54 crores as Upgradation and Special Problem Grants. Rs.254.99 crores as Local Body Grants, and Rs.420.60 crores as Grants

Eleventh Finance Commission is reflected by the fact that the award of EFC in respect of this State constitutes only 3.05 percent of the total transfers from the Centre to all the States. On the other hand, the State's share in total transfers in the awards of the Ninth and Tenth Finance Commission constituted 3.73 percent and 3.67 percent respectively.

Debt and Contingent Liabilities:

- I have already explained how the Government has had to resort to debt financing to fund its revenue expenditures and how the State's increasing debt has contributed to the present financial crisis. The outstanding debt of the Government of Assam which stood at Rs.6704.70 crores as on 1.4.1999 rose to Rs.8441.33 crores as on 1.4.2000. The loans outstanding to the Central Government was Rs.4802.85 crores as on 1.4.2000 which constituted 57 percent of the total loans outstanding. On the other hand, market borrowings were of the order of Rs.1920.01 crores which amounted to 23 percent of the total outstanding debt. As per information available, the estimated outstanding debt as on 1.4.2001 is projected to increase to Rs.9967.20 crores. During the current year, the total debt servicing liabilities as per the budget estimates is Rs.1436.43 crores, out of which Rs.996.08 crores is on account of interest payments.
- 63. The State Government is also deeply concerned about the fact that the debt servicing costs are eating into an increasingly larger share of fresh borrowings every year. In 1999-2000, while the total borrowings availed by the Government amounted to Rs.1960.73 crores, the total repayments against loan principals outstanding and interest amounted to as much as Rs.1648.59 crores. One can therefore see that annual debt servicing costs account for as much as 84 percent of fresh incoming debt leaving hardly any scope for fresh capital investments. In fact, in the case of Central loans, the repayment of principal and interest (Rs.1185.22 crores) exceeded the loan receipts from Government of India (Rs.1090.35 crores) during the same year.

- Hon'ble Members may recall that in my Budget Speech last year, I had announced that the State Government had constituted a Consolidated Sinking Fund which is to be used for the amortisation of the State Government open market loans. As a part of the Government's efforts to manage its debt more effectively and also in order to achieve greater inter- generational equity, the State Government proposes to hike the provision for this Fund to Rs.60 crores in the Budget for 2001-2002 from Rs.20 crores in 2000-2001.
- liabilities remain within manageable limits, the Government has imposed a ceiling on Government Guarantees against loans and other forms of debt financing sought to be availed by State Public Sector undertakings, Local Bodies and Co-operative Institutions. Since most of the PSUs and Co-operative Institutions are sick and are not in a position and interest eventually devolves almost entirely on the State State Government has had to pay Rs.6.43 crores on behalf of PSUs and financial institutions. Consequently, the State Government has been Guarantees.

Revenue Collection:

Government from its own sources amounted to Rs.1669.68 crores, out revenue Rs.444.92 crores. The total devolution of funds from the Centre Rs.1448.78 crores being provided as share of Central Taxes and Sponsored Schemes. The revised estimates indicate that the revenue Contraction of the State Government from its own sources during 1999-2000 was of the order of Rs.3171.26 crores. with Rs.1722.48 crores as Grants-in-Aid under Non-plan, plan and Centrally receipts of the State Government from its own sources during 2000-Rs.1424.54 crores and non tax revenues at Rs.505.75 crores. The total

devolution of funds from the Centre during 2000-2001 is expected to be Rs.4940.56 crores, with share of Central Taxes being estimated at Rs.1759.32 crores and Grants-in-Aid under Non-Plan, Plan and Centrally Sponsored Schemes at Rs.3181.24 crores.

Tax Proposals:

- The Government had fixed the target of tax revenue collection for the current financial year 2000-2001 at Rs.1040 crores under nine different Taxation Acts directly administered by the Finance Department. The provisional collection of tax revenue upto December, 2000 comes to Rs.734 crores. The collection of tax revenue for the corresponding period of 1999-2000 was Rs.592.90 crores. Thus the growth of tax revenue upto December, 2000 over that of the same period of last year is about 24 percent. It is expected that the target for collection of tax revenue for the current year will be achieved, inspite of a fall in collection of tax under the Assam Agricultural Income Tax Act, 1939, mainly due to fall in prices of Indian tea in the international and domestic markets and also due to fall in production of tea in the State in the current year.
- I had mentioned in my budget speech of last year that the Government of Assam had implemented Uniform Floor Rates of tax with effect from 01-01-2000 as per consensus arrived at in the meeting of the State Chief Ministers/ Finance Ministers held at New Delhi on 16-11-99. The introduction of the Uniform Floor Rates has greatly contributed to the reduction of rate war among the States and it is expected that this reform in the tax rates in the States would bring an additional revenue of about Rs.45 crores under the Assam General Sales Tax Act, 1993 during the current financial year.
- 69. The Assam Taxation (Settlement of Disputes) Act, 2000 was introduced with effect from 17-05-2000 to expedite settlement of cases pending in the High Court/ Supreme Court and also with the departmental appellate and revisional authorities, and at the same time to realise some revenue out of such settlement. The applications

received for settlement of disputes under the Act are under process of disposal by the designated authority.

- 70. The Assam Taxation (On Luxuries) Act, 1997 was amended with effect from 20-05-2000 in order to levy tax on the stock of luxuries manufactured within the State and subsequently despatched outside the State. This covered the manufacture of goods by the units set up to avail of the benefit of concession of Union Excise Duty offered by the Government of India in the North Eastern States. This amendment has brought an additional revenue of Rs.8 crores under the Act so Lat.
- In spite of the introduction of Uniform Floor Rates of tax. the State Government had kept cotton yarn used in handloom sector exempted from payment of tax. It is found that acrylic yarn and other synthetic yarns are also used in the handloom sector now a days. The Government is considering the inclusion of these yarns in the hank form in the exempted list with a view to providing an incentive to the handloom sector.
- Amusement and Betting Tax Act, 1939, the Government is considering a proposal to allow the proprietors of cinema halls to determine the rate of admission fees at their discretion without any Government control. As enhancement Tax is levied at percentum rate of admission fees, revenue. It is expected that an additional revenue of Rs.7.00 crores will withdrawn.
- Betting Tax Act, 1939 is levied at the rate of 10 percent of the total maximum of Rs.10.00. This rate was fixed in the year 1966. It is value during this long period. A bill is accordingly going to be introduced in the Assembly for necessary amendment of the Act.

This amendment of the Act is expected to fetch an additional revenue of Rs. 1, crores.

- A "Film Surcharge" at the rate of 20 percent of amusement tax is sought to be levied with a view to raising a corpus under the control of the Assam State Film (Finance & Development) Corporation for financing the production of regional films. For this purpose, a bill will be introduced in the current session of the Assembly for amendment of the Assam Amusement and Betting Tax Act, 1939. This "Film Surcharge" is proposed to be levied for a period of five years only.
- I am happy to inform the Hon'ble members that the 75. sanction of the President of India for introduction of the Entry Tax Bill in the State Legislative Assembly has been received recently. Accordingly, the bill will be introduced in the current session of the Assembly. It is expected that on enactment of the Assam Entry Tax Act, an additional revenue of Rs.20 crores will be generated under this Act. Implementation of this Act will reduce the scope of avoiding payment of sales tax in Assam in respect of goods purchased by persons in Assam directly from outside the State. In the proposed bill a provision has been kept that a dealer who imports any goods taxable under the Assam General Sales Tax Act, 1993 and sells the same within the State would get set off of the amount of entry tax payable on the goods so that there will be no additional burden of tax on the consumer due to levy entry tax in such cases. It is also necessary to mention that this does not amount to a new tax, but is only a measure to plug loopholes in the existing tax arrangement.
- Finance Ministers held in November, 1999 at New Delhi under the chairmanship of the Union Finance Minister to introduce the system of Value Added Tax in all the States and Union Territories from 01-04-2002. As the Hon'ble members are aware, the system of Value Added Tax is a major and critical reform in the system of collection of sales tax revenue. The new system will be more transparent and self-compliant and at the same time it will do away with the ills of cascading effect of tax under the existing system. But for proper introduction of the system

of Value Added Tax certain preparations like training of officials of the Taxation Department as well as of the dealers, creating awareness amongst all concerned including the consumers, computerisation of the department and preparation of suitable law for the purpose well be necessary. The Government has already initiated actions in this regard

Accounts 1999-2000:

As per accounts furnished by the Accountant General. Assam, the financial year 1999-2000 closed with a net deficit of Rs.142.00 crores. The actual receipts during the year under the Consolidated Fund, Contingency Fund and Public Accounts were Rs.13,251.00 crores, whereas the total actual expenditure during the year was Rs.13,283.77 crores, thereby leaving a net deficit of Rs.32.55 crores on account of current transactions during the year. Taking into account the opening deficit of Rs.109.45 crores, the State Government closed the year with a negative balance of Rs.142.00 crores as on 31.3.2000.

Revised Estimates 2000-2001:

78. The budget estimates of 2000-2001 showed an estimated overall deficit of Rs.1814.28 crores taking into account the opening deficit of Rs.986.44 crores. However, as per revised estimates, the transactions during the year shown a deficit of Rs.282.07 crores. But taking into account the opening deficit of Rs.142.00 crores, the year is anticipated to close with an overall deficit of Rs.424.07 crores.

Budget Estimate 2001-2002:

Rs.8715.08 crores under the Consolidated Fund of the State consisting of Rs.6648.75 crores under Revenue Account and Rs.2066.33 crores under Capital Account. Estimated receipts into the Consolidated Fund receipts aggregated to Rs.11329.35 crores, taking into account the receipts of Rs.2614.27 crores under Public Account. In the Budget estimates of 2001-2002 the expenditure from the Consolidated Fund of

the State is estimated at Rs.10267.63 crores of which Rs.8331.65 crores is under Revenue Account and Rs.1935.98crores under Capital Account. A graphic representation of the estimates of major items of expenditure is at **Figure-4**. Taking into account the expenditure of Rs.1954.27 crores under Public Account, the total expenditure for the year is estimated at Rs..12221.90 crores. Thus a deficit of Rs.892.55 crores is estimated on account of current transactions during the year. Taking into account the opening deficit of Rs.424.07 crores, the year 2001-2002 is anticipated to close with an overall deficit of Rs.1316.62 crores. An abstract of transactions is shown at the **Annexure**.

- Due to prudent fiscal management in the current year, we are looking at a much smaller budget deficit than the original budget estimates. The reduction in the budget deficit was achieved by better expenditure management. We hope to similarly curtail the budget deficit for the year 2001-2002 by continuing with the same measures with renewed vigour. I have already mentioned that the award of the Eleventh Finance Commission was a big disappointment. The State Government has been urging the Government of India to redress the injustice done to the State by sanctioning additional central assistance. We hope that this initiative will bear fruit and that we will be able to secure substantial additional central assistance.
- The State Government also aims to generate additional tax revenues through widening and deepening of the tax base and by putting greater stress on better tax administration. The Government also expects that there will be no let up in the rate at which the economy is growing and that increased developmental activity will generate greater buoyancy in tax revenues. Hon'ble Members may be aware that the State Government has since long been demanding that oil royalty at the rate of the landed cost of imported crude be paid by the Central Government. We expect that the Central Government will take due cognizance of this demand and agree to pay oil royalty at a significantly higher rate. The State Government also proposes to review all the existing user charges as a part of overall rationalization of government revenue sources. Further, with the recent introduction of

revised guidelines for the reimbursement of Security Related Expenditures, we can hope to secure additional funds from Government of India by way of such reimbursement.

With these words. Sir. I commend the Budget to the August House for consideration.

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ANNEXURE

Abstract of Transactions

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				(Nupees in crores)		
		Actuals	Budget Estimates	Revised Estimates	Budget Estimate	
		1999-2000	2000-2001	2000-2001	2001-2002	
Δ.	RECEIPTS:					
	I Consolidated Fund					
	Revenue Account	4840.94	6554.29	6870.85	6648.75	
	Capital Account	6119.32	2803.26	3030.85	2066.33	
	Total	10960.26	9357.55	9901.70	8715.08	
	II Contingency Fund Account	•••	•••	•••	***	
	III Public Account	2290.96	2415.20	2625.71	2614.27	
	Total (I+II+III)	13251.22	11772.75	12527.41	11329.35	
В.	EXPENDITURE:					
	I Consolidated Fund					
	Revenue Account	5845.67	7455.15	7628.23	8331.65	
	Capital Account	5315.24	3157.24	3166.05	1935.98	
	Total	11160.91	10612.39	10794.28	10267.63	
	II. Contingency Fund Account	•••	•••	•••	***	
	III. Public Account	2122.86	2015.20	2015.20	1954.27	
	Total (I+II+III)	13283.77	12627.59	12809.48	12221.90	
С.	TRANSACTIONS DURING TH	IF VFAR •				
.	Surplus (+)		•••	•••		
	Deficit (-)	 32.55	854.84	282.07	900 ~~	
	17enen (-)				892.55	
D.	OPENING BALANCE					
	Surplus (+)		 986.44	140.00	•••	
	Deficit (-)	109.45	980. 44	142.00	424.07	
E.	CLOSING BALANCE					
	Surplus (+)	•••		40.4 5		
	Deficit (-)	142.00	1841.28	424.07	13 _{16.62}	

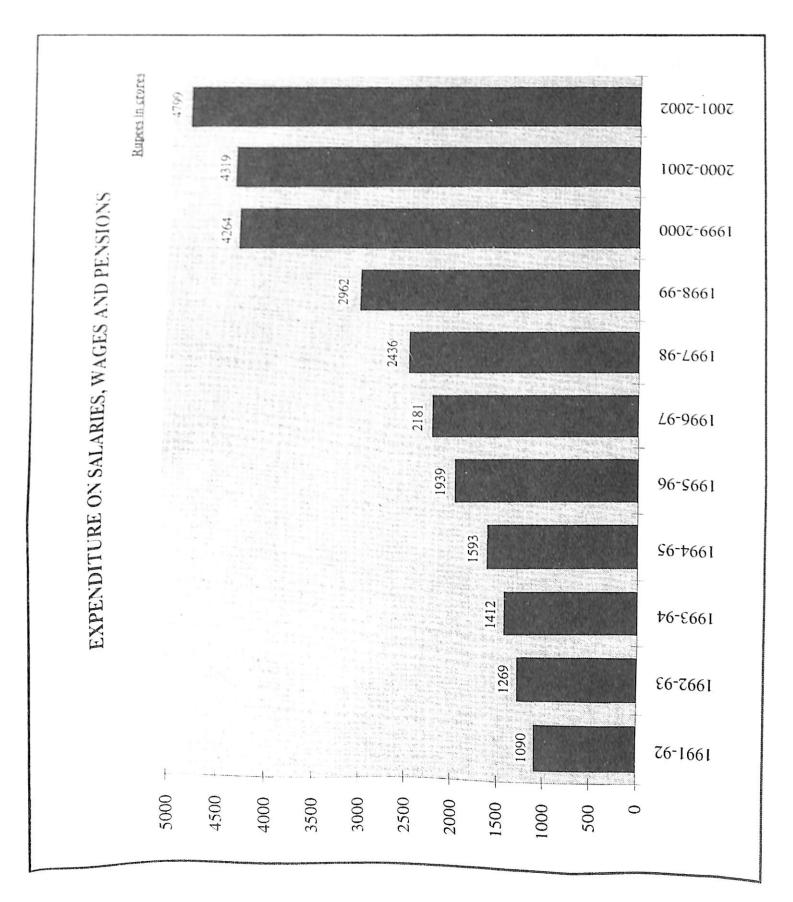


Figure-2

ESTIMATES OF INFLOWS INTO THE CONSOLIDATED FUND OF THE THE

Kupers in crotes Non Plan Grants from Centre (Rs.528) Grants from the Centre (CSS) (Rs.802) Loans from the Centre (Rs.809) STATE IN 2001-2002 Other Capital Receipt (Rs.1258) State Taxes (Rs.1606)

State Plan Grants (Rs.1429)

Non-tax Revenue (Rs.523)

Share of Central Taxes (Rs.1760)

ESTIMATES OF OUTFLOWS FROM THE CONSOLIDATED FUND OF THE STATE IN 2001-2002

