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Speech of Shri S.C.Marak, Chief Minister of Meghalaya,
Shillong at the Inaugural meeting of M.E.D.C. on 20.11.95.

Friends,

I welcome you all to this first meeting of the newly constituted M.E.D.C. I also take the opportunity to express my happiness on your spontaneous response and acceptance of being member of this Council for the interest of the State.

2. Meghalaya like other small States has been suffering from several development lags particularly deficiency in basic infrastructural support for economic and social growth including efficient management of its natural resources. In spite of the fact that the State is richly endowed with natural resources, the heavy and long monsoon sustains intensive and varied flora. Forests cover a land surface of 8510 Sq.Kms or about 37.5% of the total area of the State. The area of the reserve forests under the control of the State, however, is small. The large scale felling of trees now taking place in the State for timber and firewood is giving rise to problems of poor water retention, soil erosion, reduced soil fertility, etc., The total known coal reserve has been estimated to be 6301 million tonnes, sillimanite in the indicated category is 5 lakhs tonnes and reserve of industrial clay is 71 million tonnes. Other commercially exploitable mineral deposits are kaolin, feldspar, glass sand, etc. Heavy rainfall, big streams and rivers provide abundant hydro power potential in the State.

3. Since, the birth of Meghalaya in 1972, the Govt. of Meghalaya has taken various measures for promoting the economic and industrial development of the State and its people. However, the progress of the development in the field has not reached the level expected of for reasons attributable to inadequate resources, sluggish in-flow of investments and little private participation. In the wake of the liberalised economic policy of the Central Govt. it is felt proper to take advantage of the opportunity to exploit ways and means for accelerating the process of economic and industrial development of the State.

4. You may perhaps be aware that the State Govt. since its inception have constituted the State Planning Board with the main objective, among others, to advise the Govt. regarding the formulation of 5 years plans etc., and to review the progress and implementation of plan schemes. Over the passage of time, the unemployment among the educated youths in particular has become very critical and pose serious problem to the Govt. The Govt. has therefore

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constituted the Government Generation Council to look into the problem and to assess the prospect of generation of employment in the State, and other related matters. In addition to those important Govt. Organisation constitutes by the State Govt. It is felt essential to have a broad based organisation separately to deal with economic development aspect and problems facing the State by constituting the MEDC, following the Resolution adopted by the Meghalaya Legislative Assembly on 18.9.95.

The Council has been constituted with the need for consensus of all political parties, on broad strategies for development.

5. For achieving the aforesaid aim and overcoming the shortcoming, the Govt. has constituted the Meghalaya Economic Development Council (MEDC) with the following development strategy as per terms of reference :-

- i) To advise the State Govt. on issues relating to or touching upon the industrial and economic policies.
- ii) To deliberate and examine the constraints inhibiting flow of investment into the State and the possible steps for removal thereof.
- iii) To identify sectors where overall economic and industrial growth can be created and also accelerated.
- iv) To suggest ways for attracting investments, local and foreign in the State.
- v) To advise or recommend the strategy for achieving the aforesaid goal.

The Council is to apply its mind for efficient use of resources. Over the years we have created a lot of infrastructure. Now the need has arisen to use this infrastructure for further economic development and for ensuring a better standard of living of people.

6. I am confident that with your active participation and valuable suggestions, our endeavour to uplift the economy of the State and its people could be achieved.

Thank you.