



सत्यमेव जयते

Speech of
DR. MUKUL SANGMA
Hon'ble Chief Minister
Meghalaya

During the 63rd

Meeting
of the
North Eastern Council

at

the North Eastern Council Secretariat,
Meghalaya, Shillong

on the 02nd January, 2015

Hon'ble Union Minister of State (Independent Charge), DoNER & Chairman, N.E.C, Dr.Jitendra Singh Ji, Distinguished Members of the North Eastern Council, Officials from the Government of India, N.E.C., State Governments and Friends.

Sir, at the outset I and the people of Meghalaya would like to extend hearty congratulations to you on your new assignment. As the host State of the NEC, it is also my proud privilege to welcome you and all the outstation members of the Council to Shillong.

The meetings of the Council are an occasion to reflect and set the agenda for the year to come. I would like to take advantage of your presence and of all the distinguished members to reiterate certain issues which have been raised time again and again at the Plenary meeting as these have not received adequate attention of the Government of India. Of these, I would like to highlight only a few important ones.

Annual Plan (2014-15):

The projected outlay of the North Eastern Council for the Twelfth Five Year (2012-17) was Rs 13027.38 crores and the approved outlay conveyed by the Planning Commission was Rs 6108.00 crores only.

While this itself was inadequate, to make matters worse, the actual allocation since 2012-13 has been static at Rs.770 crore reflecting a decline in real terms. The annual allocation of the NEC needs to be suitably enhanced. Similarly, if we look at releases, we see that these have been unusually slow this year. There is a large bank of sanctions which need to be acted upon quickly, so that

cost escalation is avoided. As States, our absorption capacity has gone up considerably and we are in a position to complete projects much faster, if funds are released in time. Under your leadership, we keenly look forward to faster releases and timely implementation. May I suggest that an online system be developed for this through which all documents could be uploaded by us and releases made immediately thereafter.

10% Gross Budgetary Support (GBS): A substantial amount of funds have accumulated in the non-lapsable pool reflecting unspent balances by Union Ministries. Allocation from this pool to the North-East however, is regulated by the yearly budget ceilings fixed for DoNER by the Ministry of Finance. I would like to propose that the non-lapsable pool be kept in a Revolving Fund to be operated by DoNER and the funds made available to the States based on their project proposals, their annual demands and utilization capacities with fund allocations not constrained by yearly budgetary ceilings. A portion of this should also be placed at the disposal of NEC for funding their activities.

Inter State Roads: A crucial infrastructural gap in respect of inter state connectivity by road needs to be a priority of NEC as unless this is supported by NEC, roads constructed by one State will be limited to its own administrative jurisdiction only. This will fail to provide the continuity to connect to important roads of the neighbouring State.

Telecommunications: An accessible and reliable Telecom/IT infrastructure continues to remain an aspiration and a dream for the NER. Better communication links for the NER need to be taken

up as a strategic priority. This would involve alternate voice and internet connectivity through Bangladesh, stringing of OPGW on power lines, service ducts for utilities along all national and State Highways and solar / renewable energy solutions for all mobile towers. This may necessitate budgetary support to BSNL either through the USoF or the Ministry of DoNER, but we must not hesitate in providing this, provided firm commitments and timelines are agreed with BSNL.

Inclusion of Land as a Project Component in the DPR: In much of the North East, land is community owned and the State owns only a small percentage of land. The land tenure system is not akin to other parts of the country. In the hill states of the North East today, the creation of infrastructure inevitably involves land acquisition of community or private land. Unfortunately, these costs are not covered by NEC/DoNER funding and we are finding it very difficult to meet these costs from our own resources. I would, therefore, urge that cost of land be included as one of the project components in the DPR funded by Ministry of DoNER and NEC.

Maintenance of assets built through NEC funds: NEC has played a crucial role in building up infrastructure in the North East right from its inception. As it continues to build new assets, it is also important not to lose what has already been built. The proposal by NEC for rehabilitation of previously funded roads is therefore welcome and needs to be acted upon expeditiously with adequate earmarked funds. The scope of the support must also be extended beyond roads to cover buildings and life saving medical equipments which has been supported by NEC in the past.

NEC rules and procedures: Overtime, certain changes have been made in the rules governing NEC sanctions. Some of these are proving to be cumbersome and self-defeating. The exclusion of 7.5% agency charges from sanctions limits our selection of competent executing agencies. Similarly, exclusion of 3% contingency charges means that there is no leeway available in civil projects to tackle unforeseen challenges in a region where the geology and ground conditions are often tough and difficult to anticipate. The NEC may also like to review its earlier decisions on setting up of a NEC Fund Society in the State in view of the Union Cabinet's decision that all CSS releases should be as central assistance through the Treasury route. For all such projects, either under the Head '3601' or under '2522', there may be a tripartite agreement involving NEC, the State Government and the NGO with the State Government having a monitoring role.

Schemes specific to Meghalaya :

1. Setting up of the Indian Institute of Public Health (IIPH) in Meghalaya:

The Indian Institute of Public Health (IIPH) is a joint initiative of the Health & Family Welfare Department, Government of Meghalaya (GoM), the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare (MOHFW), Government of India and the Public Health Foundation of India (PHFI). The Government of Meghalaya has agreed to host the IIPH and has provided 22.3 acres of land. IIPH – North East is being set up to improve health in the region through sustainable educational, research, training,

policy and advocacy activities which collectively constitute a hub of action. When the Institute fully scales up over a ten year period, it plans to educate and train more than 500 students every year in long term courses such as diploma, degree and master degree courses and an additional 500 plus in short term skill and competency building programs including community workers. In its first phase over five years, the yearly output planned is 200 in long term courses and over 200 in short term courses. Streams of study would include Indigenous Health Studies, Epidemiology and Infectious Diseases, Nutrition and Public Health Policy, Substance Abuse and Tobacco Control.

This is an ambitious project of regional nature which will be meeting a long felt need. The total capital expenditure in the first phase is estimated at INR 80 Crores and I would request the NEC to consider our proposal in this regard on priority.

- 2. Expanding scope of cultural exchange :** I would like to place before the Council the proposal to encourage local artisans / entrepreneurs, local talent in folk / traditional music and songs and talented artists in fine art to enable them to participate in cultural exchange programmes which may be organized in different ASEAN Countries and our neighbouring countries in the future.
- 3. Support for Integrated Checkgates:** The State shares a long boundary with neighbouring Assam. In order to address taxation issues and to check loss of Government revenue, there is a need to set up integrated Checkgates in the State and also to create an infrastructure for easy and better monitoring through Computerization which is totally absent in the present day scenario of the State Government Check points.

4. Support for new townships: Due to rapid urbanization and growth in economic activities in many towns / cities in the North Eastern Region, it is a felt need of the State that necessary infrastructure be supported in the proposed new Shillong township and the district headquarters with futuristic approach to address the issues of urbanization and traffic congestion in the capital city of Shillong and the evergrowing district capitals

Mr. Chairman Sir, we in the North East have great expectations from this Government in general and from you in particular. Your decision to travel to Shillong for this meeting speaks for itself and I am confident that under your leadership, the Ministry of DoNER will emerge as an effective interlocutor on behalf of the North East.

With these few words, I thank you once again Sir and request that the issues raised by me are given due consideration.

Jai Hind

Khublei

Mitela