

**PROCEEDINGS OF THE REVIEW MEETINGS OF THE WORKING GROUP'E' STATE
PLANNING BOARD HELD ON THE 3RD, 6TH AND 17TH SEPTEMBER, 2004 IN THE
OFFICE CHAMBER OF THE CHAIRMAN, STATE PLANNING BOARD.**

Members and Officers present at Annexure – ‘A’

3.9.04

At the outset, Shri S.D. Khongwir, Chairman of Working Group'E' welcomed the Members and all Officers present.

The following Departments were taken up on 3.9.04.

1. Agriculture : The projected outlay for the 10th Plan (2002-2007) is Rs.8,295.00 lacs and the proposed target for food grain is 273.61 lac tonnes. It was observed that production of food grain during 2003-2004 was 225.00 lac tonnes against the target of 231.00 lac tonnes. The slogan for doubling food production in the next ten years commencing from 1997-1998 upto 2006-2007 seemed to be unrealistic due to certain limitations like less land availability etc. The slogan does make sense at the national level but not at the micro level.

The Department informed that for increasing production of food crops, they had introduced High Yield Variety seeds in the land available and demonstrations had already started. It was observed that due to increase in population, the deficit requirement of food grain can be imported from outside the state at a cheaper rate. During discussion, the Working Group wanted to have a clear picture on an amount of Rs.81 crores under Crop Husbandry which has been projected in the 10th Plan outlay. The Department was asked whether they could spend the entire amount for the remaining part of the 10th Plan. As it appeared, the amount earmarked for Horticulture was included in that amount which in fact should be shown separately. The Department is to ensure to give only the reliable statistics and data.

As Meghalaya's economy is primarily agricultural, the Department of Agriculture is a crucial one as 75% of the total population depends on it.

There was a discussion on Crop insurance for modified crops such as ginger, mustard and paddy. The farmers are responding only if the crops fail. Prior to crop failure, premiums are rarely being paid by them. However, payment of premium is done only to selected farmers. Kisan credit card is a national policy introduced 3 years ago and it is more like a rolling loan which is not of much help to the farmers. On the other hand Commercial Crops Development Board will concentrate more on marketing rather than on the production side.

2. Horticulture : The projected outlay for the 10th Plan is Rs.2565 lacs and it was noted that this amount should not be included in the proposed outlay for Agriculture. The Working Group felt that the Department should recast the correct figures. It was pointed out that the loan component under Horticulture amounts to Rs. 1 crore which is included in the Plan outlay. However, the Department assured that the loan will not be availed by them.

The Department informed that Meghalaya has a good scope for floriculture because of its unique climate, but there is lack of expertise in this field and another bottleneck is transportation. Tea and Pineapple are also doing well. The Working Group felt that there is an urgent need for processing of pine apple for better marketing prospects.

The Department suggested setting up of Meghalaya State Horticultural Board with Government funds to help inclusively for marketing and processing of waste products. The Working Group supported the idea and would discuss the proposal with the Chairman and Co-Chairmen of State Planning Board. The Department is planning to come up with a scheme under NLCPR for cultivation of passion fruit, one of the thrust areas of the Department. Several areas have been identified in Ri-Bhoi District, Jaintia Hills District and East Khasi Hills District. About 5000 seedlings have been dispatched from ICAR and the scheme was started this year. An incentive is needed for private entrepreneurs to take up such schemes.

3. Minor Irrigation : The Department informed that due to less plan allocation, most of the Irrigation works could not be taken up. During 2003-2004, the original outlay of Rs.800 lacs was revised to Rs.550 lacs only. Provision under CAD Programmes is also very poor as it is both under Central Share and State Share. An amount of Rs.41 crores has been allocated for the 10th Plan, out of which Rs.1 crore is the NABARD loan.

During discussion, it was learnt that due to the state's meagre financial resources, the Department is availing the NABARD loan for renovation and reconstruction of Minor Irrigation Projects. The Working Group however questioned the mode of repayment and the justification for taking a loan for renovation works. It requires a lot of investment in irrigation works. It is learnt that investigation and development of ground water is taken up by PHE and Mining and Geology. The question was raised whether the Department was capable of exploring this possibility. In Garo Hills, surface water is not available and the exercise is expensive. The Working Group wanted to know whether the Department could utilize the service of the Central Ground Water Board. In Assam, a shallow tube well is usually found using diesel pumps to supply water in a command area.

It was learnt that a MOU was submitted to the Government regarding formation of an Association of the farmers of different Minor Irrigation Projects so that after completion, the projects are to be handed over to them for maintenance except major maintenance to be done by Government.

The Commissioner & Secretary, Minor Irrigation was of the view that some conceptual changes need to be done under Minor Irrigation. The Department was more in favour of Micro Irrigation rather than Minor Irrigation because less beneficiaries are involved and much more controllable during floods. It was informed that during floods, the Department assess the damage and relief is provided. It was also mentioned that flow irrigation projects in our state are more advantageous because one or two persons will be owning and take care of the project.

The Working group pointed out that more money appeared to have been spent in Garo Hills compared to Khasi and Jaintia Hills and wanted to know about the production district-wise. It was informed by the Department that Garo Hills produce more rice whereas Ri-Bhoi District had potential in Agriculture and Horticulture.

4. Fisheries : The Department informed of being in a semi-comatose situation with only 700 lacs provision for the 10th Plan. It was pointed out that a construction agency gets so much of assistance compared to a development agency.

In Meghalaya, there is no dearth of natural resources for increasing fish production but the main problem is because it involves a lot of investment.

The Fishery Department is a very important Department with so much potential but the morale of the Department is very low for not getting much support from the Government. The Department stressed for a provision of Rs.10 crores for construction of 1000 ponds with an anticipated level of production of 5000 metric tonnes of fish. Fish consumption per annum is 20,000 metric tonnes and our production is only 6,000 metric tonnes only. The construction of ponds would increase fish consumption and automatically reduce dependence on meat import. If the project comes up, it will generate self-employment in the rural areas, and to energise the Department, creation of posts is a necessity.

The Working Group felt the scheme is crucial and would sit for a joint meeting with the Chairman and Co-Chairmen of all Working Groups. In conclusion, the Chairman, Working Group 'E' requested the Department to submit a brief note on the proposal for 1000 ponds.

6.9.04

The Departments taken up on 6.9.04 were :-

1. Soil Conservation : The Department informed that other than the objective to conserve Soil, Water and Vegetation it is also entrusted with the task of formulation and implementation of schemes and projects to promote environmental awareness so as to ensure sustainable development. Its activities are Integrated Watershed Management, Management of jhum through alternative Farming system and improving water harvesting to harness rainwater and surface run off for multipurpose uses etc.

To a query by the Working Group regarding Loan Component from NABARD, the Department informed that an amount of Rs.2 crores had been allotted for 2004-2005 and they hope to utilize the full amount. One of the Members, Shri A.H.Scott Lyngdoh pointed out the danger in repayment of the loans. The Working Group raised the question as to why repayment of loans be thrust on the State Government instead of the Department itself. The Department felt that the beneficiaries should be part of repayment of loans but not to impose on them alone but on all Departments who avail the loan. The Department stated that the gestation of the schemes of Soil Conservation is fairly long and as such, repayment would be possible after a gap of a certain period. However, in principle, the Department agreed that a part of the repayment may be made by the Department.

The Working Group observed that financial achievement of the Department in the first two (2) years of the 10th Plan is about Rs. 15 crores out of the 10th Plan allocation of Rs.50 crores. A question was raised whether they could utilize the balanced amount. The Department informed that during 2003-2004 the Plan allocation of Rs.8.50 crores was reduced to Rs.8.crores only and for that matter, the 10th Plan allocation is also likely to come down. The Working Group was in line with the statement of the Department since its financial achievement during 2003-2004 showed a good performance of Rs.7.98 crores against the outlay of Rs.8 crores.

The Working Group was informed that 90% from the balance of State Plan excluding Special Central Assistance on WDPSCA and NABARD Loans goes to maintenance works. The Department also informed that the emphasis is on raising of seedlings and then to be distributed to farmers instead of going for more plantations. The Plantations or assets created by the Department e.g. Rubber Plantation were handed over to the community.

The Department informed that there are 38 (thirty eight) on going watershed schemes and about 24 functioning/completed watershed projects including 12 projects under NABARD. The Working Group would like to visit the watershed project at Umrynjah. It was also informed stated that as a substitute to jhum cultivation, it has taken up Cashewnut, Arecanut and Rubber Plantation. Cashewnut and Arecanut Plantations are doing quite well but in the case of Rubber Plantation, though it is good as an environmental measure, it fails as far as income generation is concerned. During discussions, the Commissioner expressed his views that to totally eradicate jhum cultivation would be rather counter productive in terms of production and income. Even the programmes of terracing which was then at the concept stage and initial stage of implementation believed to be suitable for Soil Conservation is now found out not as effective as thought of. He further stated that as at present, the jhum cycle has come down to 5(five) years and therefore, the soil could be rejuvenated. The Department had submitted a proposal on experimental basis on the merits of shifting cultivation.

To a query by the Working Group, the Department informed that the Water Harvesting Pond at Mawsmi, Cherrapunjee is meant for a specific project viz., the Eco Park under DRDA scheme for Tourism purpose

2. **Animal Husbandry & Veterinary :** During discussions on the schemes of the Department and their implementation during 2003-2004, the Working Group took a serious note of the lapse of an amount of (i) Rs.36.43 lakhs which could not be drawn due to non-sanction of LOA from Finance Department on 31.3.2004 and (ii) Rs.60.54 lakhs which was sanctioned for subsidies schemes for Educated unemployed youth and General schemes for farmers but could not be drawn due to non-clearance of the presented bills by the Treasury Office, Shillong on 31.3.2004. The Department was asked to submit a note on this. The Working Group felt that the Department needs to take concrete steps so that huge amount does not lapse in future.

The Working Group also noted that in respect of the NABARD Loan Component of Rs.150 lakhs which was revised to Rs.50 lakhs during 2003-2004, the scheme of Rs.11.02 lakhs was sanctioned but could not be drawn due to non-receipt of LOA from the Finance Department. The Department informed the Working Group that the schemes under NABARD Loan are strengthening/extension of Indo-Danish Project Upper Shillong and Regional Cross Breed Cattle Breeding Project, Kyrdemkulai. On Indo-Danish Farm, the Department informed that renovation works like repairing of sheds and new sheds for new stocks are being taken up.

The Department also briefed on other schemes viz., Rabbit Farm at Upper Shillong etc. The Working Group decided to visit some of the farms of the Department.

During discussions, the Working Group felt that it needs information on the cumulative losses of the Department in running the Govt. Farms. To an observation of the Working Group as to whether the Govt. Farms should be privatised, the Department informed that it is not thinking in such terms because these farms are to try new breeds and the technique of raising these breeds will be transferred

to the farmers. The Working Group asked the Department to furnish data on expenditure and revenue of Govt. Farms for the last 3(three) years.

On production and requirement of meat, the Working Group asked the Department to furnish information on market requirement vis-à-vis production of meat in the state, and that which is brought from outside the state since the Working Group learnt that the state cannot meet the market requirement in meat as well as in the case of eggs production. The Department should supply information on meat intake, eggs intake and milk intake vis-à-vis national level of consumption.

3. Sports and Youth Affairs : The 10th Plan outlay of the Department is Rs.39 crores. During discussion on the schemes of the Department, the Working Group wanted to know the number of stadiums where construction works had been taken up but not completed and the funds requirement to complete each stadium.

The Working Group wanted to know on the progress of works in connection with the construction of a Swimming Pool in Tura. Further, the Working Group wanted information regarding the terms and conditions in connection with the lease of the Crinoline Swimming Pool to a private party. As at present, the toilets/showers are in bad shape, ground of swimming pool is slimy and no proper filtration of water. The Department assured that it will look into this though it admitted that the lessee run better than what it was before.

The Working Group questioned the role of the Department other than allotment of funds in matters relating to the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium at Polo ground since it was learnt that it is maintained by State Sports Council. The Department informed that as of today, it has no control on the council but only in the matter of how funds from the Department are utilized.

The Working Group made its observation that as a matter of policy, the priority of construction of Stadium should be in a State Headquarter, District Headquarters and also in Civil Sub-Division Headquarters. The Working Group wanted specific information on the progress of construction works meant for Stadium at Nongstoin (District Headquarter) and Mawkyrwat (Civil Sub-Division) and also the Students' field at Jaiaw an the amount sanctioned and spent vis-à-vis nature of works and the remaining amount that is needed to complete the works. On requirement of funds by the Department, an amount of Rs.26 crores is needed to complete the on going schemes.

On liability of the Department, the Working Group was of the view that the State Sports Council should execute works to the extent of fund availability only and not beyond that since it creates liability. The Working Group desired that funds may be provided for Sports Talent Search Scholarship. It was noted that about 65 Nos. of State/District/Sub-Division sport associations received assistance from the Department during 2003-2004 but there are complaints that a number of such organizations do not receive such benefit. The Department assured to look into this.

The Working Group wanted to know how ready is the Department to participate in the 5th All India Games in Guwahati in 2005. The Department informed that it has identified 11 disciplines depending on the qualifying criteria and the selection to be made for the national games will be based on the performance of Meghalaya games that will be held in October – November, 2004.

17.9.04

The following Departments were taken up on 17.9.04.

1. **Housing** :- The Department informed that Rural Housing Scheme is the important scheme of the Department and from 2000-2001, it is implemented under the Prime Minister Gramodaya Yojana with the BMS patterns of implementation. Under this scheme, 3(three) bundles of CGI Sheets are provided to each beneficiary as grant-in-aid to persons who belong to the Economically weaker section of the society and who are poor bonafide Meghalayan houseless villagers and whose family income is Rs.2100/- per month and who are willing to construct their houses upto roof frame level with their own resources.

The Working Group queried if there was any complaint that, the beneficiaries do not at all belong to the Economically weaker section of the society. The Department informed that so far there was no complaint. It further informed that upto 2001-2002, the identification of beneficiaries was done by MLAs and District administration but from 2002-2003, the identification of beneficiaries was made by MLAs. To a query by the Working Group on how the CGI Sheets are distributed/ supplied, the Department informed that it is done by the respective Deputy Commissioners on the names submitted by the Department and is carried out constituency wise.

The Working Group recalled to the observation made by the State Planning Board sometime back that a certain percentage be kept with the District Administration for identification of beneficiaries with the scheme in question. The Department informed that it is thinking in terms of 50:50 on identification of beneficiaries by MLAs and District Administration. During discussions, the Department also informed that District Housing Committees are being notified where the respective Deputy Commissioner is the Chairman and the respective local MLA is a Member of the Committee.

To an observation by the Working Group that the achievement of Rural Housing Scheme during the 9th Plan was 37,400 beneficiaries, which was rather unrealistic the Department assured that it will confirm the figures. On fixing the target of beneficiaries for the 10th Plan, the Working Group learnt that the estimates was from the Govt. of India. To this, the Working Group was of the opinion that there should be an estimate by the Department itself rather than depending on the Govt. of India.

The Working Group noted that against the target of 48,000 rural homeless families, the achievement was 8336 families only in the first 2 years of the 10th Plan leaving a huge target of 39664 families for the remaining 3 years of the Plan and questioned whether the Department could achieve the targeted number of beneficiaries. Likewise in the case of financial achievement, it was Rs.10 crores only for 2002-2003 and 2003-2004 against the Tenth Plan Outlay of Rs.48 crores. The Department informed that during 2004-2005, Rs.650 lacs was proposed on this scheme but only Rs.550 lacs was approved and as such, the target of families to be covered will fall short. Therefore, the Department needs more funds to achieve the target.

During discussion on EWS/LIG Loan-Cum-Subsidy scheme, the Working Group was informed that an amount of Rs.27 crores is an outstanding to be paid by MSHB to HUDCO.

The Working Group pointed out that the financial achievement of Rs. 20 lacs only during the first 2 years of the 10th Plan in the scheme Assistance to Meghalaya State Housing Board is quite low against the projected outlay of Rs.212 lacs for the 10th Plan.

On Rental Housing scheme, the Department informed that there are 6 units in Shillong (all occupied), 6 units each at Tura and Williamnagar which were completed only in last March and 6 units at Jowai which are not occupied. The Working Group was surprised to learn that the units at Jowai are not occupied whereas government employees on transfer are seeking accommodation. The Working Group will take a decision after getting all the details.

The Department informed that the scheme, assistance to District Council was stopped. On another scheme, Building Centre, the Department informed that this is a Govt.of India scheme and it is meant for training cum production centre. The said building was constructed in Shillong and at present accommodated by the Housing Board. It was also pointed out by the Department that there was no expenditure on Middle Income Group Housing Scheme.

The Working Group asked the Department to furnish an explanatory note on each scheme of the Department for further discussion.

2. Economics and Statistics :- To a query by the Working Group on the latest figure of per capita income, the Department stated that it is 20,463 annually per individual and it works out to 1705 per month and thus is neither high nor low comparatively. The Working Group was informed that the methodology to determine the per capita income in the state is as prescribed by the Govt. of India.

During discussion on different data relating to the state, the Working Group asked the Department to furnish the following informations :-

- (i) GDP of the State.
- (ii) Percentage of Forest cover.
- (iii) Rice production.
- (iv) Food grains production.
- (v) Installed Power Generation Capacity.
- (vi) Percentage of villages electrified.
- (vii) Road connectivity per 100 Sq.Km.

To a query by the Working Group of any system of comprehensive study of Food grain production, the Department informed that it takes the yield per hectare and for area, it is the farmers' area only. The Working Group felt that any production in the state should have realistic/reliable data so that it could be explained for any price hike say, as in the case of Ginger production, the price shoots up all of a sudden.

On a programme on Census of Government Employees including Corporations and Local bodies, the Department informed that it was published for the year 2000 and at present is compiling for the next report of 2003 and the Department hoped that it would be completed by March next year.

To an observation of the Working Group of the average population per District in other states, the Department was asked to furnish the tentative population figure District-wise of the state. The Working Group also asked the Department to reflect the figures of the state so as to determine where we stand in comparison to NE states or even with other states in the country.

3. District Council Affairs :- The Department briefed on the District Councils which are Autonomous Bodies with the objective of framing laws to safeguard the rights and interest of the indigenous tribal people within their jurisdiction.

It was informed that though the District Councils have the power to collect revenue, their resources are far from adequate. Accordingly, they depend largely on sanction and release of grants from the Ministry of Tribal Affairs through the state government. This fund is channelised through the District Council Affairs Department to the Autonomous District Councils. The District Council Affairs Department does not receive this fund directly from the Central Government. This fund is amalgamated with and received through the State Plan allocation under Grant-in-aid to the 3(three) Autonomous District Councils for implementation of their own development schemes. The Department informed that it is co-ordinating the schemes of the District Councils and also it conducts the election to the District Councils.

The Working Group was informed that since 2002-2003 while releasing the grants, the Ministry of Tribal Affairs have laid down an instruction that all schemes prepared by the District Councils are to be submitted to the Ministry through the State Government for approval. During 2002-2003, the financial achievement was Rs.500 lacs but for 2003-2004, the schemes are not yet sanctioned as the Ministry had asked for details on exact location and estimates for each of the projects. The Department had taken necessary action on this. The Department informed that earlier, the amount was cleared only by the State Government through Planning Department which authorize the District Council Affairs Department to release to the District Councils. On submission of Utilisation Certificates by the District Councils, the Department informed that it is not satisfactory in spite of repeated reminders. The Department was asked to furnish information on the Civil Engineering Wing set up by the District Councils.

The Working Group was of the opinion that after examination by the State Government of the schemes of the District Councils, keeping in view that the District Council itself has an Engineering Wing, the necessity to send to the Ministry of Tribal Affairs appears unjustifiable.

To a query by the Working Group that the Garo Hills Autonomous District Council could not disburse Salaries for 5(five) months or so, the Department was of the general opinion that the number of employees in the establishment of District Council has risen up because of appointment made from one time to another by the respective Executive Committees coupled with the banning of felling of trees, the revenue of the District Councils has gone down a lot.

The Working Group queried as to what is the reaction of the State Government on the submission of schemes of the District Councils to the Ministry of Tribal Affairs for their approval. The Working Group understood that Planning Department is the Nodal Department. However, it felt that this matter needs to be taken up with the Chairman and Co-Chairmen of the State Planning Board for further deliberations.

4. Border Areas:- The Working Group noted that the Department has incurred an expenditure of about Rs.12 crores only during the first 2 years of the Tenth Plan against its projected outlay of Rs.44.70 crores thus leaving an amount of around Rs.32 crores to be achieved during the next 3(three) years of the 10th Plan.

On Education-Scholarship/Stipends to Border Areas students, the Department informed that the low achievement during 2003-2004 of Rs.21.42 lacs against Rs.35 lacs was due to less number of students. During discussion on scholarship/stipends to Border Areas Students, the Department

informed that a student hailing from Border Area gets a general scholarship and a Border areas scholarship as well. Such students above 18 years should have electoral registration in those areas and in cases of students below 18 years, the parents should have electoral registrations. The Working Group felt that a projection of 98000 Border Areas Students for the 10th Plan is rather unrealistic keeping in view the achievement in 2003-2004.

On ropeways, the Department informed that the approximate cost for construction of a ropeway of about 1 Km plus is about Rs.8 lacs. After construction of a ropeway, it is handed over to a village committee/body to run and manage the same. The ropeways are for importing agricultural produces. Any maintenance cost below Rs.5000/- will be met by a village committee/body and the Department will meet the maintenance cost of about Rs.5000/-.

On information provided by the Department that there are 44 ropeways in the state and all are functioning, the Working Group made an observation that the Department should have a surveillance unit as to whether a ropeway is functioning or not and not merely based on information provided by a village committee. The Working Group asked the Department to furnish reliable information on the number of ropeways and how many are functioning.

The Department further informed that in matter of construction of ropeways, there are 2(two) firms only i.e., one from Noida and the other from Kolkata which take up construction of ropeways all over the country. The Department engaged the firm from Noida and there was a Technical Committee of the Department for the purpose. But now, the Department leaves to the Committee and the committee decides the firm for construction of ropeways.

The Department briefed on the Fruit Processing Unit at Wahkdait and informed that the same will be handed over to a village committee/society. The Working group impressed upon the Department that it should take note of marketing avenue and also felt that this will be a test for the Department because if it fails, the whole process in the Border Areas will fail.

The Department briefed on the progress of construction of roads in the Border Areas and Tea Plantation at Mawlyngngot.

The Working Group remarked that there is no Border Areas Department in NE except in Meghalaya.

The Working group asked the Department to furnish information on total investment in Border Areas since inception and the improvement/returns from such investment in comparison with the Border Areas of other states.

The meetings ended with a vote of thanks from the Chair.

Sd/-
(S.D.Khongwir),
Chairman.