RECOMMENDATIONS OF WORKING GROUP **NO.2**
(INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY, COMMUNICATION, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY AND P.H.E.)

The Meghalaya State Planning Board Working Group No.2 covering Information Technology, Communication, Science and Technology and P.H.E. met at 3.00 PM on Saturday 4th October 2008, in Hotel Pinewood, Shillong. The following members were present:

1. Dr. W.R. Kharlukhi - Deputy Chairman, Meghalaya State Planning Board
2. Shri Abhaya Kashyap - Honorary Member, Meghalaya State Planning Board
3. Dr. L.Cajee - Member, Meghalaya State Planning Board
4. Dr. Shreeranjan - Commissioner & Secretary, Planning Department
5. Shri D.P.Wahlang - Commissioner & Secretary, IT Department and Team
6. Shri B. Mawlong - Deputy Secretary, IT Department

In response to the presentations made on Information Technology at the second State Planning Board meet held on 3- 4th Oct 2008, a number of observations were made by this working group.

**INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY**

The presentation made on IT concentrated on the status of IT deployment by the Government of Meghalaya based on certain centrally supported schemes. It is important to take a broader view of IT and the opportunities it represents. IT can be viewed from different perspectives.

a) IT as an applied technology for better delivery of governance.
b) IT as a strategic tool for economic development.
c) IT as an infrastructural imperative.

1. <u>As an Applied Technology for better Delivery of Governance</u>

Most of the deployments of IT solutions being discussed fall under this category. However what is being discussed is just a beginning and its wide spread usage will result

in spinoffs of generating an awareness of what is possible. Therefore the second phase of IT should generate more specific demands from the users.

It is very important to look for synergies in terms of capturing data and also in terms of budget allocations. For example demographic data that is collected under a health budget may fulfill the bulk of the requirements of compiling a citizens' data. What we need is better targeting of other resources as well. Similarly available data such as the electoral roll could be used to start a state wide database of residents/citizens. These data must be constantly refined and updated to form the very backbone of various governance related issues.

2. As a Strategic Tool for Economic Development

There are three distinct aspects of this approach. The first aspect relates to training of manpower at all levels of computer literacy. The second relates to developing and encouraging investments in IT related enterprise and while the third relates to funding and investing in need based applications.

These three aspects when done together in an integrated manner will bring into the fold of IT persons with a wide level of skill sets. It will lead to sustainable employment generation and over a period of time it will reduce the IT cost burden which if not invested in need based applications may end up being as much as 3 per cent of the administrative cost of the government.

3. IT as an Infrastructural Imperative

Just as roads and water supply rely on connectivity IT infrastructure also primarily includes localized connectivity by way of LAN or wireless LAN and wide area connectivity by way of dedicated cables or wireless services. This includes what is commonly referred to as the infrastructure of the information highway. Externally and internally the plumbing consisting of modems, networks and routers etc. Here the choice of technology to be adopted is largely restricted by availability and compatibility issues. The department must lay down its own preferences in those matters related to security, cost as well as deployment, reliability, viewpoint and requirements.

It may be noted that IT presents tremendous opportunities of synergizing budgets, long term and short term objectives, monitoring and management. This needs an in depth study.

This working group also held another meeting on 15th October, 2008. Dr. W.R. Kharlukhi, Chairman of Working Group No.2 welcomed the Members/Officers present to the meeting. These included:

1. Dr. W.R. Kharlukhi - Deputy Chairman, Meghalaya State Planning Board
2. Mr. Abhaya Kashyap - Honorary Member, Meghalaya State Planning Board
3. Shri B. Purkayastha - Commissioner & Secretary, Communication Department
4. Shri D.P.Wahlang - Commissioner & Secretary, IT Department
5. Dr. Shreeranjan - Commissioner & Secretary, Planning Department.
6. Smti D.Giri - DGM, BSNL Meghalaya
7. Shri B.Mawlong - Deputy Secretary, IT Department
8. Shri T.G.Abraham - Chief Engineer, PHE
9. Shri R.D. West - Project Director, Science & Technology
10. Shri Sunil Biswas - State E-Governance Mission Team
11. Shri Cherakung Zeliang - State E-Governance Mission Team

The discussions at this meeting focused on the following issues -

**COMMUNICATION**

1. It was suggested that the Department of IT and Department of Communication should be merged. The Cabinet Note in this regard is with Minister i/c Communication for his perusal & approval.
2. The Communication department faces the following problems:

a) Does not have any budget allocation.
b) Its role is only to liaise with Telecom and Postal departments.

c) The problem of erratic power supply – Most of the identified tower locations do not have power. Where power is available, it is usually unstable. There is need to give public service installations top priority.
d) It was estimated that an additional 180m units of power is expected to be available for the State by March 2009.
e) Currently BSNL has set up 120 towers, out of which only 12 are feasible. Through Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF), 102 additional towers are expected to be functional.
f) Due to the prevailing land tenure system getting land to set up towers is also an issue.
g) Information from the grass root level (where implementation takes place) is not available.
h) Basic communication channels need to be updated.
i) Security issues need to be addressed. There is a strong need to take steps towards Data security, System security and Physical security.

**INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY**

The following observations were made with regard to the IT sector.

1. People are not interested to invest in the North East as they do not want to build infrastructure.
2. It is proposed that infrastructure should be first developed and then invitation to private parties may be extended to invest in the region.
3. IT should be develop in multiple phases. The first phase should cover 25 acres out of the available 80 acres so that it will be in manageable chunks.
4. In parallel the department could consider inviting investors into the region
5. Budget Allocation - Budget allocation for IT is only a meager 3% .
6. File tracking and management systems need to be in place.
7. A reporting system for funds needs to be in place.
8. A tie up with local educational institutes for small projects could be considered. This will build a direct relationship with the academia and enable the department to gather quality inputs.

9. A standard format could be prepared wherein departments can highlight their problem areas and send the same over regularly so that they can be addressed fast. This would also ensure continuous monitoring of the various ongoing projects.
10. Database – A database of births and deaths could be developed. The electoral roll is a more accurate base for such a preparation and it is more reliable than the census. Data should be updated on a regular basis by a local governing body. Innovative method of capturing data should be developed and a proper data base management system (DBMS) should be in place.
11. The development of synergies is crucial to IT.
12. Health budget can be used for creating a multi-purpose 'health-card' for capturing data regarding all socio-economic indicators. This card can be used by other departments as well instead of capturing the same data separately by different departments which will help save cost.
13. Action to be taken for all government departments regarding :

a) IT security audit : IT security is one of the most important areas and proper steps should be taken to minimize risks of attacks by external entities (hackers, viruses etc)
b) Backup of data: Regular back up of data should be taken as a measure to safeguard information in the eventuality of system getting corrupted.
c) Misuse of IT infrastructure: An IT usage policy should be in place to monitor the appropriate usage of IT infrastructure of the State. This would help in minimizing the risk factors by preventing misuse.

**SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY (PLANNING DEPARTMENT)**

The following observations were made with regard to the S&T Cell.

1. The working group meeting supports the current proposal of the Planning Department to upgrade the present Science & Technology Cell into a separate full-fledged Department viz. Department of Science & Technology. It recommends that the matter be cleared by the Government at the earliest.
2. The meeting also suggested that the Government consider strengthening the present Science & Technology set-up and infrastructure as and when required to

enable it to meet the various scientific and technological challenges in the State from time to time.

3. The meeting suggested the involvement of University, Technical and Science Colleges and Institutes in science & technology related activities undertaken in the State.
4. The meeting suggested the need for the Government to explore the possibility of a mega-project on Science & Technology being declared by the Hon'ble Prime Minister at the India Science Congress to be held in NEHU Campus, Shillong during the 1st week of January 2009.
5. The meeting identified the following areas of concern in the State where Science & Technology can intervene :

a) Hydrological and Geological Studies.
b) Environmental Studies.
c) Application of Nuclear Science & Engineering.
d) Waste Management and Sanitation.
e) Water Treatment.
f) Geo-Textile Engineering.
g) Wind Energy.

6. The meeting further suggested formulation of proposals to create separate independent centres for taking up issues relating to the above identified areas of concern and submitting the same to Government of India i.e., Department of Science & Technology, GOI, etc., for necessary funding.

**PUBLIC HEALTH AND ENGINEERING (P.H.E.)**

The following observations were made with regard to the P.H.E. department.

1. Sustainability of sources/ schemes is a major challenge which needs to be accorded highest priority. There is need to construct Rain Water Harvesting Structures (RWH)/Rain Fed Reservoirs at both the community and individual household level as one of the sustainability measures. Similarly there is need to motivate & encourage people to protect their traditional water sources and to engage in afforestation and re-afforestation programmes.

2. GIS mapping of all water sources including catchment areas must be undertaken and all critical surface water sources must be identified. Protection of Catchment Area Act 1990 must be enforced in the State. An action plan for implementation of schemes to protect catchment areas for all critical surface water sources in collaboration with the Forest department must be prepared as per provisions of the Act.
3. With large number of schemes being completed every year without proportionate increase in manpower & the village committees not coming forward to take over the completed schemes, proper maintenance of the schemes has been affected. In case of gravity feed schemes villagers should to be encouraged to come forward & take over the responsibility of maintaining these schemes. Intensive information, communication and education (IEC) activities should be carried out a) to ensure active community participation b) to inculcate a sense of ownership among the local people c) to ensure that each person individually & collectively owns and takes responsibility for water supply & sanitation facilities.
4. Taking up pumping water supply schemes has become a costly proposition in view of the increase in the cost of energy charges without an appropriate increase in outlay. There is need to discourage cost intensive pumping water supply schemes and to promote gravity feed schemes.
5. User charges are to be enforced strictly as per revised tariff, 2008 to make the schemes self sustainable.
6. There is need to ensure regular water quality testing of rural & urban water supply schemes and take remedial/corrective measures of identified problems.
7. To create a leak detection cell and implement leak detection programmes in all urban water supply schemes to substantially reduce unaccounted-for-water (UFW).
8. Capacity building is necessary in GIS mapping & online data management relating to water supply & sanitation schemes including progress reporting. Adequate training is to be imparted to PHE department officials.
9. To accelerate implementation of rural sanitation programme under sanctioned Total Sanitation Campaign (TSC) projects for all the seven districts with the

objective of achieving full sanitation coverage by the year 2012. To provide adequate State Plan funding as required under the guidelines of the TSC programme.

10. Shillong sewerage scheme covering 30% of the city area and drainage master plan project should be implemented with Asian Development Bank (ADB) assistance or other external funding agencies. Apart from this, sewerage schemes for other towns of the State should be taken up with central support.

The WG Meeting ended with a vote-of-thanks from the Chair.

Dr. W.R. Kharlukhi
Chairman, Working Group No. 2
Meghalaya State Planning Board