

**MEGHALAYA STATE PLANNING BOARD MEET**  
**Circuit House –Tura**  
**January 15<sup>th</sup>, 2009**

**DAY ONE**

The Meghalaya State Planning Board (MSPB) held its 2<sup>nd</sup> full fledged meeting on 15<sup>th</sup> January, 2009 at Circuit House, Tura under the Chairmanship of Shri **P.A. Sangma**. It was attended by official and non-official members, honorary members and advisers, special invitees who also included top economists and planners from outside and within the State, Shri **Conrad K. Sangma** Finance Minister, Govt. of Meghalaya, Kum. **Agatha K. Sangma**, Hon'ble Member of Parliament ( Lok Sabha), members of the District Councils, the Chief Secretary and senior officers of the Government of Meghalaya.

**INAUGURAL SESSION**

The inaugural session commenced with a welcome address by Shri **Ranjan Chatterjee**, I.A.S., Chief Secretary, Government of Meghalaya. In his welcome address, Shri Chatterjee greeted all the members of the Board especially those who had come from other parts of the country. He referred to the importance of the 'Directive Principles of State Policy' which had been enunciated to promote the welfare of the people and which found expression in the various five-year plans and annual plans. He also stated that the Meghalaya State

Planning Board is an advisory body constituted by the Government of Meghalaya to ensure both social and economic development. Meghalaya today ranks 24<sup>th</sup> in terms of human development index and 19<sup>th</sup> in per capita income. To improve the entire structure, the Board needs to evaluate and scrutinize the plan schemes and recommend measures to implement an effective planning process. Moreover, equitable distribution of resources to all the seven districts of the State is the key to improving the State's human development index. He also noted that clarity, sincerity and dedication will play a very important role in this exercise.

In his opening remarks the Chairman, MSPB, Shri **P.A.Sangma** appreciated the gathering as a galaxy of intellectuals of local, national and international repute. He observed that it is indeed a historical moment as a full-fledged meeting of the State Planning Board is being held in Tura for the first time since Meghalaya attained its statehood. A lot of expectation has been generated from this meeting, he noted. The main focus of the meeting was to address priorities in the remaining 11<sup>th</sup> Plan period and to discuss the proposed annual plan of the State for 2009 – 2010. He emphasized the need to set priorities afresh and to improve the development process. In setting priorities afresh, he noted the importance of keeping in mind the following issues: India's economy in the changing economic scenario of the world, the State's performance in terms of human development index, the role of science and technology and the increasing unemployment in the State. He called

for a pragmatic approach to planning for the overall development of the State. The Chairman welcomed Dr. **N.J. Kurien**, former Chief Economic Adviser to the Planning Commission of India, who had come all the way from Kerala to attend the Board meeting and to share his expertise in exploring alternative avenues to resource mobilization.

At the meeting, the Chairman constituted a separate group on Finance (Resource Mobilization). The group comprised of the Finance Minister, Shri **Conrad K.Sangma** (Chairman), Dr. **N.J.Kurien**, Shri **P.J. Bazeley**, Shri **Subodh Menon**, Principal Secretary Finance, Excise, Taxation and Revenue and Principal Secretary, Planning. He requested the group to meet during the afternoon, to discuss and to recommend measures on additional revenue mobilization.

The Chairman also inaugurated the official website of the Meghalaya State Planning Board – **megspb.gov.in** . Shri **T. Dkhar** made a short presentation on this official website the content of which was contributed by MSPB. Shri **Mihsalan Suchiang**, Deputy Chairman, MSPB then released the minutes and recommendations of the second meeting of the Meghalaya State Planning Board held at Shillong on 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> October 2008.

The Chairman was also pleased to note that the Meghalaya State Planning Board would bring out a summary of all the board meetings in the form of a book. This proposed book will contain the views and recommendations of the members on various issues discussed. He also informed the members present that it was his

intention to set up a well informed and well equipped library for the MSPB. He has been in touch with government departments around the country as well as major publishing houses to secure an impressive collection of books, journals and documents for the proposed library.

## **SESSION I**

This session primarily focused on brief presentations made by various departments.

### **HEALTH and FAMILY WELFARE**

An overview presentation was made by the Principal Secretary, Health and Family Welfare, Government of Meghalaya. In his presentation, Shri **A. K. Srivastava**, I.A.S. informed the Board that several primary health centres (PHCs) and community health centres (CHCs) would be operated on a PPP mode. He further stated that Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) have been signed with 7 NGOs who will take up the responsibility of bringing the doctors and the management staff and distributing the medicines supplied by the Government. The various CHCs and PHCs may be handed over to these NGOs during the month of February and March 2009. The Government would provide an amount of Rs. 3 lakhs and Rs. 2 lakhs per annum for maintaining these CHCs and PHCs respectively.

## **Observations and Recommendations:**

- Periodical review of the recommendations to be undertaken by the State Planning Board.
- There is no document pertaining to the maternal mortality rate (MMR). There is need to gather correct information on the MMR in the State.
- Recognition of the traditional system of medicine was stressed upon.
- Physically challenged persons need to be given proper health care.
- Awareness programmes on sanitation and health need to be undertaken.
- Potability of water used in CHCs and PHCs needs to be addressed.
- As far as health is concerned data could be collected family wise.
- Greater sensitivity to be shown to women when addressing health issues.
- Increase the number of maternity beds in health centres.
- Health is to be identified as the primary concern.

## **PUBLIC HEALTH and ENGINEERING (WATER SUPPLY)**

Shri **A.K. Bhalla**, I.A.S., Principal Secretary, PHE, Government of Meghalaya, informed the Board that by the end of 11<sup>th</sup> Plan period all areas which require adequate drinking water supply would be covered. The following observations were highlighted:

- GIS mapping of all water sources including catchment areas will be undertaken.
- People will be trained in water treatment and quality monitoring in the state level as well as in the village level.
- So far, user charges are made house wise and there are no charges levied on public water taps. Revised user charges for households will be implemented.
- Currently, the Department is not equipped for leak detection. However, it is planning to create a leak detection system shortly in Shillong and Tura. Sewerage of Shillong city needs to be taken care of and sewerage schemes for other towns of the State should be taken up with central support.
- Sustainability of water sources is a major challenge which needs to be accorded highest priority. There is a need to construct rain water harvesting structures at both the community and individual household level. Therefore, there is a need for a proper study of the geology of the State, particularly Cherrapunjee.
- A Rain Water Harvesting Mission has been launched in the State with the Chief Secretary as the Chairman.

### **Observation and Recommendations:**

- Pumping water supply schemes should be discouraged and gravity feed schemes should be promoted. Villagers should be encouraged to come forward and take over the responsibility of maintaining these schemes.
- Involve local community from the initial stages of water supply scheme. In this aspect Cherrapunjee should be taken up as a challenge.

### **AGRICULTURE and ALLIED SECTORS**

A brief presentation was made by Shri **V.S. Oberoi**, I.A.S., Agriculture Production Commissioner. He made important observations on various issues:

- Need for additional funding for horticulture.
- To find out the deficiency of micro nutrients in the soil, detailed micro mapping of the soil should be adopted.
- Retention of traditional cropping system and promotion of eco-friendly regime.
- Provision for micro or field level irrigation projects.
- Creation of adequate market especially for horticulture.
- The Board may take up the issue of constrained fund allocation to agriculture and horticulture.
- Implementation of *Rashtriya Krishi Vikash Yojna* (RKVY)

### **Observation and Recommendations:**

- Need for an independent audit.

- Protection of indigenous crops.
- Micro propagation facility- to allocate more funds for food processing.
- Sensitize and enlighten farmers about seed banks.
- Adopt System of Rice Intensification (SRI) especially in rice production as these systems require less water.
- The State does not have a seed certification agency. There is only one seed farm in the State which is inadequate.
- Food processing and storage facilities should be provided.
- Wasteland and not fertile cultivable land should be allotted for the brick industry.
- Loss of cultivable land due to coal mining should be checked.
- Boost cultivation of Valencia orange.
- Road networks to be made feasible for transportation of produce.
- Addressing food security issue is mandatory.
- Need for a systematic study on the loss of paddy due to climate change and untimely rainfall.
- The State Cabinet may be recommended to approve the proposal for contract farming which is presently not permitted.
- Irrigation facility for winter paddy.
- Bio diversity of the area should be kept in mind for long gestation plantations.



## **Chairman's Note**

The Chairman informed the members present that those departments which were unable to make their presentations to the Board due to constraint of time, may kindly do so in writing. They are requested to submit their reports to the Commissioner and Secretary, MSPB, within ten days.

## **STATE ANNUAL PLAN 2009 –2010 MEGHALAYA'S 11<sup>th</sup> PLAN PRIORITIES**

The presentation on the proposed State Annual Plan for 2009-2010 (Draft Proposals) was made by Shri **P.B.O. Warjri**, I.A.S., Principal Secretary, Planning and Programme Implementation and Evaluation. He noted that Meghalaya's 11<sup>th</sup> plan priorities are power, road connectivity, agriculture and allied sectors, poverty alleviation and employment generation, emphasis on social services, tourism, border trade and infrastructure and participatory development. The priorities set under the 11<sup>th</sup> plan are:

- Implementation of flagship programmes such as *Bharat Nirman*, NREGS, BRGF, RKVY, IFAD-MRDS and NERLP.
- Launching the rain water harvesting mission.
- Make Meghalaya an educational hub.
- Improve skill development through various departments.
- Employment generation.
- Access development funds for border areas.

- Seek community participation in conversion of natural resources.

In the Annual Plan outlay for the year 2009-10, largest allocation is made to the power sector. There will be central assistance for specific programmes like flagship programmes and centrally sponsored schemes. The Chairman suggested that human resource development should be given the first priority and that the second priority be given to agriculture and allied sectors. He also stated that tourism is an important area for employment. There is need to increase plan outlay for tourism.

## **STATE FINANCIAL RESOURCES STATEMENT**

### **Presentation of Finance Minister**

Shri **Conrad K. Sangma**, Minister i/c Finance, Power, Tourism, I.T. etc., made an elaborate presentation on the State's financial resources. The presentation focused on the proposed income and expenditure of the State and proposed sources of funding for the next year's plan. He gave a detailed statement of the total receipts and expenditure of the State in the preceding year 2008-2009. The presentation highlighted that grants from the centre account for almost 60% of the State's receipts. The State's own sources of income include tax revenue (from sales tax, VAT and excise duties) and non-tax revenue (cess and royalty on minerals such as coal, limestone etc.). The Finance Minister noted that revenue expenditure of the State is very high accounting for almost 80% while capital

expenditure accounts for only 20%. Moreover, the State has not spent much on infrastructure development and this need to be corrected. The Finance Minister made the following suggestions:

- Innovative funding process needs to be undertaken. Setting up of integrated check gates could be considered to increase revenues,
- Increase VAT revenues by plugging loopholes and leakage of funds,
- Proper screening and computerization of operating systems,
- Raising of bonds and similar funding patterns to finance projects,
- Citizens' contributions in some form could be considered to meet shortfall in revenue generation.

In expressing his gratitude to the Finance Minister, the Chairman noted that in 36 years this is the first time that the Finance Minister himself is presenting the financial position of the State to the Meghalaya State Planning Board. To meet the proposed shortfall in the State's finances (which is projected at 620 crores) the Chairman noted that emphasis should be laid on resource mobilization and increasing the productivity of the State's work force. Austerity measures already being undertaken have to be reinforced by plugging the leakages of funds which occurs in various ways.

### **Observation and Recommendations:**

Dr. **N.J. Kurien**, one of the top economists of the country and a former senior adviser to the Planning Commission of India, congratulated the Finance Minister Shri **Conrad K. Sangma** for his presentation which he considered thoroughly professional. He lauded the discussions taking place at the meeting which to him were of a very high order. He noted that 80% of Meghalaya's revenues are derived from the centre. The State may face problems in harnessing these revenues next year when the kind of tax revenue growth experienced by the centre (which amply helps Meghalaya) may not be there. He cautioned that the tempo of the 11<sup>th</sup> Plan may suffer and this shortfall in tax revenues may continue for a year or so. There is need to reduce revenue expenditure on the non-plan segment which is currently very high. There is ample potential in the State to improve its revenue generation. It is important to plug in the leakages and to also consider innovative revenue generating measures without hurting the people.

Today states are assessed on the basis of social development. Social development encompasses the sum total of economic growth, human development and other aspects of social life which increase the welfare and happiness of people. On the basis of social development indicators developed at the Council for Social Development, Social Development Reports (SDRs) have been prepared. The Social Development Report considers six indices to rank the performance of states. These are - health care, basic infrastructure, education,

economic deprivation or absence of it, social deprivation or absence of it and demographic factors. Meghalaya is ranked overall in the 4<sup>th</sup> place among the north eastern states. The problems faced by Meghalaya are lack of complete access to basic facilities like electricity and transportation, education, health care, demography and high mortality rates. Meghalaya however ranks number one in terms of lack of social deprivation considering the appropriate treatment meted out to women and minorities.

### **STATE'S FINANCIAL ANALYSIS – MSPB**

In his presentation on the "State's Financial Analysis" on behalf of the Board, Shri **P. J. Bazeley**, honorary member, MSPB, commended the detailed and comprehensive presentation made by the Finance Minister. He also commended the presentation made by the Principal Secretary, Planning for bringing out many 'live' issues. Shri P.J. Bazeley raised six issues for discussion:

- A. The growth of Meghalaya's tax revenue as a percentage of the State's Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) is about 4.4%. The GSDP which represents the actual production made within the State excludes taxable goods which come into the State from outside. Therefore the taxable effort would be the GSDP plus the taxable component from goods and services which come into the State.

- The average tax available from VAT should be more than 4.4% and should be around 7-8%. There is possibility of collecting taxes much more than presently being done. There is need to plug loopholes in those 'leaking pipes' and improve our tax effort in attracting collectable taxes of the State.
- B. There is need to look at plan revenue expenditure vis-à-vis capital revenue expenditure. The cost of delivery is extremely on the higher end where in 2006-2007 the State was spending Rs. 2.35 to implement a plan scheme of Re. 1. Measures need to be found to reduce the cost of delivery at about 50% of the scheme. As we add more and more plan schemes we need to divert existing manpower and machinery from plans which have been completed to new plans.
- C. The revenue expenditure of the State has grown at an alarming rate of almost 100%. The two major components of revenue expenditure are salaries and interest payments. Efforts must be made to bring down the increase in revenue expenditure. We need to take a look at our manpower and services in the field as we proliferate into new areas.
- D. In the proposed outlay for 2009-2010, as much as 52.9% has been allocated to both Energy (23.1%) and Road (29.8%) sectors. Under the 11<sup>th</sup> Plan the Planning Commission recommended allocation of 11.8% for the energy sector and 17.6% for the roads and transport sector. The normal individualized priority to a sector should be between 10-15% as

a cap, and this may go up to a maximum of 20%. There is need to review our plan outlay for both these sectors to ensure that other sectors are also given their due share. While both these sectors deserve due consideration our plan fund is not the only way of funding these two sectors. We can look at institutional funding and to other means outside the Plan for meeting the shortfall in the two sectors.

- E. In addition to Energy and Road sectors, eight additional sectors have been identified by the Meghalaya State Planning Board as priority areas. These are Human Resource Development, Crop Husbandry, Horticulture, Industries, Minerals, Tourism, Health Care, Water Supply and Sanitation. In the approved 11<sup>th</sup> Plan, 31.35% was earmarked for these eight areas. In the first year of the 11<sup>th</sup> Plan i.e. 2007-2008, 26.3% was spent on these eight areas. In the proposed expenditure for 2009-2010 an allocation of 21.1% has been earmarked for these areas while 14.55% has been earmarked for these areas in the proposed expenditure for 2010-2011. In the light of decreasing allocation to these eight core areas, a re-consideration of allocation is highly recommended.
- F. Utilization of plan funds in the region and in the State is abysmally low. To address this concern there is need to set up an agency/ mechanism such as a State Development Consortium. Such an agency can overcome many of the hurdles presently faced, tap institutional funding into it and make funds

available for cost effective investment insuring that investments will give greater returns. Such an initiative will enable the government to pay back the consortium and the consortium to service the loans. If this is done, our plan efforts will be in a better position tomorrow than they are today.

**Observation and Recommendations:**

- Most of the funds that come from the central sector for programmes like SSA, NRHM are not indicated in the annual plan.
- If the money that comes from the central sector and which goes directly to the account of such programmes is indicated, then the presentation is fairly balanced.
- In planning for the developmental process there is need to also take into account the availability of institutional funding, private investments, FDIs and so on.

**ANNUAL PLAN 2009-2010 (DRAFT PROPOSALS)**

**Observation and Recommendations:**

Shri **R.V. Shahi**, honorary member, MSPB, gave a brief summary of the 11<sup>th</sup> five year plan, the deliverances for 2009 – 2010 and the proposed outcome and outlay. He noted that the presentation of the Annual Plan (Draft Proposal) should start with a chapter highlighting



the goals, objectives and deliverables (both quantitative and qualitative). The second chapter which relates to Rural Development should briefly highlight the deliverables.

In his observations on chapter five relating to Energy, he suggested that details of power projects should be reviewed from time to time. Priority should be given to infrastructure. Though the budget of the State needs to be balanced, it cannot afford to cut down its allocation on energy as most sectors depend on uninterrupted supply of energy. The State needs to spend and properly utilize funds for pending projects. There is need to adopt an accelerated power reform programme and to review what has been achieved. Since the figures for non-conventional energy are a matter of concern, (approved outlay under 11<sup>th</sup> plan is Rs 1200.00 lakhs) priority should be given to this area. The department needs to take up this area seriously or it will not be able to project a bright picture.

## **SESSION II**

The second session was devoted to a general discussion on issues highlighted in Annual Plan 2009-2010 (Draft Proposals). Members present offered their views and opinions on measures which may be adopted to improve the State's economy. This general discussion was followed by a presentation made by Shri Toki Blah on the observations made at the Indian Science Congress at Shillong (January 3-7,2009), a presentation by the Transparency Working

Group and finally the recommendations of the special group on Finance (Resource Mobilization).

Shri **M.C. Gupta**, honorary member, MSPB, highlighted the need to pick on four or five core areas and to go ahead with the fund allocation for these identified areas. The Board needs to weigh its options on whether to follow the routine approach or break norms and identify a new approach. If economic activity recedes there will be a crisis and the economy's revival may be witnessed only after 2 or 3 years. Tax to GSDP ratio is too low in Meghalaya. A social audit of all the plans should be in place, this will lead to a larger degree of social monitoring. He suggested the adoption of the German system of a "rolling budget" which gives an indicative budget not only for the present year but also for the next 4 to 5 years. This exercise will provide direction to the State. Though tax compliance has improved but much needs to be done for further improvement. In order to invest, priority should be given to those sectors which have better input-output ratio and which are eco-friendly.

Shri Gupta made a suggestion to the Board to follow the financial system of Germany which has two heads namely a) the Current expenditure and b) Investment in three sectors i.e. Transport (roads, railway and airways), Human Resource Development and Research.

Smti. **Veena Nayyar**, honorary member, MSPB, congratulated the Board and the Department of Finance for bringing in transparency and accountability (through the presentations made) which are

imperative to understanding the direction of the State. She also appreciated the decision of creating working groups to assist various departments. In the interest of human development, which is of primary importance, she emphasized the need for a gender cell. She suggested the creation of a Working Group on Gender to address issues related to gender. There is a sex – ratio discrimination in Meghalaya, an open discrimination against children and women and the literacy figures are also concerningly low. Therefore, she believed that it was high time to redress this discrimination. She suggested that reporting / monitoring may be done in a desegregated framework and money has to go to areas where the need is the greatest. She stated that women are unable to mobilize themselves because they are not given a chance. She also suggested that an investment thrust should be made in agriculture in order to maintain a steady growth. The Planning department should look at the positive and negative aspects while taking decisions, and planning should also be vetted through the gender lens.

Shri **B.K. Goswami**, honorary member, pointed out that there is a global demand for hospitality trained people from North East India. In view of this demand he suggested the setting up of a full-fledged Hotel Management Institute in Tura. As *Ayurveda* is an important practice which attracts tourists, he recommended that two spas based on traditional herbal medicines should be set up in Garo Hills and Khasi Hills respectively. He stressed on the importance of a

handicraft market in the region and that people need to be trained for the same. He was glad to note that community projects had been undertaken by the people. The State needs ambitious plans and innovative ways to promote tourism. He talked about segmented tourism and how the State can promote each segment such as water tourism, land tourism etc. He appreciated the “bed and breakfast” scheme which was recently introduced in Shillong and suggested that it could be introduced in Tura as well.

Shri **Toki Blah**, non – official member, MSPB, observed that there is need for rural development as 80% of the population of the State resides in the rural areas. He raised a query on the fund allocation for these areas. He opined that sustainable development needs to be owned and run by the people. The State needs a Panchayati Raj or an alternative body which will reflect the constituents of the Panchayati Raj in each village. He concluded that a gender cell in isolation will not work unless there is participation from the rural sector.

Dr. **A.K. Nongkynrih**, special invitee, MSPB, made two observations pertaining to the development of the economy. First, there is need for social auditing and second, planning should take place at the district level. Discussions could then be carried forwarded to the departments and then finally collated as a plan document.

Smti. **Patricia Mukhim** special invitee, MSPB observed that mining is undertaken largely by the private sector and without accountability. She wanted to know when these mines were going to be reclaimed by the State. She suggested the need to find out what trade people are interested in and to take decisions according to their interests. She observed that projects in the State are affected by time and cost overruns and never completed on time. She stressed on the need to usher in corporate social responsibility in addressing development issues of the State.

Dr. **Glen Kharkongor**, non-official member, MSPB raised a query on how the State is assessed on the three parameters, i.e., life expectancy, literacy and power. He pointed out that official statistics show that at the elementary level the school dropout rate is 31%. This figure is however questionable due to the poor quality of data collected and error in entering data. There is no budgetary allocation for collecting and collating of indigenous knowledge. As a result 25% of indigenous knowledge is lost with every generation.

Dr. **Saralan Gopalan** observed that because the various departments are compartmentalized, development has been slow. As far as development is concerned combined efforts of various departments should be made to bring about enhanced results. She also suggested that the Board could seek the assistance of various self help groups in implementing poverty alleviation programmes. There are numerous resources available from employment

programmes. Even if a very large amount of the State's revenue goes to salaries there should be no dilution on man power. She also noted the necessity of trained teachers in the education department.

Shri **D.K. Manavalan**, honorary member, MSPB, stressed on the need to re-prioritize the State's thrust areas on the basis of the changing world scenario. He suggested that participation of communities under Article 243(G) – Powers, authority and responsibilities of Panchayat, could be encouraged. He wanted to know what the outcome indicators were and how public spending could be utilized to the maximum. He also suggested that flagship programmes such as Backward Region Grant Front (BRGF) should be taken seriously.

Shri **R.V. Shahi**, honorary member, MSPB, added that a chapter on resource mobilization should be highlighted in the Annual Plan. Other states are developing without spending. However the state government of Meghalaya depends on complete funding from the centre. Agencies other than the government should be given a chance to mobilize resources for the State. Mining and Tourism can help in bringing revenue to the State. The Annual Plan should also include a chapter on participation of other non – government agencies. The State should make an attempt to change the perception of getting funds from the centre and instead explore avenues of generating funds through self help groups.

The Chairman, Shri **P. A. Sangma**, thanked the members for an enlightening discussion. The observations made by them have been well received and made note of especially by the participating departments.

## **96<sup>th</sup> INDIAN SCIENCE CONGRESS**

### **Findings and Recommendations pertinent to North East India, especially Meghalaya:**

Shri **Toki Blah**, non – official member, MSPB presented the Recommendations made by 96<sup>th</sup> Indian Science Congress (ISC), held at NEHU, Shillong. His presentation touched upon those recommendations pertinent to North East India, particularly Meghalaya.

- Recommendations raised are pertinent and thought provoking especially as they relate to Meghalaya and the region as a whole.
- They therefore need to be discussed at the level of those responsible for policy formulation and policy implementation.
- The State Planning Board is the proper platform for the above to take place.
- The interactions at this session & the resolutions adopted are expected to impact in the future development of the State.
- Common issues that cut across the Meghalaya spectrum are -

1. Climate change and its mitigation
  2. Bio-diversity conservation/ preservation
  3. Indigenous Knowledge and its relevance
  4. Building up a scientific mind and the capacity to appreciate science
- Some of the recommendations that were made in the Indian Science Congress were –
    1. Shri **P.A. Sangma** suggested the establishment of a Centre for Bio- Diversity Conservation; a National Commission for Indigenous Knowledge ; State Level Scientific Advisory Councils ; Policy on Science Capacity Building in our Education Policy
    2. Dr.**M.S. Swaminathan** suggested the introduction of concepts on Ever Green Revolution and Herbal Biodiversity. He also called upon the need to erase the stigma of *Sohra* as the 'wettest desert'.
    3. Kum. **Agatha K. Sangma** made a called for developing an effective strategy to control climate change and the need to reintroduce the 'Slow Food' concept.
  - Meghalaya as a responsible constituent of the world community shares its concern and is determined to contribute towards mitigation of the problem.
    1. Need to set up a full-fledged MEGHALAYA BIODIVERSITY RESOURCE CENTRE (MBRC). Terms of Reference for the MBRC will revolve round issues on how to come up with a



holistic /comprehensive plan of action towards bio-diversity preservation in the State. The State Planning Board may recommend the establishment of the MBRC at Upper Shillong.

2. Introduction of life style changes especially in food habits -  
Introduce the concept of a 'Slow Food Movement' & a Mission mode for vegetable kitchen gardens for all households in the State. The two concepts (slow food & kitchen gardens) are expected to have a cascading effect in strengthening food security especially in upland rural Meghalaya, reduce transport costs of food, reduce pressure on large scale land utility for food production and increase production of organic food. In addition, this introduction is expected to have a multi-pronged effect on health, environment preservation and income enhancement especially for the rural people.
- In view of predictions made in an " Inconvenient Truth" and the adverse effect of climate change on South East Asia, Bay of Bengal etc., Meghalaya is now ideally poised to take initiatives by:
  1. inviting neighboring North East states to adopt a joint regional strategy to address these predictions on climate change.
  2. looking beyond national borders in search of answers to this impending international disaster.

- The Indian Science Congress has strongly recommended the establishment of a National Indigenous Knowledge Commission (NIKC).
  1. The MSPB has already set up an Indigenous Knowledge Mission Team with a term of reference (TOR) on documentation of indigenous practices that are relevant to present and future life requirements.
  2. It is now proposed that a Meghalaya Indigenous Knowledge Commission (MIKC) in line with the NIKC be established in the State.
  3. The proposed MIKC will have a strong association with all aspects relating to climate change, bio-diversity preservation and carbon trading related activities.
- The ISC strongly recommended restructuring, revamping and improvement of Science Education in the entire North East. In the case of Meghalaya it is proposed that:
  1. Meghalaya should immediately set up a State Scientific Advisory Council.
  2. Capacity building programmes in Science Education should be strengthened.
  3. Strengthening the foundation of students in the core disciplines of Mathematics, Science and English comprehension is to receive priority in the Education Policy of the State Government.

4. Basic guidelines based on qualification and merit for recruitment of teachers, should be framed in the Education Policy.
5. Contract basis for recruitment of best available teachers should be implemented, especially in core disciplines where there is dearth of local man power.
6. In service training for all local teachers, to strengthen proficiency in core disciplines mentioned above, to be rigorously implemented.
7. Science Education Fund can be raised from government officials and employees according to their grade. Money will be deducted from the source with missionary funding.

**Observation and Recommendations:**

Shri **V.S. Oberoi**, I.A.S., noted that there were initial apprehensions of holding the Indian Science Congress in Shillong. However persistent efforts made by the Chairman, MSPB and senior officials ensured that it was made a reality. He also said that from this massive event N.E.H.U has gained infrastructure. Till now, Shillong has only twelve colleges that offer courses in Science which sadly has not been matched by the inculcation of science temper. There is also lack of facilities for pursuing higher studies in the Science streams. The State made use of the Indian Science Congress to derive maximum benefit for it students. The pre-occupation of the Congress with logistics dampened the expectations. Many students also missed

the opportunity of attending it as it was the holiday season. Earth Science was a subject of discussion at the Science Congress. There was a suggestion that as Meghalaya is a seismic prone region there is a need to increase the number of automated weather stations and to build forecasting stations. There should also be a department for disaster management. He also informed the members that Shillong will be used as a hub for science centres and N.E.H.U will be used as a platform for them.

Kum. **Agatha K. Sangma**, Member of Parliament, Lok Sabha, observed that the resources laid down for the future generation are diminishing. The Board as a key policy initiator needs to change the structure and direction in which we are moving by insuring our "ecological footprint". Ecological footprint is the quantity of natural resources that one consumes in one's lifetime. The more you consume the more natural resources are being depleted. She made mention of the slow food revolution that is taking place around the world and expressed her appreciation that 2009 has been declared as the "Year of the Vegetable". She stressed on the need to reduce the ecological footprint by reducing the fuel consumption that is used to import food. She also emphasized the need to mitigate the effects of climate change and made two suggestions – introducing the concept of an evergreen forest and preservation of our rich bio-diversity.

Dr. **Glen Kharkongor** made two suggestions: mobilization of resources and generation of funds from carbon credits. The North East region needs to concentrate on expansion of sacred groves and use of bio mass. To encourage learning of Science there is need to make use of innovative methods like setting up of mobile science laboratories.

Shri **D. K. Manavalan** emphasized the need to assess the vulnerability of the rural community. As Meghalaya is a disaster prone area, the Board needs to prepare the community to overcome any kind of disaster. He informed the Board that eight missions for disaster management will be constituted shortly which will change the entire method of planning.

The Board under the chairmanship of Shri **P.A. Sangma** approved the recommendations and proposals of the Indian Science Congress (ISC), pertinent to the North East, especially to Meghalaya, as presented by Shri Toki Blah.

### **TRANSPARENCY WORKING GROUP**

The Transparency Working Group has held a series of discussions on relevant issues. In their report on vigilance and anti-corruption mechanism the group noted that the vigilance apparatus in

Meghalaya is weak. To strengthen this apparatus a few suggestions were placed before the Board:

- There should be a Vigilance Commission in Meghalaya which will be headed by the Chief Secretary. The Vigilance Commission shall report to the Chief Minister.
- Members of the Vigilance Commission shall include amongst others, Principal Secretary (Personnel).
- The Vigilance Commission will have an organizational channel to perform duties such as departmental enquiries.
- For technical departments such as Public Health and Engineering (P.H.E.), a chief technical examiner will be appointed. He/she shall be in the rank of Superintendent Engineer.
- Officers in the Vigilance Commission will be provided a protective mechanism.
- There is need to set up an Anti-Corruption department to be headed by an Inspector General of Police (IGP). This department should cover all public servants and be vested with powers of a police station. Relevant sections of the IPC should be added to this department.
- No additional legislation is required in creating the Commission. Only a formal government order needs to be issued.
- So far, investigative agencies are present only at the centre. Such investigative agencies will also be set up in the State and will cover the whole gamut of public servants.

Shri **U.S Misra**, honorary member, stated that the Anti- Corruption Department will be a police unit headed by the Superintendent of Police (SP). The entire State will be under the jurisdiction of officers at the SP level stationed in two places, Shillong and Tura respectively. He also stated that the quality of work taken up is more important than the quantity of allocation. A list of businessmen and public servants including MLAs and ministers with doubtful integrity will be prepared. Such persons will be under the purview of this department. All assistance should be given to police officers while investigating any cases. The proposal to set up this Department is almost complete and is only waiting for an order from the government. He also expressed hope that it will be operational within a month. If the present government has the will and the determination to root out corruption, it will not be an impossible task. Both politician and bureaucrat can be taken to task as per law, if found guilty of corruption.

The Chairman subscribed to the views expressed in the presentation. He requested the Transparency Working Group to present its recommendations in writing to the State Planning Board for approval.

## **FINANCE (Resource Mobilisation) GROUP**

The Finance Minister, Shri **Conrad K. Sangma** presented his report to the MSPB after the group on Finance (Resource Mobilization) had met, discussed and made a number of observations.

### **Observations and Recommendations**

- Finance is an area that deals with a lot of numbers for which information is not readily available. He suggested that the State needs to aggressively move on computerization of budgetary and treasury expenditure of the government. To do so there is need for trained professionals in this area of work.
- The National Institute of Public Finance (NIPF) will be invited by the State to assist in these initiatives.
- There is need to review the revenue expenditure of the State. The salary component in the State is higher than the other components. The Finance Department must have an expenditure management system to look into the details of expenditure of each department, to check whether the approved outlay is being utilized or not and to also try and bring down the revenue expenditure of the State.
- The Finance Department will undertake efforts to harness additional mobilization of resources by computerizing VAT and by introducing integrated check gates.
- A Resource Mobilization Committee headed by the Chief Minister already exists. In the Committee meetings issues relevant to integrated check gates, royalty, VAT, etc., will be



taken up for discussion. Dr. **N.J. Kurien** will also be invited as an expert to these meetings.

- There is need to avoid the creation of additional planned posts. Technical staff could be shifted from one project (after completion) to another. Moreover shifting of technical personnel from plan to non-plan activities will help in putting more money into developmental work.

In his concluding remarks, the Chairman observed that the major concern in the State is that there is no fiscal policy. He highlighted on the need of re-organizing the ministries wherein allied sectors must have only one ministry so that there is an integrated approach for policy making.

At the close of the day the Chairman expressed his sincere gratitude to all the members present for their co-operation and an enlightened discussion.

Sd/-  
Shri P.A Sangma,  
(Chairman)