

**INAUGURAL ADDRESS OF DR. DONKUPAR ROY,
HON'BLE CHIEF MINISTER, MEGHALAYA AT
THE MEETING OF THE STATE PLANNING
BOARD AT HOTEL PINWOOD, SHILLONG**

3RD OCTOBER, 2008

Hon'ble Chairman of the State Planning Board, Shri P.A. Sangma, my dear Cabinet Colleagues, respected Members of the Meghalaya State Planning Board, Chief Secretary and other Senior Officers:

I consider it as a great honour to be associated with this first and full meeting of the Meghalaya State Planning Board since it was reconstituted recently under the able chairmanship of Shri P.A. Sangma. I have no doubt that the present Board will be able to advise and provide a direction to the State Government towards achieving social and economic development comparable with other developed States of the country. May I take this opportunity to welcome each and every one of you, especially those who have come from Delhi and from other places. I hope that your stay in Shillong will be a very pleasant experience.

2. The State of Meghalaya is now in its thirty seventh year of existence. Today it is a good time to take stock of the situation as to where do we stand in relation to our objectives of providing a good quality of life to our people, the elimination of poverty, and the

provision of economic opportunity. Significant changes do have taken place in which the network of administration has expanded, as has the infrastructure, and the spread of basic services. Numerous developmental programmes have been taken up, and literacy rates have improved, the outreach of the health care system has enlarged. No doubt there is much that has changed.

3. However, much still remains to be done to achieve the desired levels of development. This is the highest priority of the present Government in the State. Strategically, we should build upon our strengths and address our weaknesses. The present Government has already laid down its vision in the form of the Common Minimum Programme, evolved in a participative manner by all the constituents of the Government. The Programme envisages convergence of schemes for more effective implementation, recognizes the role of public-private partnership in development and adoption of technologies to bridge the rural-urban divide. The stress has been given on inclusiveness. Special efforts need to be made to address the concerns of the underprivileged and the marginalized sections of our population. The present Government is committed to the welfare of common man and for the all round development of the State.

4. Though I do not like to reel out statistics, but just to drive the point across, I am given to understand that among the States and UTs in the country, Meghalaya ranked 24th in Human Development Index (HDI), 21st in Index of social and economic infrastructure, 16th

in per capita consumption of electricity, 25th in road density, 30th in per capita utilisation of credit and 19th in per capita income. The Infant Mortality Rate in 2006 stands at 53 compared to national average of 57, whereas it is 11 in Manipur, 15 in Goa and Kerala and 20 in Nagaland. Total number of higher educational institutions in Meghalaya is 57 compared to more than 2000 in states like Maharashtra, UP, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka. Literacy rates stand at 62.56% in 2001 compared to national average of 64.84%, whereas it is 90% in Kerala, 88% in Mizoram and around 82% in Goa, Chandigarh and Delhi.

5. Meghalaya achieved a growth rate of only 6.33 percent during the Tenth Plan period as compared to 7.8 percent during the Ninth Plan. This was mainly due to the resource constraints as well as infrastructure constraints, particularly power, to sustain and support a high level of growth. There is need for accelerated investment in infrastructure. During the 11th Plan period, the target growth rate fixed by the Planning Commission for Meghalaya is 7.2 percent as compared to the national target of 9.0 percent. The growth rate of 7.2 percent fixed for Meghalaya comprises of a growth rate of 4.7 percent in agriculture, 8.0 percent in industry and 7.9 percent in services sectors. To achieve this growth target, a Plan size of Rs. 9185.00 crores has been fixed for Meghalaya during the Eleventh Plan. The lower growth rate target fixed for the State as compared to the all-India target would imply that at the end of the 11th Plan period, Meghalaya will lag even further behind the other States of the country.

6. The Vision 2020 document of the North Eastern Region has stated that there is a need for acceleration in the growth of most of the North Eastern States if they are to catch up with the per capita GDP of the country by the year 2020. The document has estimated that Meghalaya needs to grow at an average of 10.96 percent in terms of its Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) and at 9.72 percent in terms of its per capita GSDP during the period 2007 to 2020. Therefore, massive investment in physical, social and economic infrastructure is required to enable a faster rate of development in the coming years.

7. During the 11th Plan period the Government will focus on the 'outcome oriented approach' instead of 'expenditure oriented approach'. We shall give priority to complete the critical ongoing projects so that benefits reach the desired target group. During the next five years, the priorities of the State Government include -

- Power generation, transmission, grid connectivity and rural electrification.
- Agriculture and allied sectors with strong emphasis on horticulture including post harvesting management and processing.
- Roads and Bridges for ensuring better connectivity.
- Sericulture & Weaving for generation of income and employment to the women folk.
- Tourism infrastructure and tourism services.

- Trade with Bangladesh and creation of infrastructure for the same.
- Decentralization of planning and involvement of the people in the development process.
- Social Services like education, health, water supply and nutrition.
- Poverty alleviation and employment generation in rural areas through Rural Development Programmes.

8. The State is blessed with a favourable climate, beautiful landscape of undulating hills, meandering streams, numerous caves and a vast array of flora and fauna. The State has, however, not been able to adequately tap the potential that exists for tourism. The hills also present some very unique problems which inhibit the developmental efforts of the State. Over 80 percent of the population lives in rural areas and are spread over 5782 villages. As such, the cost of providing basic infrastructure is quite prohibitive.

9. Food grain production in the State is about 270 thousand tonnes while horticultural produce is about 250 thousand tonnes. Horticulture, post harvest management, processing, organic farming certification, micro financing to the farmers, irrigation and watershed development are some of the issues which need to be looked into.

10. The Industrial Policy of the State provides a number of incentives for setting up of units in the State. Infrastructure has also been developed in the form of EPIP, Industrial Estates and Growth Centre. However, with changing global scenario we need to re-orient our Industrial Policy.

11. The State Government is on the verge of completing the 84 MW Myntdu Leshka H.E.P. which will augment power generation in the State from the present level of 185 MW. There are a number of hydro electric projects which can be implemented but adequate funds have not been mobilized so far. Coal based thermal projects can also be set up. The State Government is also presently considering several transmission projects for strengthening the interstate network for future trading in power. The implementation of the Rural Electrification Programme under RGGVY is being taken up in great earnest with 60 percent of the villages electrified as on March, 2008.

12. The State has 603 kms of National Highways, 1134 kms. of State Highways, 1219 Kms of Major District Roads besides Other District Roads, Urban & Village Roads. The road density in the State is about 36 kms per 100 sq kms. The areas of concern in respect of Road sector include maintenance of existing roads and the slow implementation of rural connectivity under PMGSY.

13. As I mentioned earlier the literacy rate in the State is just below the national average. The other areas of concern are the high drop out rates and the quality of education imparted especially at the primary and secondary level. The percentage of untrained teachers is also high.

14. There are 7 hospitals, 2 State level institutions, 28 CHCs, 104 PHCs, 14 dispensaries and 401 SHCs. However, these are much below the desired norms of the Government of India. There is shortage of professionals in the field of health care while the State Government is facing issues of high fertility rate and high incidence of anaemia among women. The National Rural Health Mission has been a source of considerable assistance to the Government in this field. The implementation of nutrition programmes also needs to be improved. To meet the shortfall of doctors in the State, the Government has sought expressions of interest for setting up of medical colleges on the PPP model. I am told that Martin Luther University, Shillong is planning to start a course in B.Sc (Rural Health), that may ensure availability of medically trained persons in the rural areas.

15. The other areas of serious concern facing the State include the low levels of income, large percentage of population of about 49 percent being below the poverty line, dependence on the tertiary sector and existence of a high percentage of educated unemployed.

16. The development challenges facing the State are enormous and we propose to address some of these issues during the Eleventh Plan by adopting the following strategies:-

- Leveraging funds available from sources like the Centrally Sponsored & Central Sector Schemes, the Non Lapsable Central Pool of Resources (NLCPR) and North Eastern Council (NEC).
- Effective implementation and monitoring of the Flagship Programmes including Bharat Nirman.
- Ensuring proper and productive deployment of resources.
- Achieving a broad based and inclusive growth that addresses intra State disparity.
- Adopting a cluster approach in agriculture and horticulture and to focus on post harvest management like cold chains for perishables, marketing and fruit processing.
- Convergence of all rural development programmes including the National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme, Backward Regions Grant Fund, National Agriculture Development Programme, Border Areas Development Programme, Flagship Programmes including Bharat Nirman.
- Adopting an integrated approach to livelihood development in the villages with the active involvement of SHGs.
- Launching of a Rain Water Harvesting Mission to bring about sustainable water harvesting on a large scale through community participation.

- Development of the manufacturing sector based on the State's mineral and horticultural resources.
- Opening trade with Bangladesh to ensure upliftment of the economy of the State, especially for the border areas.
- Generation of employment, particularly in the rural areas as there is great potential for creation of jobs in the rural areas in the field of post harvest management, agro processing, industry, tourism and other services.
- Making Shillong the educational hub of the N.E. Region.
- Encouraging Skill Development & Vocational training based on demands of the local market. Proficiency in English will provide a good base for IT and IT enabled services.
- Evolving a model of development which will be a combination of the traditional tribal institutions and elected representatives at the village level for ensuring the participation of the people at the grassroot level in planning process.
- Urgent restructuring and reforming of the Government delivery system.

17. With the aim to give a fillip to the development and improving delivery systems, the Government has reconstituted the State Planning Board bringing in personalities of the highest eminence in different fields, both from within and outside the State. I am sure that your expertise will help us review our past successes and failures and guide us to achieve our goals and deliver the desired

outcomes to the people of the State. The proactive steps taken by the Board, I am sure, would have a positive impact on development of the State. I am glad to know that the Chairman of the Board has set up Working Groups to take up detailed discussions with concerned departments. I am also happy to learn that the Chairman has set up a Knowledge Mission Team to specially dwell on the areas of indigenous knowledge that have stood the test of time.

18. Various Development departments of the Government are going to make presentations about their programmes and schemes to all of you in the forthcoming sessions slotted today as well as tomorrow. Being young and vibrant state we aspire to grow and to be at par with other progressive States of the Country. We have got immense resources both man and material. I look forward to sound advice from the State Planning Board on tackling the problems we are facing and identifying opportunities as well as strategies to make use of our inherent potential.

19. Before I conclude, I would like to thank each and every one of you who are present here today and I am sure that we can all work together for the upliftment of the people of Meghalaya.

Thank you.