

Esteemed Prime Minister, Distinguished Members of the National Development Council and Friends,

At the outset, I express my gratitude to the Prime Minister for convening this meeting of the National Development Council to discuss and finalise the Mid Term Appraisal of the Eleventh Five Year Plan. I congratulate the Planning Commission for having prepared the Mid Term Appraisal document for the Eleventh Plan and placing the same before the N.D.C. for discussions.

2. The target growth rate for Meghalaya during the Eleventh Plan is 7.3 percent as against the national target of 9 percent. The lower growth rate target fixed for the State, as compared to the all-India target, would imply that the State will lag further behind at the end of the 11th Plan period. I request the Central Government to take necessary steps to arrest further regional disparity in development.

3. The State of Meghalaya, being a hilly State, relies only on road transport. The regular increase in oil prices over the last few years has directly resulted in higher prices, especially of essential goods, which has adversely affected the people of the State.

4. From the time of its creation, in 1972 till date, the State of Meghalaya, despite its weak resource base, has been endeavoring to move forward and we are very grateful to the Government of India for extending generous and continuing support and assistance to the State through agencies like the Planning Commission, the Union Ministry of DONER, the other Central Ministries and the North Eastern Council. However, in spite of all attempts, the State is still lagging far behind. I would request the Government of India to continue supporting and guiding us in our efforts towards greater development. We need to provide more substantial investment in power, roads, industries, education and health sectors, and I request the Planning Commission and the Ministry of DONER to extend all possible assistance.

5. The agreed Eleventh Five Year Plan outlay of Meghalaya is Rs. 9185.00 crores. The anticipated Plan investment during the first three years of the Eleventh Plan is of the tune of Rs. 3800.00 Crores which accounts for about 41 per cent of the agreed Eleventh Plan outlay. The State would, therefore, require to make an investment of Rs. 5385.00 Crores during the last two years of the Eleventh Plan to be able to achieve the agreed Eleventh Plan outlay of Rs. 9185.00 Crores. This is achievable if adequate resources are available to support the Annual Plans of 2010-11 and 2011-12. To be able to achieve this objective, the State Government would have to rely mainly on Central support including timely release of the various Central Assistance due to the State during last two years of the Eleventh Plan.

6. The bulk of the population in the State is dependent on agriculture. Being a hilly State, there is little scope of increasing the cropped area due to the limiting terrain. Horticulture holds much promise because the State has a favourable agro-climatic condition suitable for horticultural crops of high value. Over the years, the State Government has recognised the problems associated with the agriculture sector which, among others, includes rejuvenating the support systems in extension, credit and the delivery system of inputs, management of irrigation projects, marketing, etc. Some measures have been taken by the State Government to assist the farmers, yet much remains to be done.

7. It is a well known fact that Meghalaya receives comparatively high rainfall. However, in the absence of effective means to tap this vital resource, we have not been able to harness its potential. It is for this very reason that a separate full fledged Water Resources Department has been created in 2009-10 to exclusively address the issues relating to planning, assessment, conservation and overall judicious utilisation of this resource in co-ordination with other State Departments dealing with the different aspects like water supply and water conservation. The State Government has also set up a Rainwater Harvesting Mission.

8. The irrigation potential created upto date is only 14 percent of the total potential of 2.18 lakh hectares. The State Government is utilising the Central Assistance provided by the Government of India under the Accelerated Irrigation Benefit Programme (AIBP) for implementation of irrigation projects. Since its inception in 1999-2000, 117 minor irrigation schemes with a total command area of 0.13 lakh hectares have been sanctioned, out of which 71 schemes have been completed with a potential command area of 6806 hectares. During 2010-11, 46 ongoing minor irrigation schemes with a total command area of 6354 hectares will be completed.

9. With a view to increase the income of the rural populace, a number of livelihood programmes are in the pipeline. The State Government aims at an integrated livelihood approach. Sericulture and weaving will be an important component of this programme since this sector has a very good potential in contributing towards improving the rural economy.

10. Several villages of the State have been benefited by the two externally aided programmes under IFAD funding. The State is also at an advanced stage of project preparation for a Climate Change Adaptation programme to be funded by the German Development Bank. Community participation in development has picked up under the IFAD funded projects. The Technology Mission has also had a tremendous effect, with a spurt in the cultivation of cash crops like flowers, strawberries and coloured capsicum which are changing the income of farmers in several areas. More needs to be done.

11. In view of the present global climate change and its threat to water security, the State Government is initiating a new scheme – “Integrated Basin Development project cum Livelihood Programme”. This will provide opportunities for optimum harnessing of the potentialities of respective river basins and provide multi-faceted benefits such as recharging of catchment areas, improvement of hydrology, usage of water

bodies for fish production, micro-irrigation and promotion of rural and eco-tourism, etc.

12. In the total absence of railways and inland waterways, roads have to play a critical and pivotal role for transport of goods and services in my State. Although the road density has increased from around 12 Km. per 100 Sq. Km. in 1971 to around 38.20 Km. per 100 Sq. Km. in 2010, it is still far below the national level. Village connectivity under PMGSY is now receiving special attention of the State Government. Today, the percentage of habitations connected with all weather roads in Meghalaya is 51 percent. The remaining 49 percent of the habitations, though mostly small and isolated with population of less than 200 people will also have to be adequately connected. Much remains to be done to bring up the State not only to the national level, but more importantly, to the level that agricultural and industrial development can be sustained. In this connection, I may mention that the increase in road density has already led to a remarkable growth in the tertiary sector in the State's economy which now contributes about 48 percent to the State NSDP, and many of our young people find employment in this sector.

13. With the ever increasing traffic within Shillong and Jowai cities, traffic congestion is a major problem faced by day to day commuters in these two cities. The delay in the implementation of the Shillong Bye Pass has caused great hardship to the citizens of the city. However, I am happy to learn that the Government of India has allotted the work for construction of the Shillong Bye Pass. I hope that the actual work on the project will not be delayed any further. In the case of the Jowai Bye Pass, the land compensation process is underway and I would urge the Central Government to take up the Jowai Bye Pass on a priority basis after the land acquisition proceedings have been completed.

14. We are grateful to the Government of India for bringing important roads under SARDP and for declaring a number of important roads within the State as National Highways such as the N.H. 51 and N.H. 62,

where works such as double laning, reconstruction and strengthening of pavements, improvement of geometrics, etc, are under way. Another important project in Meghalaya is the four-laning of the Jorabad - Umiam section of N.H. 40 where work has been allotted. Land for this will be handed over shortly to the NHAI. N.H. – 44 from Shillong to Agartala via Badarpur in Assam also connects N.H. – 40 to the Barak Valley, to Manipur and to Mizoram. It is therefore, politically and economically very important to complete this work in a very short time. I would request the Government of India to give special priority to this road.

15. The N.H. – 51 and N.H. – 62 are at different phases of upgradation. These roads need to be upgraded to 10 metres width (with paved shoulder) double-lane roads on priority in view of their socio-economic importance.

16. The Shillong – Nongstoin – Rongjeng – Tura road (256 kms) under the SARDP scheme which have been projected in four different stretches, requires to be taken up on priority as this vital road will run like a spine through the length of Meghalaya and connect the Garo Hills region with the Khasi Hills region of the State.

17. One of the projects under the 1996 Prime Minister's package was the construction of the Dawki bridge along with its approaches. This project has been delayed for a long time. I understand that the opening of the bidding document for construction of this bridge was completed recently. I would request the Government of India to speed up this matter as Dawki is an important border trading station with Bangladesh.

18. The North Eastern State Roads Investment Programme funded by A.D.B. in various tranches. Garobadha – Dalu road (93.4 Km) is under Tranche – 1; Mawngap-Umpung road (76.2 km) and Mawshynrut-Hahim road (36.8 km) is under Tranche – 3 have been pending for a long time and need to be given priority. Mawngap-Umpung road should be further

extended to Baghmara via Maheshkhola connecting N.H.-62. This will facilitate connection through mineral rich areas and tourist destinations.

19. Meghalaya has a potential of about 3,200 MW of hydro electric power. The hilly terrain and the heavy rainfall make Meghalaya a State ideal for generating hydro electric power. However, the tapped power potential in the State, till date, is only 185.2 MW. At present, the State is facing an average shortage of around 600 MW of power. The 2 x 42 MW Myntdu Leshka Hydel Project will be commissioned within this year. Besides the Myntdu Leshka Hydel Project, a number of hydel power projects are also in the pipeline under Public-Private Partnership.

20. The State has coal reserves of about 550 million tonnes. With these reserves, thermal power of the order of 1000 to 2000 MW can be generated for about 100 years. The development of a coal based thermal power project in the State is very essential to tide over the existing power deficit. This would also provide the necessary base load, especially during the lean season and ensure the much needed ideal thermal hydro mix, which will ensure stability and security of power system in the State.

21. The Ministry of Coal allotted a Coal Block in Orissa jointly to four states of Meghalaya, Assam, Orissa and Tamil Nadu to enable setting up of Thermal Power Projects to augment the power situation in the respective States. A joint venture company between the four States has been established and the preliminary process for exploration of coal has commenced. The individual States are required to utilise their share of coal for establishment of Thermal Power Plants, and Meghalaya has initiated the process of floating an Expression of Interest (EOI) for the purpose. The State Government has also signed the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for setting up thermal power projects in the State with private companies as well as NEEPCO. Besides, MOUs have also been signed with several renowned private companies for development of hydro power projects, and additional power projects are expected to come up in the near future.

22. In view of the growth in the Industrial sector and several proposals in the pipeline for setting up of thermal power projects, I have already taken up with the Union Minister of State for Coal, as well as the Union Minister of Power, for considering allocation of a separate Coal Block to Meghalaya to meet the anticipated demand.

23. At present, the State's power generation is purely hydel and, as such, the danger of carbon emission does not arise. With regards to afforestation of catchment areas, the State Government is ensuring that the norms laid down by the Union Ministry of Environment and Forest are strictly followed. In the case of the thermal power projects which are to be set up, all necessary statutory precautions will be undertaken to ensure that the harmful effects and carbon emission are reduced to the minimum.

24. The Rural Electrification Programme in Meghalaya is being implemented as a priority programme. As on December, 2009, 3428 villages or 60 percent of the State's 5782 villages have been electrified. The majority of the remaining 2354 unelectrified villages, which account for 40 percent of the total villages, have less than 50 households.

25. Rural health infrastructure in terms of Sub-Centres, Primary Health Centres and Community Health Centres have been established in different places in conformity with norms applicable to hilly areas and are operative and functional. There are 407 sub-centres, 109 public health centres and 29 community health centres in the State. The National Rural Health Mission has had quite an impact in my State.

26. Meghalaya is experiencing a steady growth in population and in the number of urban centres. Around 20 percent of the total population of the State live in urban areas. Out of the total urban population, 60 percent live in Shillong, the capital of the State. At present, there are 16 urban centres in the State and another 6 settlements are expected to qualify as Census Towns by 2011. Provision of infrastructure could not keep pace with the growing population as a result of which the levels of

infrastructure are not adequate and the existing infrastructure has been stretched to the limit. The required investment in infrastructure is estimated at Rs. 4052.63 crores over the next 20 years. Although the introduction of JNNURM is providing the much needed support towards infrastructure development, all the existing towns do not qualify for assistance under the programme. Private sector involvement in developing urban infrastructure in North Eastern Region is non-existent.

27. I am grateful that Shillong has been selected as one of the JNNURM mission cities in the country. In spite of the fact that some reforms have social, economic and political dimensions and consultations at all levels are essential in view of the fact that Meghalaya is a tribal state where provisions of the Sixth Schedule are applicable, we are committed to achieve at least 80 percent of the reforms by March 2011 and the rest by March, 2012. The first instalment of the funds sanctioned under JNNURM and UIDSSMT has been received by the State Government. However, the Government of India has informed that no further instalments would be possible unless 100 percent reforms are achieved as per the original time schedule prescribed. The works under JNNURM and UIDSSMT are under progress and any delay in release of further instalments will certainly hamper the implementation of schemes. I would urge upon the Government of India to review this issue.

28. To accommodate the ever increasing population of Shillong, setting up of a new township designed for two lakh population was conceived and an area of 2030 hectares identified to the east of Shillong city. The State Government's intervention is restricted to acquiring and development of 500 hectares of land. For the remaining 1530 hectares, the State Government is only required to provide bulk infrastructure to provide impetus for growth and development. Out of the 500 hectares to be acquired by the State Government, only 370.26 hectares have been acquired so far. It has not been possible to acquire the remaining 129.74 hectares due to shortage of funds. The State Government is exploring

various avenues for funding and I would request the Central Government to assist the State Government in raising funds for the purpose.

29. Further, sustaining the existing assets in the urban areas requires considerable funds. The maintenance funds raised by the local bodies and the grants and assistance under the Finance Commission awards are still inadequate. I would request the Central Government to kindly assist the State Government in allocation of more funds for maintenance of both present and future assets in the urban areas.

30. Being a predominantly tribal State, Meghalaya is not eligible for assistance under the Tribal Sub Plan. Further, the Government of India earmarks certain funds as grant-in-aid under Article 275 (1) of the Constitution but the procedures entailing release of this fund is quite restrictive. I would urge the Central Government to amend the guidelines of these schemes so that the earmarked funds are released directly to the State Government.

31. The State has remained peaceful for a number of years. Militancy has been under control and I am happy to say that the state police have been able to effectively control the activities of indigenous militant organisations as well as outfits of other states using Meghalaya as a corridor to Bangladesh. As at present, there are no indications of the presence of left wing extremism in the State. However, the State Police needs to remain vigilant and we need the continued support of the Government of India in terms of training, equipment and financial assistance.

In conclusion, I wish the deliberations of this Council every success.

THANK YOU

JAI HIND