

**SPEECH OF HON'BLE GOVERNOR OF MEGHALAYA ON THE
OCCASION OF INDEPENDENCE DAY, 2016.**

My dear fellow citizens of Meghalaya,

Ka jingmen bad jingsuk ia phi baroh. (Khasi)

Plaknan angni tomtomani aro kusini salam. (Garo)

1. On the occasion of our 70th Independence Day, I extend my heartiest greetings to each one of you. This is a proud occasion for us, when we celebrate our freedom as an independent nation, freedom which had been achieved after a long period of struggle, and sacrifice of countless fellow countrymen. This is also a solemn occasion, when we remember and recollect with gratitude the contributions of all the great patriots of India- Mahatma Gandhi, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Vallabhai Patel, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose, Lokmanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Subramanya Bharati and many others, who provided the leadership, to liberate the country from foreign rule. We also remember and recollect with a strong sense of pride, the selfless sacrifice by the patriots of our own

State- U Tirot Sing, U Kiang Nangbah, Pa Togan Sangma, and many others, in their struggle against colonial rule. While honouring our freedom fighters, let us imbibe their spirit, by re-dedicating ourselves to the service of our State and our Nation.

2. The State has witnessed major successful events this year. These include the 12th South Asian Games which was hosted jointly by our State and Assam during February, 2016. The Bye-election to the Tura Parliamentary Constituency was conducted in a peaceful manner in May, 2016. And finally, the memorable visit of our Hon'ble Prime Minister to Shillong on 27th and 28th May 2016 to address the 65th Plenary Session of the North Eastern Council which was attended by the Governors and the Chief Ministers of all the North Eastern States. During this visit, the Hon'ble Prime Minister also addressed a mammoth public gathering at Polo Ground and spelt out the Government's initiatives and schemes to bring about sustainable development in the region. The Hon'ble Prime Minister also visited the Mattilang Amusement Park from where he took photographs with the mesmerizing Elephant Falls in the background and the Khasi Heritage Village at Mawphlang where he enthusiastically

interacted with the young artists draped in traditional attire and even tried his hand at playing the Khasi traditional drum. His maiden visit to Shillong as Prime Minister was very well-received by the people of the State.

3. Agriculture is the mainstay of our economy and deserves a special focus. Meghalaya is the proud recipient of the Government of India's KRISHI KARMAN AWARD as the Best Performing State among Category III States in overall Foodgrain Production for three consecutive years of 2012-2013, 2013-2014 & 2014-2015. The foremost priority of the Government is to upscale food grain production to narrow the gap between production and demand. Steps are also being taken to promote organic cultivation through the use of organic bio-fertilizers and bio-pesticides. The State is also making earnest efforts to realize its full potential in the horticulture sector. The State grows several varieties of fruits, vegetables, plantation crops, flowers, orchids and spices including the World's No. 1 Turmeric – *Lakadong* from Jaintia Hills which is in great demand outside the State. A new Central scheme, namely, the Soil Health

Card scheme, which aims at promoting location-specific and crop-specific sustainable soil health management and appropriate land use, is also under implementation.

4. On the Rural Development sector, the Government continues to implement various poverty alleviation programmes. During 2015 -16 under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS), wage employment of 199.10 lakh persondays through execution of infrastructure works was generated. The implementation of National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM) has been expanded to 8 (eight) blocks in 2015-16 and 447 Self Help Groups have been formed.

5. Government of India has launched the Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY) aimed at universalizing financial inclusiveness by ensuring that each and every house hold in the country has bank account along with other social insurance and entrepreneurship programmes viz. Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti BimaYojana (PMJJBY), Pradhan Mantri Suraksha BimaYojana

(PMSBY), Atal Pension Yojana (APY) and Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana (PMMY). In collaboration with the State Bank of India, more than 2,25,000 bank accounts have been opened and about 1,86,000 RuPay cards have been issued. Under the Mudra Yojana, loans amounting to Rs 103.00 crore have been distributed so far to 8,581 beneficiaries.

6. Being a hill State, road communication is very important for the overall development and progress of the State. Under the State Plan funds, 253 Kms of kutchra road have been blacktopped while 60 Kms of new roads and 507 Running metres of RCC bridges have been constructed. Under the Special Plan Assistance, the Government has sanctioned 208 projects for construction of new roads as well as for improvement of existing ones in the State at a cost of Rs. 600 crores. The Central Government is also assisting the programme for improvement of State Highways and Major District Roads under the Central Road Fund Schemes. Further, under Pradhan Mantri Grameen Sadak Yojana, 220 habitations have been connected by a road length of 847 Kms.

7. Under the Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Gram Jyoti Yojana (DDUJGY), 100% village electrification is targeted to be achieved by June 2017. Presently, electrification of the 894 unelectrified villages in the State at an estimated cost of Rs. 282.00 crore is being taken up in phases. Under the Ujala programme, the Government of India is providing subsidy for purchase of energy efficient LED bulbs. This scheme has become very popular and more than 14 crore LED bulbs have been distributed in the country which has resulted in cost savings of over Rs. 20 crore per day. This scheme will be implemented in our State also shortly.

8. One of the major initiatives of the Government of Meghalaya is to provide quality educational facilities for all round development of human resources in the State. Along with the implementation of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) and Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA), the upgradation of 117 Government Aided Secondary/Higher Secondary schools is being undertaken. Under the Rashtriya Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA), the State has got the

approval for setting up an Engineering College in Shillong and a College of Architecture & Urban Planning in the Garo Hills.

9. Employment of the youth is a high priority agenda for the Government. The vision of our Hon'ble Prime Minister on "Skill India" has been taken up in the State in right earnest. As part of this journey, placement as well as self-employment linked vocational education and skill development for the youth are being promoted through various innovative programmes. The State is implementing an ambitious skill development programme for skilling 60,000 youth in the next 3 years under an Asian Development Bank funded Project. Recently, the Government of India has sanctioned a new ITI at Mawkyrwat and a Model Career Centre for Tura.

10. Meghalaya is making steady progress in improving the health facilities and health status of the people. However, one major area of concern is the high Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR) and Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) in the State. Recently, I have reviewed the progress being made by the State to tackle this problem and have advised the Health & Family Welfare Department to accord very

high priority to this issue. I also urge upon all the pregnant women in the State to avail the free check up facility in Government health centres being provided on the 9th of every month under the recently launched Pradhan Mantri Surakshit Matritva Abhiyan Yojana.

11. Under Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, the State is fully geared up to achieve total sanitation coverage by the target date of 2nd October 2019. Presently 80% of rural households have been provided with toilets and 2,716 villages out of 6,785 villages in the State have become Open Defecation Free villages. Ri Bhoi district received commendation letter for good performance in the Grameen category from the Government of India on the Civil Services Day i.e. 21st April 2016.

12. On 1st April 2016, the Government of India has launched the Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana for providing free LPG connections to the women belonging to the Below Poverty Line (BPL) households. The scheme will cover 5 crore BPL households in the country over a period of 3 years. This scheme will be implemented in our State very

shortly.

13. On the Sports front, the Government is giving due attention to the creation of requisite infrastructure. An International Standard Football Stadium funded by the Ministry of DONER at a cost of Rs.44.00 crores will be constructed at Ampati. The foundation stone for this was laid by the Hon'ble Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi on 27th May 2016 at Shillong.

14. On the law and order front, the State has faced difficult situations in Garo Hills due to the rise of militancy, especially by the GNLA and other splinter groups. It is to the credit of our security forces that through sustained and determined efforts, the overall internal security situation has now greatly improved. In the past four months, in Counter Insurgency Operations, the GNLA has suffered serious setbacks leading to large scale surrender and arrest of militants as well as recovery of huge quantity of explosives, arms and ammunitions. Further, after the disbandment of ANVC and ANVC (B) on 15th December, 2014, the violent era of another militant outfit,

the United A'chik Liberation Army (UALA) came to an end on 9th June, 2016 when the outfit bid farewell to arms in an official disbanding ceremony held at Tura, West Garo Hills. It is expected that this will contribute towards bringing about normalcy and lasting peace in the Garo Hills region.

15. Great nations are built with the contribution and hard work of one and all. On the other hand, violence in any form undermines progress. There is no place for violence in our society. There is no issue that cannot lend itself to solution through dialogue and reconciliation. The path of discourse and resolution can sometimes be difficult, but we must persist, as this alone can provide lasting solutions. I earnestly appeal to all citizens of the State, to hold on steadfastly, to our democratic values, and shun the path of violence as we proceed on our journey towards development and progress.

16. As I conclude, I will quote from the Tamil literary classic 'Thirukkural' which says that...

"The five ornaments of a country are health, wealth, crops, happiness

and security”.

May the blessings of the Almighty be upon us all, and may He lead us on the right path, so that Meghalaya is bestowed with these five ornaments.

Once again, I wish all my fellow citizens a very “Happy Independence Day”

Khublei! Mithela !! Jai hind !!!
