

**REPUBLIC DAY ADDRESS**

**BY**

**Honourable Governor**

**Dr. K.K. PAUL**

**GOVERNOR OF MEGHALAYA**

*Shillong, 26<sup>th</sup> January, 2014*

*My Dear fellow citizens of Meghalaya,*

1. On this happy and joyous occasion of our 65<sup>th</sup> Republic Day, it gives me immense pleasure to warmly greet and felicitate all of you. On this day, sixty four years ago, we the people of India, gave to ourselves our own Constitution which seeks to secure to all citizens justice, liberty and equality. Along with this, we have also solemnly resolved to uphold the unity and integrity of our great nation. As a charter of rights and as a guide to action, it is a document that all of us can be proud of.
2. Our freedom struggle was based on the strong and robust foundation of **non-violence**. Today, this **foundation** is, unfortunately, **under threat** in some parts of the country. We are **facing challenges to our unity and integrity** by certain elements which are inimical to the core values of our Constitution. As peace loving citizens committed to democratic and secular values, we need to come together and fight such divisive forces. I appeal to the people of the State to spare no efforts to ensure that peace is maintained at all costs.
3. The **internal security scenario in the State** has been by and large satisfactory but one of anxiety. National days of importance were celebrated peacefully. All major **festivals** were also celebrated in the State with customary zeal and enthusiasm. The **State Police with** the assistance of the **Central Reserve Police Force**, have done a **commendable job** in containing the activities of various militant outfits. However, the increased activities of **GNLA and the rise of other splinter militant** groups in the Garo Hills has been a matter of concern, and the Government is committed to deal with this situation, firmly.
4. Last year, the State witnessed **agitations by some NGOs** and student organizations in the form of bandhs, office picketing, road blockade etc., on the issue of implementation of Inner Line Permit (ILP). This caused immense **hardship to the general public** and more particularly to farmers, wage earners, petty traders and students. The Government had appointed out its **potentially adverse fall out including the severe**

**damage to the perception** about the State, which could result in **reversing the momentum of growth and progress**. While we have been endeavouring, to **project Meghalaya as a liberal and progressive State**, and as an attractive **destination for investments in tourism, education, health and industries**; imposition of ILP may send a **regressive message**. As such, more **pragmatic and effective mechanisms need** to be evolved to deal with the issue of influx. The welcome step taken by the State Government to invite the agitating NGOs for **talks** and, in turn, the positive response shown by the NGOs need to be commended. We must stay engaged and I am sure that together we will be able to find enduring solutions to all such problems.

5. The Government is keen and determined to restore **peace in the Garo Hills** where insurgency has caused immense hardship to the common people. The settlement with ANVC has reached the final stages of approval by the Central Government. The State Government is keen on getting this done before the next **elections** to the Garo Hills Autonomous District Council. It is with this intent that the term of the present Council has been **extended by six months**. Given the sincere intent on the part of the Government, it is expected that the leadership of ANVC will maintain peace and impress upon its cadres and factions to refrain from resorting to any unlawful activities. It must be reiterated that ensuring peace, public order and safety of the citizens is the first and foremost duty of the State administration.
6. Our **Constitution has stood the test of time** and has provided a **robust framework** for meeting the aspirations of the citizens. Groups and communities have led their grievances, but it has been the strength of our democracy, that we have been able to accommodate different opinions and find common ground. I therefore appeal to all other militant outfits in the State to reflect on the necessity of a dialogue. The Government has offered the path of **dialogue to GNLA**. I urge upon the leadership of GNLA to consider this seriously. It is the most opportune time to restore peace and normalcy in the Garo Hills, which the people of the region are entitled to. **Violence only results in all round misery**.
7. **Rapid all round development** holds the key to prosperity. During recent years, Meghalaya has witnessed sustained economic growth. However, our infrastructure is inadequate and we still have many

challenges. To address this, a large number of projects and initiatives have now been taken up and we are beginning to see tangible results. **Key projects such as the four laning** of the Guwahati-Shillong highway and construction of the road connecting **Shillong and Nongstoin with Tura** have made significant progress. Government has also been able to successfully negotiate with **ADB funding support for the Garobadha-Dalu** road.

8. The **industries sector** can be a major contributor towards economic growth as well as **employment generation**. The **North East Industrial and Investment Promotion Policy, 2007** has paved the way towards incentivising investment in the manufacturing sector in the North East. In order to supplement this further, the State Government has brought out the **Meghalaya Investment and Industrial Policy, 2012**, with emphasis on coverage of women and the **physically challenged entrepreneurs**. For this to succeed, we need to create a **congenial climate** for potential investors to come to the State with their **capital, technology and other competencies**.
9. **Growth of industries** is closely linked to the state of our transport and communication facilities. On this count, we lag behind badly. We do not have a fully functional airport as yet. **Railways can be the game changer**, as this affords the most effective and economic means of bulk transportation. While the first railway line into the State, namely, the **Dudhnoi-Mendipathar railway line in the Garo Hills** is expected to be commissioned **by April 2014**, other projects in the Khasi Hills are held up on account of opposition from certain quarters. It is rather ironical that while people in other regions of the country agitate to demand railway lines we witness agitations in our State opposing railway lines. Conceptually, **a rail link to the Jaintia Hills** side from Barak Valley is also possible, which, could help in transportation of Coal. We need to reconsider our priorities in view of the immense benefits in terms of socio-economic growth that the extension of railway lines can bring to the State.
10. **Information technology** acts as a catalyst to bring about transparent, responsive, effective and accountable governance. The Government will use information technology applications to improve the management of development programmes. Steps are being taken to make the State a favoured destination for IT business, industry,

education and services. The launching of the '**Digital Learning Aid Scheme**' with the distribution of mobile **tablet PCs to all Class-XII students**, will go a long way in realizing the ultimate potential of IT in the education sector. Besides, the Government will continue with the capacity building programme and award of laptops to meritorious students and extend the **Digital Learning Aid Scheme to Class-X and XI** in subsequent years. The Government has also approved the plan to make class-rooms **Wi-Fi** enabled to facilitate digital learning.

- 11. The Integrated Basin Development and Livelihood Promotion programme** has picked up further pace. **Entrepreneur Facilitation Centres (EFCs)** are now operational in **33 Blocks** and a large number of entrepreneurs have been sent for training and exposure visits. **Entrepreneurship opportunities** are now opening up in **aquaculture, apiculture, livestock, tourism, horticulture and sericulture sectors**.
- 12. GDP growth** of the State in the past few years has been extremely encouraging. This growth needs to be **inclusive** to cover even the most marginalised. To make this a reality, Government has allocated funds to supplement the resources available under the **Indira Awas Yojana** for construction of individual houses for Below Poverty Line families. Detailed **guidelines for the Chief Minister's Wedding assistance Scheme** for orphan girls have now been worked out. Provision of funds has also been made for the Chief Minister's assistance for the **Critical illnesses Scheme**.
- 13.** Despite best efforts, the benefits of various **health related schemes** are taking time **to reach the remote areas**, resulting in some of the social health indicators to be still adverse and in the uncomfortable zone. One reason could be inadequacy of hygiene, as a very large number of the houses still lack basic **toilet facilities**. Perhaps, the **Nirmal Gram Yojana** of the Central Government which focuses on this aspect could be the answer. We should have a mission mode approach with set targets, as unhygienic conditions may also be the cause of certain health related problems.
- 14.** The Government is endeavouring to make the **State a hub for art, culture and sports**. The commissioning of the State Convention Centre has provided a major boost to the capability of the State to host events of national and international importance. A proposal for setting up an

**International Centre for Performing Arts and Culture** has been approved in principle under the **NLCPR** scheme. On the sports front, major investments have been made in the recent past in improving the **J.N. Stadium at Shillong**. Work is currently underway to set up two **modern stadia at Tura and Ampati**.

15. The rate of growth of population of Meghalaya is one of the highest in our country. About **20% of population of the state is now 6 years old or less**. This gives us a **huge demographic advantage**, but also weighs in with certain responsibilities. We have to have adequate number of schools, colleges and teachers. Teachers have to be appropriately trained for imparting quality education. The Government has taken steps in this direction for skill development and other such programmes. In this context **ADB is also assisting the State**. But a lot still remains to be accomplished in the field of education. Considering certain physical constraints and environmental concerns our state cannot be heavily industrialised. As such, it becomes important to **channelize the youth** with appropriate skills for the service sector and a knowledge economy.
16. Amongst some of the initiatives are coaching **centre** at Shillong for preparing students of the State for competitive examinations. This is in addition to the **Pre-Examination Training Centre** already being run by the Government. The Youth for Green campaign has helped us connect with a large number of youth across the State.
17. Next month elections to the Autonomous District Councils in the Khasi and Jaintia Hill areas have been scheduled. These Councils are constitutional entities and follow stringent norms and rules. I am sure Meghalaya, as in the past, would once again set an example for the rest of the country with an incident free and a peaceful poll and a turn out, which should beat all previous records.
18. In conclusion, I would like to appeal to all sections of society to work in unison to make Meghalaya a land of peace and prosperity that all of us can be proud of. Let us remind ourselves, today, that growth and development cannot take place in an atmosphere of uncertainty and turmoil. Let us therefore join hands to face the challenges of tomorrow through a common commitment towards peace and social justice as enshrined in our Constitution.

Once again I wish you all a Happy Republic Day.

**KHUBLEI! MITHELA!! JAI HIND!!!**