

**TELEVISED SPEECH OF THE HON'BLE GOVERNOR OF MEGHALAYA ON
THE OCCASION OF INDEPENDENCE DAY 2013.**

My dear fellow citizens,

1. Wish you all a very happy Independence Day! And it gives me immense pleasure to greet all of you on this joyous occasion. This is my first Independence Day address to the citizens of the State after assuming office. Sixty years ago, on this day, our country achieved Independence from foreign rule and joined the community of free nations of the world. This freedom was achieved after a long period of struggle in which several of our fellow countrymen made immense sacrifices, many of them with their lives. On this occasion, let us spare a few moments in silent prayer, for those great men and women, who fought for our freedom of our country.
2. Friends, on this occasion we must also remember and recollect with pride the patriots of our own State – U Tirot Sing, U Kiang Nangbah, Pa Togan Sangma, and numerous others, for their selfless struggle and sacrifice against the colonial rule of that time. Today, we are enjoying the benefits of freedom because of their supreme sacrifice.
3. After Independence, we chose to become a democratic republic, based on the principles of secularism, social justice and equality. We must take pride in the fact that these values have taken deep roots in the country and our democracy has flourished and strengthened over the decades. We need to work ceaselessly towards further reinforcing our democratic ethos and values. On this day, let us rededicate ourselves to this cause.
4. A significant event this year in our State was the elections to the 12th Meghalaya Legislative Assembly, held during February 2013. The conduct of the elections was free, fair and peaceful despite the boycott call given by a banned militant outfit. People participated in full strength and with immense enthusiasm. This clearly reflects the commitment of our people towards democratic institutions and rejection of such anti-national forces.
5. The State Government is committed to bring the fruits of development to its people, particularly the weaker and less privileged sections. A peaceful and harmonious environment is a pre-requisite for the development of the State. The law and order situation in Meghalaya has been stable and well under control. Unfortunately, certain divisive elements, in some parts of the State, are indulging in criminal activities such as abduction, intimidation and killing of innocent citizens. The State Government is fully committed to deal with such undesirable elements with utmost firmness.
6. The situation in certain pockets in the disputed areas with Assam, especially in West Khasi Hills District and some areas of Jaintia Hills and Ri-Bhoi Districts has been a matter of concern. Efforts made at the political and administrative levels have helped in defusing and containing the situation. We have 696 kms long inter-State boundary with Assam. The areas of differences along the border require continuous monitoring. Efforts are on to

solve these disputes for which mechanisms at the level of Chief Ministers and Chief Secretaries of the two States have been created.

7. Situation on the International border with Bangladesh is peaceful. Close liaison with the Border Security Force (BSF) is maintained and the situation is continuously monitored. We are in regular contact with the Government of India for early completion of the fencing on the International border. The Meghalaya Police has also taken steps to check infiltration.
8. In spite of the severe resource constraints faced by the State, we have been able to achieve remarkable growth rate during the 11th Five Year Plan, which has helped in improving the living conditions of our people. This has been recognised and appreciated by the Planning Commission as well. The goal for the 12th Plan is to grow at the rate of 11% per annum. This requires higher levels of investments both in the public as well as private sectors. In recognition of this, the Planning Commission, has agreed to an outlay of Rs. 4,151 crores for the Annual Plan 2013-14. We need to utilise this fully and efficiently.
9. A large number of developmental schemes and programmes have been taken up by the State Government. These are under the State Plan, various national flagship programmes, centrally sponsored schemes and NEC funded so as to improve the lot of our people. Many new initiatives were launched in recent years as a part of this endeavour. These have all contributed to the growth of the Gross State Domestic Product.
10. The objective of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) is to enhance the livelihood security of the people by generating wage employment, while developing the infrastructure base of rural areas. Under MGNREGA, during 2012-13, Rs. 284 crore was spent and 156 lakh person days were generated in the State.
11. The total road length of the State as on 01-04-2013 is 9548 kms, out of which 6,423 kms is surfaced and 3,125 km un-surfaced. During 2012-13, 63 kms of new roads were constructed and 302 kms of kutch roads were blacktopped. Shillong Bye Pass covering almost 49 Kms at a cost of Rs. 266 crore has since been completed. Some major works in progress are four-laning of Jorabad-Umiam road and double laning of Shillong - Nongstoin and Nonstoin - Tura roads.
12. The Border Area Development Department has been implementing schemes under the Special Central Assistance and the Border Areas Development Programme (BADP), which is a 100% Central Government funded Scheme. A unique feature of these schemes is that the projects are implemented by the Local Committees formed by the concerned villages, with technical supervision by the Department. This provides employment opportunity to the local people and also ensures better quality and early completion of the projects.
13. The Soil & Water Conservation Department works towards preventing soil erosion and land degradation, conserving water and increasing crop and biomass productivity. During 2012-13, 292 check dams, retaining walls and water harvesting structures were constructed and 698 hectares of new coffee,

rubber, arecanut plantations were raised. NABARD loan of Rs. 12 crore was availed and utilised for schemes meant to enhance the productivity of agriculture and allied activities in small river valleys of the State covering an area of 2,645 hectares.

14. The Animal Husbandry & Veterinary Department aims to increase productivity in livestock as well as availability of meat and dairy products in the State. The Department is establishing vocational centres at Khlieh Tyrshi in the West Jaintia Hills District and Manai in the West Khasi Hills district, which are nearing completion. 8 (eight) new veterinary dispensaries and 1 (one) new cattle farm will be established to provide quality and hygienic meat, two slaughter houses at Jowai and Tura have recently been sanctioned.
15. The Information Technology Sector is working towards promotion of transparent, responsive, effective and accountable governance. The Government has initiated steps to make the State a favoured destination for IT business, industry, education and services, which will enable wealth creation, employment generation and economic growth.
16. Under the e-Governance programme undertaken by the Finance Department, on-line operations of treasuries were fully activated in all the existing 16 Treasuries including in the newly created Sub-Treasuries at Dadenggiri and Amlarem. This programme has improved Government payment system and public service delivery. Payments on account of salaries, pensions, on supplies made or services rendered or work done on behalf of the Government are directly credited to the bank account of the payees.
17. The Taxation Department makes substantial contribution to the State exchequer and the revenue collected by it during 2012-13 was Rs. 577 crore. With the introduction of e-services, the Department has been able to achieve transparency, easier mode of payment for tax payers and increased revenue collection. Tax-payers can now pay taxes on-line anytime anywhere from the comforts of their homes. In the near future, more e-services such as e-CST, e-Refund etc. will be taken up.
18. The Labour Department has taken up skill development programmes and modernization of employment exchanges as the thrust areas. During 2012-13, 4,355 persons were trained in various employable trades. For more effective enforcement of labour laws, 10 Labour Inspectors were appointed recently and another 39 Labour Inspectors are expected to be appointed during the current year.
19. Activities relating to sports and Youth affairs received due attention from the Government under the Intensive Sports and Youth Development Programme (ISYDP) and the Chief Minister's Youth Development Scheme (CMYDS). Two important sports events, namely the South Asian Federation Sub-Junior Table Tennis Championship and the North East Taekwondo Championship were hosted successfully at Shillong during 2012-13. Floodlights have been installed at the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium, Shillong. 292 sportspersons, who have excelled at the state, regional and national level competitions were felicitated during May, 2013. It was a proud moment for our State when Miss

Wansuk Myrthong of Meghalaya Police became the first woman from Meghalaya to climb Mount Everest on 18th May, 2013.

20. The State Govt. has taken up several important measures for welfare of ex-servicemen, widows and their dependants. A fund for the construction of Sainik Rest House-cum-Office at Shillong has been released. Pension of World War II Veterans has been increased while enhancement of veterans' pension is also under active consideration.
21. The State Government attaches a great deal of importance to the monitoring and evaluation of various schemes and projects being implemented by the development departments. This is done in order to ensure that the schemes are implemented more effectively and the fruits of development percolate down to the poorest of the poor whose lot the government seeks to improve.
22. As I conclude, I call upon the people of our State to join hands in our continuing efforts to maintain peace and harmony and to march ahead on the path of growth and development. I also urge upon the parents and guardians to find time to counsel and guide the children in moral, ethical and social values, to enable them to grow as worthy citizens of our society, our state and our country. May the blessings of Almighty be upon us all, and may He lead us on the right path so that we are able to see the 'Meghalaya of our dreams' in our lifetime!

Once again I wish all my fellow citizens a very "Happy Independence Day"!

Khublei !

Mithela!!

Jaihind!!!