

**TELEVISED SPEECH OF HON'BLE GOVERNOR OF MEGHALAYA
ON THE OCCASION OF INDEPENDENCE DAY, 2014.**

My dear fellow citizens,

1. On the occasion of the 67th anniversary of our Independence, I extend my heartiest greetings to the people of Meghalaya. This is a proud occasion for us. A time, 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 sons and daughters of India- Mahatma Gandhi, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Maulana Azad, Netaji Subhas Bose, Sardar Patel and several 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 honoring our freedom fighters, let us imbibe their spirit, by re-dedicating ourselves to the service of our State and our Nation.

2. 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.

3. The State Government is firm in its commitment to maintain peace and harmony in the State. The security situation in the districts of Garo Hills area remains a cause of concern, as militant outfits, continue to engage in criminal activities. The success rate of our security forces in the operations against the militants and the criminal gangs, has shown an improvement, during the last six months. Additional Central Armed Forces have since been deployed and besides that, the strength of the police personnel in Garo Hills has also been augmented.

4. Elections to the Khasi Hills and Jaintia Hills Autonomous District Councils were held peacefully in February, this year. Polls during the General Elections to the 16th Lok Sabha, were also conducted peacefully. These were possible only due to the effective maintenance of law and order by the administration. Awaiting the response from the Government of India, the elections to the Garo Hills District Councils have had to be deferred.

5. Separation of the judiciary from the executive has been effected in the district headquarters of East Khasi Hills, West Garo Hills, West Khasi Hills, East Garo Hills, West Jaintia Hills and Ri Bhoi Districts. Besides these, separation has also been effected in the Sub-Divisions- Amlarem, Sohra, Mairang and Dadenggre. The District Courts of West Khasi Hills and East Garo Hills became functional from June, 2014.

6. The outlay for the State, approved by the Planning Commission during the current 12th Plan period is Rs. 22,000 crores. The aim, during this plan period, is to put Meghalaya on a higher growth

trajectory, and improve the quality of life of its citizens. The State Government has budgeted a Plan size of Rs. 4545.00 crore during the current year. This represents an increase of about 9.50 percent over the Plan size of the previous year.

7. Activities undertaken under the Integrated Basin Development & Livelihood Promotion Programme (IBDLP), are at different stages of implementation. Enterprise Facilitation Centres (EFCs) have been set up at Block headquarters, for providing information to development partners, facilitating linkages with agencies involved in enterprise building, and providing support for growth of micro enterprises.

8. The Asian Development Bank has approved a project, namely, "Supporting Human Capital Development in Meghalaya", which is the first of its kind in the country. The implementation of this project has already begun. In view of the very high drop out rate persisting in our schools, this is an initiative taken by the State Government to improve the quality of education in the Secondary

and Higher Secondary Schools, training of untrained teachers and upgrading infrastructure of some of the Government-aided Schools. The project also aims to improve the employability of the youth of the State through skill development initiatives. A \$100 million loan has been signed between Government of India, the Asian Development Bank and the State Government, for this Project.

9. To provide quality and high level education to students, in the remote areas, Government has taken steps to set up residential schools, with infrastructure facilities, comparable to national standards. For this purpose, the State Government has identified 20 (twenty) educationally backward Blocks.

10. In the Animal Husbandry & Veterinary sector, Government is committed to create and upgrade 11 (eleven) new dispensaries during the current year. The Veterinary Hospital at Shillong has been strengthened with diagnostic facilities. In addition, a special scheme for import of quality germplasm, through an M.O.U signed between the State Government and the

Government of Alberta in Canada, is expected to increase the production and fulfill the demand.

11. For the economic and social development of rural areas in the State, under Indira Awas Yojana (IAY), 6,600 new houses were constructed last year. Under the Indira Gandhi National Old Age Pension Scheme (IGNOAPS), Rs. 1872 lakhs was utilized benefiting 48,000 pensioners. Under the Indira Gandhi National Widows Pension Scheme (IGNWPS), Rs.94 lakhs was utilized benefiting 6,800 widows. Under the Indira Gandhi National Disability Pension Scheme (IGNDPS), an amount of Rs.9.50 lakhs was utilized benefiting 1,400 persons. Under the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS) last year, Rs. 316 crore was utilized, and 120 lakh person days of employment was generated.

12. Government is committed to providing adequate safe drinking water, & sanitation facilities, to all the inhabitants of the State with more emphasis on schools, anganwadi centres and rural areas. Works for implementation of Greater Shillong Water Supply Project

(Phase - III) under JNNURM and Tura Phase I & II Water Supply Scheme, are under implementation. In view of the fact that about 40% of the households in the State do not have access to toilet facilities. The Total Sanitation Campaign (TSC) has been given extra impetus, and the programme has been renamed as Nirmal Bharat Abhiyan (NBA). This will have more thrust on awareness campaign, solid and liquid waste management in rural areas, besides covering all households, with sanitation facilities and construction of school & anganwadi toilets.

13. On the Commerce front, efforts have been made to emphasize, and provide more focus on development of infrastructure, for promotion and facilitation of exports. With the successful establishment of the Border Haats, at Kalaichar in West Garo Hills, and Balat in East Khasi Hills, the economic condition of the people living in those areas is expected to improve. The proposal for setting up more border haats, along the International border, is being vigorously pursued with the Government of India.

14. Government will continue to lay emphasis on the development of information technology to enhance employability of the youth. For the rural areas, the State has designed a Basic IT Training program under the Digital Literacy scheme. Under the scheme, 'Digital Learning Aid for Students', 219 meritorious students, were distributed with laptops. Important schemes slated for implementation during the current year, include the 2nd phase extension of Software Technology Park and the Cloud Enablement of the State Data Centre project.

15. Health and Family Welfare continues to play an important role in our pursuit of ensuring a healthier future for the people of the State. At present, there are 422 Sub Health Centres, 110 Public Health Centres, 28 Community Health Centres and 12 Hospitals in the State. A lot remains to be achieved to provide for the facilities in rural areas and send doctors to such areas. To mitigate the burden faced by the common man and to provide protection to households, from financial liabilities, arising out of hospitalization, the Megha Health Insurance Scheme (MHIS) is being continued to cater to the medical

needs of the citizens of the State. To deal with cancer cases in the State, the Government is constructing the Cancer Wing in Civil Hospital, Shillong. Our maternal mortality and infant mortality rates need to improve. For this an intensive awareness campaign, coupled with mobile medical teams particularly in rural areas, need to be launched. In this context, implementation of the Meghalaya Maternity Benefit Scheme, to reduce the overall Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR) and Infant Mortality Rate (IMR), is already being continued.

16. In order to provide proper guidance to aspiring youth, in the pursuit of their career, an amount of Rs 500 lakhs has been earmarked for the Chief Minister's Career Guidance and Counselling Scheme under Special Central Assistance (SCA). For proper sports infrastructure for the youth, an amount of Rs.160 lakhs has already been sanctioned, as 1st instalment.

17. Shillong is in the seismic zone. In order to facilitate orderly expansion of the capital city, the New Shillong Township is being

developed, and adequate attention is being given to develop necessary core infrastructure in the Township. At the same time building bye laws will have to be enforced vigorously.

18. In the Power Sector, the present unrestricted power demand in the State is 628 Mega Watts, while the existing power availability from the State's own generation and Central Sector Share of Power is only 524 MW. The gap is being met through additional central allocation at present. The development of a coal based Thermal Power Project, in the State, is very essential to tide over the power deficit and to achieve the much needed, ideal thermal-hydro mix. The State Government has signed an MOU with NEEPCO and other partners, for development of 1040 MW Coal based Thermal Power Plant in Garo Hills.

19. Efforts will continue to ensure better connectivity for the people of the State. The Government is in the process of implementing the Public transport System for Rural Connectivity. The construction of Dudhnoi- Mendipathar Railway line has been completed, and trial

runs have been successfully conducted this year. The line will be declared operational very soon. This is an important milestone in the history of the State, and is expected to be a boon for Garo Hills area.

20. The Government has promoted traditional cultural festivals such as Nongkrem, Wangala and Behdeinkhlam, and Monolith, alongwith tourism festivals in all districts, to enable them to showcase their unique ethnic customs, traditions and products. The Shillong International Centre for Performing Arts and Culture has since been sanctioned, work for which will commence later this year.

21. Independence Day should also be observed as a day to renew our pledge for strengthening various facets of national integration. At the same time we also have to reiterate our commitment to, good governance, which is an integral element for promotion of inclusive growth, and development. Governance decisions, as such, have to be in the overall interests of the people and have to be implemented in a fair and a transparent manner.

22. As I conclude, I call upon all the people of the State, to join hands in our continuing endeavour, to maintain peace and harmony, and to forge ahead, on the path of growth and development. May the blessings of the Almighty be upon us all, and may He lead us on the right path, so that we are able to march towards, a vibrant, prosperous and peaceful Meghalaya.

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

Khublei! Mithela !! Jai hind !!!