



Speech of

Dr. D. D. LAPANG
Chief Minister, Meghalaya

at the

52nd Meeting

of the

North Eastern Council

at

New Delhi

on

17th February, 2006.

***Respected Chairman, Hon'ble Governors,
Distinguished Chief Ministers, Nominated Members of the
N.E.C. and friends,***

It has been nearly eight months since we last met at Shillong and it gives me great pleasure to avail this opportunity attend and participate once again at this august Council Meeting of the N.E.C. Firstly, I would like to flag some of the very important issues which this august Council may decide on. These are -

I. NON-RELEASE OF 10% LOAN COMPONENT IN RESPECT OF N. E. C. SCHEMES/PROJECTS:

From the current year (2005-06) the North Eastern Council (on the decision of the Government of India) released 90% grant only as assistance for funding of NEC Schemes/Projects. For the 10% loan component which the NEC used to release to the States up to 2004-05, the NEC has shifted the burden to the States to raise the Loans. Since the member States of the NEC have a very narrow resource base and since their loan raising power is weak, they will not be in a position to fund the 10% Loan component of the NEC Schemes/Projects. This would lead to a situation in which the Schemes/Projects taken up under the NEC Regional Schemes/Programmes remain incomplete. Hence, to ensure smooth funding of NEC Schemes/Projects to ensure their 100% completion, it is suggested that the NEC pass a resolution urging upon the Govt. of India to continue funding of the NEC Schemes/Projects on 100% basis, i.e. inclusive of 90% grant and 10% Loan as practices from the beginning of the NEC till the year 2004-2005.

II. FUNDING OF EXTERNALLY AIDED PROJECTS IN MEMBER STATES OF THE N.E.C.:-

So far, the Ministry of Finance, Govt. of India has been releasing Central Assistance to the Member States of the NEC (being Special Category States) for funding of Externally Aided Projects (EAPs) on 90% grant and 10% Loan basis. However, during his budget speech 2005, the Hon'ble Minister, Finance, Govt. of India has mentioned that, henceforth, loans availed under EAPs would be devolved to the States on back-to-back basis. If this is effected, Special Category States of the NEC family would not be able to avail externally aided funds to finance their projects. This would lead to a situation in which, these States would be constrained on the path of development and the gap between economically advanced States and the N.E. Region would further widen. It is, therefore suggested, that, the NEC pass a resolution urging upon the Govt. of India not to deviate from the existing practice of funding EAPs in the member States of the NE Region on 90% grant and 10% Loan basis.

III. ENHANCEMENT OF MAINTENANCE FUNDS FOR ASSETS CREATED BY THE NEC:-

So far, the NEC has extended nominal support for maintenance of those Roads & Bridges which have been taken up and completed as NEC projects. For other infrastructures created by the NEC over the years (excluding Roads & Bridges), no maintenance funds have been extended. Since the value of created assets would fast depreciate due to poor maintenance caused by paucity of funds among the States and since this would lead to national loss, it is necessary to find put ways and means to provide sufficient funds for maintenance of those assets

created in different sectors over the years. It is, therefore, suggested that the NEC pass a resolution to the effect that 10% of the NEC funds released to the States be utilized for maintenance of all assets created over the years under the NEC programmes.

IV. AIR CONNECTIVITY OF STATE CAPITALS OF THE MEMBER STATES OF THE NEC:-

Even after three decades of regional planning by the NEC, we have not been able to provide a circuit of air connectivity between the State Capitals of the Member States of the NEC. Air link to Umroi airport, Shillong by Alliance Air is also not very satisfactory. It is suggested, that, the NEC pass a resolution to the effect that airport infrastructure and air connectivity be improved suitably in all the capitals of the Member States of the NEC on top priority basis. Efficient and reliable airline services may be introduced covering all the States capitals of NE States and Sikkim as quickly as possible.

V. OTHER IMPORTANT ISSUES:

(a). N.E.C's Annual Plan 2005-2006 & 2006-2007 : I Strongly support the Suggestions made under agenda item against Annual Plan 2005-06 and tentative Annual Plan 2006-07. I would like to point out that during the 51st Council Meeting held at Shillong I had strongly urged that the Centre should allocate Rs.1136.80 crores to the NEC during 2005-06. I once again reiterate that the Annual Plan size of NEC for 2005-06 should be raised to Rs.1136.80 crores in order to ensure that the North Eastern Council achieves its targeted objectives. As regards the Annual Plan 2006-07, I

support the tentative Budget of Rs.1337.00 crores with a suggestion that allocation under Agriculture and Allied Sectors be enhanced to a minimum of 7% of the total outlay, with emphasis being laid on horticulture. **Transport and Communication** is a vital sector for bringing about rapid economic development. As such, priority assigned to this sector from the very beginning of the NEC should be maintained. Other important sectors which, I feel need to be assigned high priority are –Power, Tourism and human resource development, programmes.

(b). Road & Bridges: The State Government has submitted DPRs' in respect of some vital Road Schemes. Some of the more important ones are:

- (i). Improvement including Metalling & Blacktopping of internal roads around Nongpoh connecting G.S. Road (N.H. 40).
- (ii). Improvement including strengthening of Mawmaram-Nongthliew-Mawmih-Mawmluh-Mawlyndep Road (Length – 33 Kms Portion 0 -17 Km Phase –I).
- (iii). Widening into intermediate lane including Metalling & Black topping of Ichamati-Bholaganj Road. (Length = 9.60 Kms).
- (iv). Strengthening of weak pavement including reconstruction of bridges on Bajengdoba-Resubelpara-Mendipathar Road.
- (v). Strengthening of weak pavement including raising of submerged portion and providing protective walls and drainage system on Songsak-Mendipathar road (4th -36th Kms).

- (vi). Improvement including strengthening of Mankachar–Mahendraganj Road.
- (vii). Strengthening of weak pavement including reconstruction of SPT bridges and re-sectioning of road-side drains on Rongrenggiri-Simsanggiri-Nengkra road.

The estimated cost of each of these schemes is below Rs.5.00 crores and if fund for these schemes are released within this financial year, these schemes can be completed within the Tenth Plan period itself. The North Eastern Council may kindly consider to sanction these schemes on priority basis.

(c). Power Sector: I also strongly urge upon the Council to consider sanctioning of the following schemes under Power sector for which DPRs' have been submitted: -

- (1) Control of Siltation & Pollution of Umiam Reservoir.
@ **2276.29** Lakhs.
- (2) 132 KV SC Transmission line from Agia (Assam) to Nangalbibra (Meghalaya). @ **2036.00** Lakhs.
- (3) Construction of 2nd Circuit 132 KV Single Circuit Transmission Line between Stage –III & Stage – IV Power House.(Length = 11.00 Kms.) @ **398.00** Lakhs.
- (4) LILO of 132 KV Stage-IV – Sarusajai Transmission Line at Umtru Power Station (UPS) @ **387.00**
- (5) Installation of Capacitor Bank at 33 KV Umtru Switchyard & 132 KV EPIP– I at Byrnihat @ **284.00**
- (6) Renovation & Modernisation of the Protection System of Power Stations and 132 KV Grid Sub-Stations of Me.S.E.B. @ **485.00**

Besides the above, Concept Papers in respect of 4 (four) schemes for Survey & Investigation of Hydel Projects have been submitted to the N. E.C. Secretariat for consideration and may kindly be considered by the Council:

- (1) Survey & Investigation of Umngot H.E. Project (150 MW).
@ **277.70** Lakhs.
- (2) Survey & Investigation of Myntdu Leshka (Stage-II) H.E.P (60MW). @ **268.37** Lakhs
- (3) Survey & Investigation of Umiam Umtru Stage -V H.E. Project (25MW). @ **208.57** Lakhs.
- (4) Survey & Investigation of New Umtrew H.E.P (2x20 MW)
@ **188.19**.

VI. 11TH FIVE YEAR PLAN: -

As regards Preparation of the 11th Five Year Plan, I agree with the suggestions made by the N. E. C. Secretariat under the item- **Strategy for Preparation of 11th Five Year Plan**, it is suggested that the NEC may factor in the Plan in synergy with the **Vision Document 2020**. It is also suggested that the system of scrutiny and selection of NEC schemes through a Working Group mechanism at NEC Secretariat level be introduced.

VII. INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY:

I support the suggestion given by the Council Secretariat regarding **Setting up of a Technical Institute** for training of local youths in various IT related branches of engineering like -

- (i) Electronic and Tele-communication (E &TC),

(ii) Information Technology (IT),

(iii) Computer Technology (CT).

This will help create windows of opportunity for employment.

VIII. MULTI-CROPPING FARMING AND DEMONSTRATION: A PROACTIVE PILOT PROJECT:

Meghalaya's economy is basically agrarian as it is rural based with Agriculture contributing about thirty per cent of the State GDP and about eighty per cent of the population are engaged in agriculture. The progress in the Agriculture sector has substantially improved with slow but steady changes from the old methods of technology and large scale shifting cultivation towards settled cultivation.

I agree with the points mentioned in this agenda paper that the Green Revolution had little impact in the Region which continues to import food and food products worth about Rs.2500 crores every year from outside the region. I fully support the model project as mentioned in the agenda note with a request that the NEC may consider taking up one such model project in Meghalaya.

IX. SETTING UP OF NORTH EASTERN TOURISM DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL (NETDC):

I fully endorsed the need for setting up of **North Eastern Tourism Development Council (NETDC)**. Meghalaya is one of the premier Tourist States of the North East, being endowed with rich natural beauty. Yet its potential needs to be exploited further. It has rich cultural heritage and is blessed with a

salubrious climate, which is naturally attractive for short sojourn for tourists from the plain areas. It has special attractions in its Shillong golf course and in the rainiest town of Cherrapunjee (Sohra). It also boasts of one of the most beautiful high altitude lake at Umiam and numerous caves some of which are yet to be explored. So far, many tourists have been coming to the State but in a disorganized manner and are not lured by any specified packages and products. A strategy needs to be adopted, where; even upper market tourists are offered tourist products. Tourism is an eco-friendly industry, capable of generating substantial employment opportunities to the people. **I agree that setting up of North Eastern Tourism Development Council will tap the potential of the tourism industry in this Region.**

I have dwelt upon some basic issues which have relevance to the all round and holistic development of the North Eastern Region and Meghalaya. I hope that the Council and the Central Ministries will pay due attention to the points and suggestions put forward. I also hope that the deliberations in the meeting would help us in arriving at decisions which would be in the long term interest of the Region, and which would ensure the North Eastern Region as a whole develops as an equal partner in the National scene.

JAI HIND