



ADDRESS

OF

Shri S.C. MARAK
CHIEF MINISTER, MEGHALAYA

AT THE 37th MEETING

OF

THE NORTH EASTERN COUNCIL

On 22nd January, 1994

AT SHILLONG.

Respected Chairman, Respected Home Minister, Finance Minister, Governors and Chief Ministers, Ministers and friends.

It gives me great pleasure to welcome the Union Home Minister, other Central Ministers, Governors and Chief Ministers of the North Eastern States and other distinguished Colleagues and officials to this meeting of the North Eastern Council. Our deliberations take place against a background of unusual turbulence and uncertainty in this part of the country. Virtually every state in this region faces serious threats to internal security and the inflow of arms and explosives from across our borders has aggravated the situation further. Arms smuggling and drug trafficking have assumed serious dimensions and the outbreak of AIDs is a new scourge. With the lengthening shadows of terrorism, violence and disruption, the prospects of economic development appear to be vulnerable and uncertain. The first task before us is to bring about a radical improvement in the security environment so that normal economic activity could be fully resumed and investor confidence restored.

2. Over the last two decades, the Council has financed investment to the extent of nearly Rs. 2000 crores. On the whole, these investments have been very productive. The Council's contribution to the expansion of the road network in the Region has been remarkable; its role in stepping up power generation and extending the transmission network has been equally significant. The Council has founded a number of regional institutions which have brought our young people together, imparted useful skills to them and strengthened the bonds of unity in the Region. The Council has a record of achievements and we want it to carry on with its good work in the years ahead.

In this context, it is felt that the proposal under Agenda item No. 13 for a Memorandum of Understanding between the N.E.C. and the constituent States for implementation of N.E.C. schemes is unsustainable as the concept of M.O.U. does not apply to Central Sector Schemes. As the N.E.C. schemes are supportive to the NE States' development efforts and include many small schemes/problems mentioned in the aforesaid agenda could be resolved by other administrative means. It is also not considered necessary for the council to adopt a Resolution regarding NERIST as proposed under Agenda

item No.9 as the matter must have been receiving due attention of the Union Home Ministry. However, as regards proposed amendments to the Provision regarding Quorum to constitute a meeting of the Council, I extend my support as this is a practical requirement.

3. The key to the future security and well-being of the Region lies in the tempo of investment in new plant and machinery, new technologies and in building skills, knowledge and expertise in human beings. I am afraid the tempo of public investment in the region is somewhat slackening and there are many disturbing signs we have to take note of. The NEC's resource allocations are mainly meant only for completing existing projects, especially in the power sector. While it is essential to complete on-going projects quickly, we must provide resources for new projects. Past investments in infrastructure development have opened up the whole region, integrating the economy of the region more closely with the national economy and promoting greater interdependence within the region itself. Full benefits of these investments can be derived only if we sustain the momentum already generated by pumping in more resources in the run up to the 21st century. To put it very briefly, the NEC needs resources of a much higher magnitude if it is to remain a serious player in the unfolding saga of regional co-operation and development.

4. We often hear about proposals for restructuring the NEC, redefining its role, improving the criteria for project selection and enhancing the effectiveness of project management. There is a case for reviewing existing mechanisms and strengthening the Council to play a truly dynamic role in the next decade and beyond. The shape of the Council will have to be determined in terms of the future functional role assigned to it and the scale of investible resources placed at its disposal. In any case, it must be clear to all of us that N E C should continue to perform a critical role in stimulating further growth in this region. NEC must also continue to contribute to the task of institution-building and development of human resources.

5. Hitherto, the N E C has been mainly devoting its energies and attention to roads and communications, power generation and transmission and a few regional centres for training etc. In the coming decades, the focus of its attention will have to shift to encompass some vital areas like environment, forestry, wild life, bio-diversity and other elements which have a direct bearing on the quality of life and the very sustainability of development itself. Like

