



Speech

of

Shri Rowell Lyngdoh

Hon'ble Deputy Chief Minister, Meghalaya

at the

**61st Meeting
of the**

North Eastern Council

at

Parliament House Annexe
New Delhi

On the 27th June, 2012

Hon'ble Union Minister, DONER & Chairman, N.E.C. Shri Paban Singh Ghatowar-Ji, Distinguished Members of the North Eastern Council, Officials from the Government of India, N.E.C., State Governments and Friends.

I bring greetings of the people of Meghalaya to you Sir, and to the House. It gives me great pleasure to represent the Chief Minister of Meghalaya in the 61st Plenary Session of the North Eastern Council and to convey his sincere regrets for his inability to be present in the meeting due to his pre-engagement out of the country. It is also a privilege for me to be able to participate in the deliberations of this august gathering.

At the outset, let me congratulate you, Sir, on assuming charge of the office of the Minister i/c DoNER. I am confident that under your able leadership, the North East as a region will be able to strive forward towards achieving faster balanced development of the region as per its mandate and to realize the goals that we have set for ourselves.

We are now at the beginning of the 12th Five Year Plan and the approach and strategy that we are going to adopt at this very critical juncture would decide the outcome as we march forward on the path of development. It is appreciated that the NEC had constituted the Working Groups under different sectors for the preparation of the 12th Five Year Plan (2012-17). The valuable inputs contributed by the members of the Sectoral Working Groups and the strategies adopted for the formulation of the 12th Five Year Plan have made it possible for the NEC to finalize the Sector-wise Allocation for the proposed Annual Plan 2012-13 and the proposed 12th Five Year Plan of the NEC. I am hopeful that the deliberations during the meeting would generate far reaching benefits to the people of the North Eastern Region.

Let me now place before the august house, the views of the State Government on the agenda points for today's meeting and other related issues concerning the State of Meghalaya for a meaningful discussion.

Draft 12th Five Year Plan 2012-17 & draft Annual Plan 2012-13 of the NEC

The Vision 2020 estimated that the North Eastern region has to grow at a rate of 11.78% in GSDP and 10.47% in per capita income, which are essential for the region to catch up with the rest of the country by the 13th Plan. This could only be achieved if adequate corresponding investment is made. The allocation for 2012-13 for NEC has, however, been fixed at ₹ 787 crore against the allocation of ₹ 770 crore during 2011-12 which amount to only about 2 percentage increase over the preceding year and in fact represents a decrease in real terms. The role of the NEC as a successful regional planner has to be backed by adequate resources to address issues that have inter State/regional ramifications. I am apprehensive that going by the present trend, the gap between the North East and the rest of the country will widen and we will never be able to catch up with the rest of the country. I therefore support the amount of ₹ 13027.38 crore for the 12th Plan and ₹ 1840.40 crore during 2012-13 proposed by the NEC.

10 % Gross Budgetary Support (GBS):

Let me, at this stage reiterate the views aired by the Chief Minister during the 60th plenary held at New Delhi that while substantial funds are reported to have been accumulated in the non lapsable pool, the allocations to the States from this pool, however, get regulated by the yearly budget ceilings fixed for DoNER by the Ministry of Finance. It is again suggested that the non-lapsable pool should be kept in a Revolving Fund to be operated by DoNER and the funds should be made available to the States based on their demand and capacity and not constrained by yearly budgetary ceilings. A portion of this should also be placed at the disposal of NEC for funding their activities. As per the existing arrangement, 10% of the GBS is supposed to be invested in the North-Eastern region and the shortfall, if any, is to go into the non-lapsable central pool of resources (NLCPR).

Look-East Policy

There are close historical and cultural ties between the people of the North East and those of the nations of South East Asia in terms of culture, language,

history, commerce and environment. These needs to be strengthened by ending the economic isolation of the region through opening of the border trade which will enable development of markets for primary commodities, industrial products and surplus agricultural produce and to facilitate cultural and tourism related interactions with its international neighbours.

There are altogether 10 (ten) Land Custom Stations in the Indo-Bangla border of Meghalaya out of which two of them, viz, Rynghku and Balat are at present non-functional.

We are yet to experience the positive outcome of the Look East policy of the Government of India. In so far as Meghalaya is concerned, 2 (two) border haats, Kalaichar in West Garo Hills and Balat in East Khasi Hills have been recently made operational. Opening up of more Border haats would have direct economic benefit to the people along both sides of the border. To facilitate the growth of foreign trade especially for indigenous products of the state more specifically horticulture produce, a Certification Agency is required to be set up in the Land Custom Stations in the State. It would be greatly appreciated if the NEC could play a pro-active role for facilitating this aspect.

Roads & bridges

There are 9 (nine) NEC ongoing projects sanctioned at an estimated cost of ₹ 476.52 Crores. NEC has upto March 2012 released fund amounting to ₹ 236.178 Crores. For completion of these projects, the requirement of fund (NEC Share) is ₹ 195.32 Crores as shown below:

The Working Group of NEC has recommended for consideration under 12th Five Year Plan (i) 11 (eleven) road schemes of total length of 382 Kms at a cost of ₹ 801.00 Crores (ii) Conversion of Timber bridges to permanent RCC bridges for ₹ 27.00 Crores & (iii) Survey & Investigation including DPR preparation for new schemes amounting to ₹ 1.95 Crores. These need to be taken up on priority and I would request the NEC to fast track these proposals.

National Highways: Construction of the four lane on the National Highway-40 including Umsning and Shilong by-pass is in progress and will be completed very soon as the process of land acquisition and alignment of the four lane is going on.

It is heartening to note the decision of the Union Ministry of Road Transport & Highways that 361 km. of the State Highways would be converted as National Highway during this year 2012-13. The National Highway of length 361 Km. in Meghalaya and 40 Km. in Assam, will start from Srirampur on NH-27 and passing through Dhubri connecting Phulbari, Tura, Rongram, Rongjeng and terminate at Nongstoin on NH-106, would be upgraded as National Highway. Up-gradation of the Dhubri-Phulbari National Highway is welcome as this road will connect the border with Bangladesh and therefore facilitate trans- border trade.

Maintenance of Roads:

The total road length constructed with assistance from the NEC till date is 946 Kms. The NEC funding for maintenance of roads since 2001 has been subsequently discontinued. Maintenance of valuable road assets created over the years is a continuous problem faced by the State Governments due to inadequacy of funds under Non-Plan. Without proper maintenance, the assets created would lose their economic value. I therefore suggest that the NEC should consider earmarking a certain percentage of its funds for maintenance of these roads.

Framing of DPR for NEC Funded projects

Only 2% Contingency Charges were considered in the DPR by NEC for all the schemes sanctioned during the 11th Plan. It is requested that usual Charges @ 3% Contingency. 1.5% Work charge, 1% Quality Control and 6.5% Agency be allowed in the DPR.

Inter-State Bus Terminus (ISBT) and Inter-State Truck terminus (ISTT)

In the proposed NEC budget An allocation of ₹ 15 crores only has been made during 2012-13 for all NE States. Meghalaya has identified land for bus

terminus and has funds to acquire them in 2011-12. Therefore it is expected that the land for ISBT will be handed over to the constructing agency in 2012-13. According to the DPR, expenditure to the tune of ₹ 1500 lakhs and ₹ 500 lakhs will be incurred in 1st year for the construction of ISBT and ISTT. Therefore the requirement for ISBT for Meghalaya alone will be ₹ 20.00 crore during 2012-13 from the budget of NEC.

In view of the above requirement, combined with other North East State's requirement, the proposed allocation for ISBT / ISTT needs to be enhanced.

Rail Connectivity:

(i) Tetelia – Byrnihat (21.5 Kms.): The anticipated cost of the project is ₹ 384.00 crore. Time frame of completion is March, 2014. The alignment of 19.2 Kms. falls in Assam and 2.3 Kms. in Meghalaya. The process of Land Acquisition has been taken up by the Government of Assam and Meghalaya respectively.

(ii) Dudhnoi – Mendipathar (19.75 Kms.): This is an alternative route proposed by the Government of Meghalaya in the year 1995. Final location survey has been completed and detailed estimate of ₹ 86.22 crore sanctioned by Railway Board in May '08. The process of Land Acquisition is not completed yet. However, advance possession of the entire land has been taken invoking Emergency Provision under section 17 of L.A. Act (Special Power in cases of urgency and public purpose) following payment of 80% of the total estimated amount of land compensation to the land owners. The land in question has also been handed over to the North Frontier Railway for construction of the track and railway head etc. The remaining 20% of land compensation shall be paid after Draft Award under section 11 of L.A. Act.

(iii) Byrnihat- Shillong (108 Kms.): The survey for this project was sanctioned in 2007-08. This National project with an estimated cost of ₹ 4,083.02 crore was included in the Railway Budget 2010-11. Time frame for completion is March, 2018. Fund allotment for this project for the year 2011-2012 is ₹ 40.00 crore. Problem

regarding further survey work has run into certain roadblock which is expected to be resolved soon.

(iv) Panchratna-Badarpur (437.00 Kms.): This project with an estimated cost of ₹ 15,894.00 crore is yet to be sanctioned. Project report has been submitted to Railway Board. Reconnaissance Engineering- cum-Traffic Survey of new BG Line from Panchratna (Jogighopa) to Badarpur (Silchar) has been completed and report submitted to Railway Board on October, 2010. Tender is being finalized for carrying out the Reconnaissance Engineering-Cum-Traffic Survey of new BG rail connectivity to Jaintia Hills, Jowai to Lakro, Sutnga – Pala, Umkyung – Lanka and Shillong – Chandranathpur this year.

Air Connectivity:

Umroi Airport: The length of the runway of this Airport is 6000 feet. The Government has acquired 258 acres of land with the assistance from the central Government which was handed over to the Airport Authority of India to expand the runway to 7500 feet for facilitating landing of bigger aircraft.

LA for additional land has been completed and the land has been handed over to AAI on the 26th November, 2010.

At present, there is one ATR -42 flight being operated by the AAI on daily basis except on Friday. This flight operates from Kolkata to Umroi Airport . A new Terminal building has been constructed by AAI to cater to the needs of the passengers.

Baljek Airport: Located in Jengjal, West Garo Hills District, this Airport with 3300 ft. runway capable for landing of 20 seater class of Dornier aircrafts was completed during 2008 and inaugurated by HE the President of India on 23rd October 2008. The Airport has, however, remained non-functional even after completion due to the fact that the Airport was conceived as a STOL (Short Taking Off and Landing) Airport with a runway of around 1120 meters which is capable of handling small Aircrafts (20 seater) which are no longer in operation.

In order to accommodate 50 seater ATR aircraft, an additional 4700 ft. in the runway is required to be extended and the State Govt. has sanctioned ₹ 301.80 lakhs for this purpose. Further, the State Government will enter into an MoU with AAI for maintenance of Baljek Airport which is ₹ 3.5 crore annually NEC is requested to include the upgradation of Baljek Airport including its maintenance as one of the projects under the Scheme of the NEC for improvement / upgradation of Airports in the North Eastern Region. It is envisaged that a minimum of ₹ 51.80 crore would be required for the upgradation works during 2012-13 against the estimated cost of ₹ 111.23 crore.

The NEC may pass a resolution to the effect that air connectivity be improved suitably in all the member States of the NEC on top priority basis to facilitate efficient intra-regional as well as inter-regional and international communication. All the commercial lines should be mandated to run at least one service each connecting the State capitals of the region to the national capital.

Inland Waterways:

Meghalaya shares an international boundary of 443 Km. with Bangladesh in the South and West and export items like coal, limestone and boulders and some fruits are going by water transport. Meghalaya and Bangladesh need to be connected for the promotion of trade which is due to the complementary relation between the resource base of Meghalaya and the demand structure of Bangladesh. Therefore, improvement of the transportation network such as road and waterways in the border areas for trade and commerce is imperative in view of the Look East Policy.

It is well known fact that the Inland Water Transport is a cost effective mode of transport and is also environment friendly. Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI) & Ministry of DoNER jointly proposed to promote IWT in the potential waterways in the North Eastern States under **NER Vision 2020**. RITES Ltd. which was assigned the job for identification of Inland Water Transport Projects has made a feasibility study in April, 2011 and has identified viz. Simsang, Jinjiram, Jadukota (Kynshi) rivers of Meghalaya as having the potential to be developed for navigable

purposes. These rivers are very important for the economy of the people as many agriculture and horticulture products including the coal and limestone are transported through small boats to reach the market.

Power:

The total availability of power in Meghalaya is 482.44 MW including 210 MW share from the central utilities. Due to transmission constraint, the power that can be drawn presently is 90-110 MW during peak hours and 140-160 MW during off-peak hours out of the total power available. The State needs transmission lines of 220 KV and 400 KV levels to enable drawal of the available allocated power from the grid which is expected to be of the order 900-1010 MW by the end of the XII Plan period.

NEC have sanctioned a total of 20 projects in respect of the State of Meghalaya during the XI Period of which 4 power projects amounting to ₹ 5821.65 lakhs were completed and the remaining 16 (sixteen) ongoing Power projects are yet to be completed.

To meet the unrestricted power demand and the required strengthening of the existing transmission network, certain transmission schemes have been proposed. NEC is requested to consider funding of these during the 12th Plan. It will be a great help if NEC could also support a feasibility study to enable mapping of power generation potential for the benefit of small and isolated villages in the region.

Integrated Basin Development and Livelihood Promotion Programme:

Inclusive growth with a focus on poverty reduction, employment generation and livelihood provision is highlighted by the Planning Commission, Government of India in the Approach Paper for the 12th Plan. In line with that perspective, the Government of Meghalaya has launched a new flagship programme titled “Integrated Basin Development & livelihood promotion Programme” (IBDLP). The mission of the Programme is ***“to promote optimal and effective development and utilization of basin resources for ensuring livelihood security and inclusive growth within a sustainable framework.”***

A significant feature of this Programme is specific mission mode interventions in Horticulture, Forest and Plantation crops, Aquaculture, Livestock, Sericulture & Weaving, Apiculture, Energy, Water, Tourism, Skills, and Knowledge Management. The core objective of each of these missions is to facilitate the promotion of sustainable livelihoods for the people of the state leveraging on the opportunities and strengths of the State's natural resources. The Programme seeks to provide an enabling framework for uplifting the socio-economic conditions of the people by capacity building and strong entrepreneurship of the individuals as also the communities, eventually to empower the people to make appropriate choices and decisions within a rational and sustainable framework. Another important objective of the Programme is to promote women's empowerment through financial inclusion. Under the Programme and Missions stated above, the impact of Climate Change and the urgent need for effective coping, mitigation and adaptation strategies also will be addressed.

The Meghalaya Institute of Governance, the Meghalaya Institute of Entrepreneurship and the Meghalaya Institute of Natural Resources have been set up under the ambit of this Programme with the aim of promoting governance, entrepreneurship skills while ensuring sustainable natural resource management.

Future role of the NEC

The NEC was set up against a specific backdrop. However, over the years, its role in regional planning and as a source of well executed research and domain specific expertise has been overshadowed by discussions on financial allocations and projects. Ever since the Ministry of DoNER was set up initially as a Department and later as a Ministry, this debate has gained further traction. We in the States deeply value cutting edge research and new ideas based on empirical findings. Unfortunately, not much has been forthcoming in this over the last few years. I would therefore suggest that in addition to sanctioning projects for execution by State Governments, the NEC must emerge as a thought leader for the North East region by engaging with experts as well as research and academic institutions.

Importantly, it must also facilitate informed discussion and debate across the States and the people of the region. No single State has all the solutions, even if it has all the money. We in the North East are linked very closely to our neighbouring States and indeed our neighbouring countries. Our planning must take this into account and the NEC is uniquely placed to nurture the process.

I hope that the deliberations and decisions of this august House would be fruitful for the benefit of the people of the North East. In conclusion, I would like to thank you once again for having given me the opportunity to place our views before this august gathering.

THANK YOU

JAI HIND