

February 17, 2004

Press Release No. 127/04

### RENAMING OF ROADS, VILLAGES, ETC

**Shillong February 17, 2004:** As per the direction of the Government of Meghalaya, the following roads/villages/buildings will now be renamed as follows; the "*State Central Library Building*" will now be called the "*U Soso Tham Building*"; the "*Museum Building*" as the "*Williamson Sangma Museum Building*", the "*Mavis Dunn Road*" as "*Mavis Dunn Mawlong Road*" and Sonapahar village as *Mawshynrut*.

Furthermore, *Dangar* village which is under the Mawsynram Block of East Khasi Hills will now be considered as a separate entity from Balat which is under Ranikor block of West Khasi Hills District. The road from *Khyndai Lad, Magnum Hotel to the English Service Church* has been renamed as *Radhon Sing Lyngdoh Road*. The "*Lumpyngad Bungalow*", which is the official residence of the Meghalaya Chief Minister will now be called "*Sherwood Bungalow*".

Lastly the 10 HFG Flats at Vellore will be called "*Meghalaya House Vellore*" (*Spring of Hope*)

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### PULSE POLIO IMMUNIZATION

**Shillong, February 17, 2004:** The District Health Medical Officer, Ri Bhoi District, Nongpoh has informed that the Pulse Polio Immunization campaign for the Oral Polio Vaccine (OPV) will be organised in the District on February 23 – 25, 2004. In this connection, social organisations, headmen, social workers and parents are requested to cooperate with the health workers by bringing their children below the age of five years to the nearest CHCs/PHCs/Schools/ AWW Cnetre etc where OPV will be administered.

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### FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT, 2002

**Shillong, February 17, 2004:** On January 6, 2003, the Freedom of Information Act, 2002, received the assent of the President of India. The Act aims at providing freedom to every citizen to secure access to information under the control of public authorities, consistent with public interest, in order to promote openness, transparency and accountability in administration and in relation to matters connected therewith or incidental thereto. It defines "appropriate Government" as meaning, in relation to a "Public Authority" established, constituted or owned or substantially financed by funds provided directly or indirectly or controlled.

- i. By the Central Government, the Central Government;
- ii. By the State Government, the State Government;
- iii. By the Union Territory, the Central Government.

This Act shall apply to "Public Authorities" which means any authority or Body established or constituted by or under the Constitution; by any law made by the appropriate Government or, any other body owned, controlled or substantially financed directly or indirectly by the appropriate

Government.

The ambit covers the two Houses of Parliament, State Legislatures, the Supreme Court/High Courts/Subordinate Courts including their administrative offices, Constitutional Authorities like Election Commission, Comptroller & Auditor General, Union Public Service Commission etc. Only domestic and foreign private bodies working within the country have been excluded from the purview of the Act.

It casts an obligation on Public Authorities to grant access to information and to public certain categories of information, it also casts an obligation on the concerned officers to disclose reasons for decisions to those affected and to disclose the relevant facts analysis when major policies or decisions are announced.

The Act, lays down the machinery for the grant of access of information. The Public Authorities are required to appoint Public Information Officers, whose responsibility is to deal with requests for information and also to assist persons seeking information.

A time limit of 30 days has been prescribed for compliance with requests for information under the Act, which, can be extended to 60 days where third-party interests are involved.

Where the information sought form under the Act, relates to life and liberty of a person, the same should be provided within 48 hours.

Certain categories of information have been exempted from disclosure, There are 7 such categories mentioned in Section 8 of the Act, which are specific, and, 4 such categories are mentioned in Section 9 of the Act, which are general. The specific categories, by way, of illustration, include, information likely to affect security of the State, detection and investigation of offences, public order, conduct of international relations, Centre- State relations and, strategic scientific or economic interests of India. Cabinet, papers, records of the deliberative process, including legal advice, noting made on file etc, trade or commercial secrets, are also exempted form disclosure. The general categories include information that is too great in nature, which is likely to be disclosed within the next 30 days on its own, or which is available in published material, and, which could cause unwarranted invasion of the privacy of any person.

The Act also contains a provision for reveal of information, which is otherwise exempted from disclosure under Section 8 on completion of 25 year after the completion of the event. This is subject to the safeguards referred to in Section 8 (1) (a) of the Act.

The Act also incorporates the principle of severability.

The Act also provides a two tier Appellate Forum of a purely departmental nature to be determined by the government or competent authority as the case may be, for different levels involved.

On a request for information being refused, the applicant can prefer an appeal to he prescribed authority within 30 days of the decision; the time limit for disposal of appeal also 30 days.

Section 15 of the Act has barred the jurisdiction of subordinate courts expressly.

The provisions of the Act have been made over riding in character, so that the scheme is not subverted through the operation of other Acts/ instruments.

Certain Public Authorities, which are specified in the Schedule to the Act, have been exempted from

being covered within the ambit of the Act

Fees can be prescribed for grant of access to information.

The rules made under the Act, by the Central Government/State Government, are to be laid before the Parliament/ State Legislature.

**Press Release No.130/04**

#### **KHADC OATH TAKING CEREMONY**

**Shillong, February 17, 2004:** The Governor of Meghalaya has summoned the First Session of the Khasi Hills District Council to meet in the District Council Hall Shillong at 1100 hours on Wednesday the 18<sup>th</sup> February, 2004 for subscribing of oath or affirmation by the newly elected members of the Khasi Hills Autonomous District Council and to further fix 1100 hours on Friday the 20<sup>th</sup> February, 2004 as the date and time for the election of the Chairman of the said Council at the same place.

The Deputy Commissioner, East Khasi Hills District, Shillong shall administer the Oath of affirmation to the newly elected members of the Khasi Hills Autonomous District Council and preside over the meeting of the District Council to conduct the election of the Chairman.

**Press Release No.131/04**

#### **CM LAID FOUNDATION STONE OF NEIMA CHILDREN'S HOME AT SAHSNIANG**

**Shillong, February 17, 2004:** Meghalaya Chief Minister, Dr. D D Lapang today laid the foundation stone of the North East India Mission Association (NEIMA) Children's Home at Sahnsniang village, Jaintia Hills District, in the presence of the Meghalaya Minister for Agriculture, Mr K. Susngi, Social welfare Minister, Mr J A Lyngdoh and the Minister of State for Health, Mr Nehlang Lyngdoh. The meeting was presided over by the Minister for Higher and Technical Education, Mr M. Suchiang, who is also the local MLA of the area.

Speaking on the occasion, Dr Lapang lauded the NEIMA for their endeavour to provide hope and succour to the orphans and the hopeless by setting up the Children's Home in the village. He said that NEIMA being an agency of the church, which was started on May 22, 2002 with its headquarter at Shillong, has cited a very good example of 'Christianity in Action', by serving God beyond the four walls of the church. He observed that a genuine and credible organisation like NEIMA deserves full support from all quarters and he assured Government assistance to the Association in its mission.