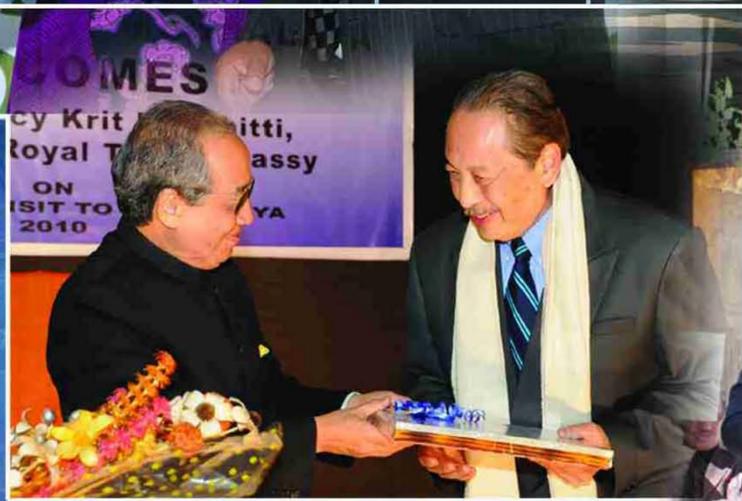
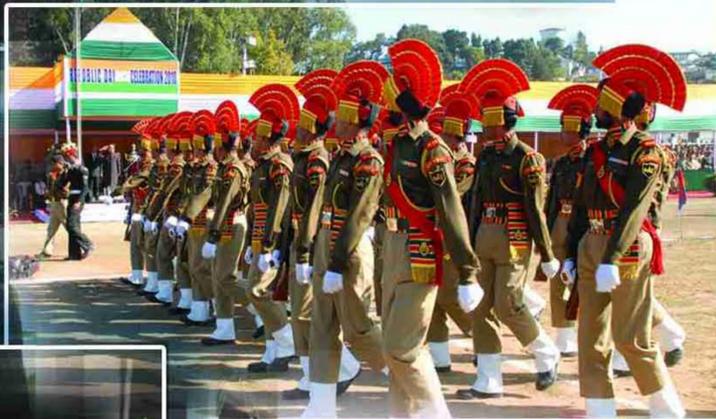




the MEGHALAYACHRONICLE

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UPA Chairperson dedicates NEIGRIHMS to the Nation

United Progressive Alliance (UPA) Chairperson, Sonia Gandhi dedicated the North Eastern Indira Gandhi Regional Institute of Health and Medical Sciences (NEIGRIHMS), at Mawdiangdiang, Shillong on March 5, 2010. She was accompanied by the Union Minister for Health and Family Welfare and President of the Governing Body of NEIGRIHMS,

interim facility and later built a sprawling campus on the outskirts of Shillong at a cost of Rs.423 crore. The hospital has a 30-bed Intensive Care Unit and 35 specialty and super specialty departments and when fully functional it will have 68 Senior Resident doctors, 70 Junior Resident doctors and 39 faculty members.

Addressing the gathering at the NEIGRIHMS



Shri. Ghulam Nabi Azad, Meghalaya Chief Minister Dr. D D Lapang, Shri Vincent Pala Union Minister of State for Water Resources, officials of NEIGRIHMS besides senior state government officials.

This 500-bedded super specialty hospital has been designed on the lines of the premier All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), New Delhi, and Postgraduate Institute of Medical Education and Research (PGIMER), Chandigarh. The Institute is the first of its kind in the northeast that will provide the best of health facilities in the region.

Conceived by Rajiv Gandhi 23 years ago, the Institute has been functioning since 2002 first as an

auditorium, Smti. Gandhi said that with the dedication of NEIGRIHMS, the dream of former Prime Minister late Rajiv Gandhi to provide the people of Northeast with access to affordable medical care is being realized. Pointing out the lack of some facilities and other related facilities in the Institute, Smti. Gandhi assured that the Central Government will actively look into the problems and will strive to render all necessary support to ensure that the Institute could achieve the purpose for which it was set up. Stating that the priority of the UPA Government is to provide the best public health care facility to the people, Smti. Gandhi informed that the UPA Government had launched its flagship programme, the National Rural Health Mission to

upgrade and expand healthcare facilities and added that soon a similar programme will also be launched for the urban masses.

Reminding that diseases like Tuberculosis, Malaria, HIV/AIDS, Cancer are public health challenges, the existence of Institutes like NEIGRI-HMS with its research facilities will go a long way in providing right and curative treatment to such patients besides providing correct information, education and communication to the people on how to take care of themselves, said Smti. Gandhi.

Earlier the Union Minister for Health and Family Welfare, Shri. Ghulam Nabi Azad informed that NEIGHRIMS was established at the cost of Rs. 422 crores and when fully functional the Institute will have 35 specialities and super specialities departments. With the aim of improving the health care system throughout the country, Shri. Azad said that more medical colleges will be established in the North East and the country as a whole and said that special concessions have been put in place for the North Eastern region so as to attract private investors to set medical colleges here. He further added that a few dozen nursing schools will be es-

tablished in the next two years and Meghalaya has been identified as one of the states where such nursing schools will be set up. He further informed that Rs. 67.05 crores has been earmarked for the establishment of a herbal institute under the Department of Ayurveda, Yoga and Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homoeopathy (AYUSH) within the premises of NEIGHRIMS.

The Chief Minister of Meghalaya, Dr D.D.Lapang, in his brief address, drew attention to the shortcomings of the Institute such as the non-filling up of sanctioned posts of specialized medical personnel and the need for the establishment of a Cancer wing in the NEIGHRIMS.

Later in the day, Smti. Gandhi formally inaugurated the Don Bosco Centre for Indigenous Cultures (DBCIC) at Mawlai, Shillong. It is worth mentioning that the DBCIC is the largest in Asia to showcase the indigenous cultures and heritage.

Lauding the Salesian Brothers of the Catholic Church for their dedicated service in the field of education and other social services, she expressed hope that the museum will emerge as one of the academic centres in the North East Region which will act as a channel in strengthening the bond of brotherhood of the North East people.

CM ATTENDS NE BUSINESS SUMMIT

Meghalaya Chief Minister, Dr D D Lapang attended the 2-day 5th North East Business Summit scheduled for the 8th and 9th January 2010 at Kolkata in which the Union Minister of Food Processing, Mr Subodh Kant Sahai was the Chief Guest. The summit was organized by the Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region and the Indian Chamber of Commerce. DONER Minister, Mr B K Handique, Assam Chief Minister, Mr Tarun Gogoi and President of the ICC, Mr V Saran were also present among other dignitaries from Thailand, Bangladesh, Myanmar and China.

In his speech, Dr. Lapang said that from its inception, Meghalaya had a vision to become self-sustained and aspired to come at par with the other progressive States of the country, adding that the focus was on development and enhancing economic upliftment for the betterment and progress of all the inhabitants of the State. He further stated that the State has shown significant achievement in the field of horticulture, tourism, industrial development, education, IT etc. and this has been possible because of the investment friendly policies of the State and overall support of the Govern-

ment of India.

With regards to investment scope, Dr. Lapang informed that Meghalaya has enormous potential in infrastructural development, sufficient Agro-Horticulture produces, large reserve of Mineral resources, very conducive for IT and IT related services, in social infrastructure like nursing home, educational institution, pharmaceutical products (herbal) which are already wooing investors to invest in the State.

Dr. Lapang also asserted that the people of the North East are grateful to the Central Government for the constant support with the Vision Document Twenty-20 and NEIIP Policy, adding that the North Eastern States and the business houses are eagerly waiting for the Vision Document and NEIIP to be implemented in the region in earnest spirit so that the region can attract more investors by translating those into a reality.

It may also be mentioned that Dr Lapang also met the Ambassador of Royal Kingdom of Thailand, Mr Krit Krai Chitti where in the Ambassador said that the Business delegation from Thailand showed keen interest in investing in the North East particularly in Meghalaya.

CM VISITS BANGLADESH

“The recent visit of Her Excellency Sheikh Hasina Wajed, Prime Minister of Bangladesh to India is a landmark in the history of the relationship between India and Bangladesh. The two countries reached several areas of understanding which would result in wide ranging consequences both economic and political. Visionaries like our Prime Minister, Dr Manmohan Singh and Sheikh Hasina Wajed reaffirmed the shared historical bondage, traditional linkages, socio economic inter-dependence between the two countries which envisages opening the doors to a new phase in our bilateral relations. With the new spirit and encouragement received from this engagement, I am standing here on the soil of Bangladesh to pick up the threads and explore the possibility of restructuring the historical bondage for progress and economic development of the people on both sides of the border,” said the Meghalaya Chief Minister, Dr D D Lapang during his speech at the inaugural session of the India Trade Fair 2010, North East India Bangladesh Trade & Investment Summit held at Sheraton Hotel, Dhaka, Bangladesh today. The Trade Fair was inaugurated by the Bangladesh Finance Minister, Mr Abul Maal A Muhith.

During his speech, Dr Lapang said that trade and commerce across the border has been continuing since time immemorial and the barter system was in practice even during the 18th century. The system in various forms continued till 1971 but stopped abruptly in 1974. He informed that Meghalaya is sharing border ‘haats’ with Bangladesh which are located in Khasi Hills and Garo Hills, at Dawki, Borsora, Mahendraganj and Gasuapara. He underlined that the residents in the border areas are calling for re-opening of the border haats as it would improve the socio-economic

conditions of the people of the areas. Dr Lapang also informed that the Meghalaya Government has been pursuing with the Government of India for reopening of the border haats, which at present is awaiting final clearance by the Government of Bangladesh.

Dr Lapang said that in the year 2009 alone, goods worth Rs.1840 million were exported alone from Meghalaya to Bangladesh. The items included citrus fruits, spices, boulders, coal and limestone. He said that a step forward towards development of trade and commerce between the two countries shall open doors to wider horizons of sharing, caring, understanding and strengthening the might of the people of the two countries for a progressive future and better human existence.

In the course of his speech, Dr Lapang highlighted the main potentials of Meghalaya in Tourism, Mineral based Industries, Health care, Information Technology including Education and Horticulture.

It may be mentioned that the 3-day India Trade Fair 2010, Dhaka, from February 25th – 27th is a joint India-Bangladesh Trade Show & Bangladesh –Northeast India Trade and Investment Conclave organized by the India – Bangladesh Chamber of Commerce & Industry (IBCCI), supported by the High Commission of India, Dhaka, partnered with the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) and the Indian Chamber of Commerce (ICC) as the coordinator for North East India.

Deputy Chief Ministers, Dr Mukul Sangma and Mr Bindo Lanong also took part in the Trade and Investment Opportunities discussion sessions, where they highlighted the investment potentials of Meghalaya in different sectors.



MEIRA KUMAR INAUGURATES 12th NERCPA CONFERENCE

In a grand reception held at the Meghalaya Legislative Assembly, Arts and Culture Building, Rilbong, Shillong on January 29, 2010, the Speaker of the Lok Sabha, Smti. Meira Kumar inaugurated the 12th Annual Conference of the North East Region Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (NERCPA). In attendance was the Union Minister of State for Water Resources, Shri. Vincent Pala, the Deputy Chairman of the Rajya Sabha, Shri. K Rahman Khan, Meghalaya Chief Minister, Dr. D D Lapang, Speakers and Deputy Speakers of the North Eastern States and other officials.

This year's conclave saw the meeting of minds to deliberate upon "the impact of insurgency activities in the North East India on Socio-Economic Development and its solution thereof".

The NERCPA, which was established in the year 1996, is the only unique and broad based forum for parliamentarians and legislators of the North East States. Over the years, it has evolved into a vibrant and effective forum for not only advancing the interest of the region, but also for developing the parliamentary fraternity and raise concerted voice on the issues of common interest of the region. The NERCPA has also inspired the MPs of the North East Region to come together on a common platform irrespective of party affiliation to form the North East Forum of MPs.

Delivering the inaugural address, Smti. Meira Kumar drew focus to the problems plaguing the North Eastern Region which continues to impede its development. Stating that despite the existence of rich natural resources and enormous potential for growth, it is a stark reality that the North East is grappling with multifarious problems of underdevelopment, unemployment, backwardness and insurgency. Adding that the per capita gross State domestic product of the region is less than the rest of the country she said that the region's share of road and rail networks as well as energy consumption is also below the national average. While literacy rate is higher than the national average, this has not transformed into a high rate of

employment due to lack of economic development and industrial activities in the region.

The Central Government has been committing large amount of resources by way of special economic and developmental packages for the region. However, as per the Report on the Demand for Grants for the Ministry of Development of the North East Region for the year 2008-09, as many as 233 projects are lagging behind the schedule due to the delays in the utilization of funds and limited working seasons. Therefore, Smti. Meira Kumar called for greater commitment to pursue such projects for the region within a stricter time-frame

Affirming that it is the responsibility of the States in the region as well as the nation as a whole to address these developmental challenges, she reiterated the need for a peaceful atmosphere where security of life and property can be guaranteed to the people creating an environment that is conducive to investment.

Smti. Meira Kumar further stated that initiatives are needed to bring back those influenced by the culture of violence, into the mainstream of society. As violence and democracy cannot co-exist, movements which are instrumental in depriving ordinary citizens of their fundamental right to life and liberty and undermining development cannot claim any place in a democratic society, she added. The need of the hour, she felt, was for people to actively participate in the decision-making process to bring about durable peace and prosperity to the region.

Speaking as the Guest of Honour, Dr. D D Lapang said that insurgency has its roots in socio-economic and political environment of the region. It is reinforced by a strong desire to safe guard local identities and the perceived neglect of the North Eastern Region. It is impossible to either start or abolish any such movement without winning the hearts and minds of the people, he added. For a resolution to this imbroglio, the insurgent groups need to have a real desire to solve the problems and the Government has to create an atmosphere of confidence whereby there can be a serious meeting of minds, Dr. Lapang said.





Shri Tanka Bahadur Rai, Speaker, Assam Legislative Assembly and Chairman, NERCPA, in his keynote address, delved at length on the aims and objectives of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) and NERCPA. Informing that the NERCPA is a branch of the CPA, Mr. Rai said that the CPA has emerged as a custodian of parliamentary democracy, making remarkable contributions towards democratic consolidation through its member-parliaments. Its endeavours for promoting the spirit of mutual cooperation and understanding among member-countries, for setting benchmarks for good governance and for building peace and bridges of understanding among people and parliamentarians of the Com-

monwealth have been commendable. Mr. Rai also said that in its turn, the NERCPA has contributed greatly in furthering the aims and objectives of the Association by bringing together the members of the region in regular conferences and meetings. Such deliberations, no doubt, will help the people of the region in fostering democratic values and mutual understanding so very essential for addressing issues of common interest.

The inaugural function was presided by the Speaker of the Meghalaya Legislative Assembly and newly elected Chairman of the NERCPA, Shri. Charles Pyngrope.

The business session of the Conference saw the sharing of thoughts on the impact of insurgency led by Shri. Kiyanielie Peseyle, Speaker of the Nagaland Legislative Assembly.

Others who spoke included Shri. K Rahman Khan, Deputy Chairman of the Rajya Sabha and Shri. H A Halim, Speaker, West Bengal Legislative Assembly.

EMRI 1st ANNIVERSARY

The Emergency Management and Research Institute (EMRI), 108 celebrated its 1st anniversary at a function organized at U Soso Tham Auditorium, Shillong where the Meghalaya Deputy Chief Minister, Dr. Mukul Sangma graced the occasion as the chief guest in the presence of Commissioner & Secretary to the Government of Meghalaya, Health and Family Welfare, Mr. D P Wahlang, Chief Executive Officer, EMRI, Mr. Venkat Changavalli and Chief Operating Officer, EMRI, Mr. A Tyagi.

Speaking on the occasion, Dr. Sangma lauded the invaluable support rendered by the EMRI for the benefit of the people of the State, adding that the emergency service to the people is very systematic and appropriate. He further said that the demand for further expansion of the service to the people is on the increase. With the introduction of the service, the EMRI has been able to save valuable lives in the State, said Dr. Sangma, adding that till date 1600 lives have been saved where 166 deliveries were performed in the 108 ambulance. He also informed that Meghalaya is the second State in the North East to have this service and at present it has got 30 ambulances in the entire State.

Earlier, Dr. Sangma handed over the awards to three employees of the EMRI who have dedicated their

services for the benefit of the people.

Other who spoke on the occasion included Commissioner & Secretary to the Government of Meghalaya, Health and Family Welfare, Mr. D P Wahlang, Chief Executive Officer, EMRI, Mr. Venkat Changavalli and Chief Operating Officer, EMRI, Mr. A Tyagi.

It may be mentioned here that till date 13911 emergency calls have been attended to; 1834 emergencies related to vehicular and non vehicular accidents and 2914 emergencies related to pregnancy were attended to by the EMRI service in the State.



Regional Level Conference on Women's Right

The National Commission for Women, New Delhi, sponsored and organized the Regional Level Conference on Women's Rights with special focus on the North East in collaboration with the Department of Social Welfare, Government of Meghalaya on February 18, 2010 at the Shillong Club Conference Hall.

The Conference was well attended by the Chairperson of the State Commission for Women of Assam, Nagaland, Tripura, Mizoram, Arunachal Pradesh, officials from the Social Welfare Department and Police, NGO's and other prominent personalities.

Meghalaya Chief Minister Dr. D. D. Lapang was the Chief Guest at the inaugural function. In his speech, Dr Lapang congratulated and lauded the efforts of the Commission and the Department of Social Welfare in organizing the conference on Women's Rights.

The Chief Guest expressed serious concern over the increasing rate of crime and atrocities against women. He also added that women constitute half of the world's population and their involvement in the process of change, progress and development cannot be ignored. He called for an effective strategy mechanism to guarantee the Rights of women.

The Special Guest of Honour, Mr. B. M. Lanong, Deputy Chief Minister in charge Social Welfare in his speech remarked that although in Meghalaya there is no caste system, untouchability, dowry, female infanticide, neglect of the girl child and other social evils yet there are other social problems concerning women's rights and issues like illiteracy, dropouts, early marriages, domestic violence, sexual abuse, alcoholism and drug abuse, trafficking single mothers which hinders development and empowerment of women. He

called for a widespread movement by women for peace, progress and development.

The member National Commission for Women, Mrs. W Syiem speaking as the Guest of Honour, remarked that women are perceived as weaker sex and change can only come when women realize and assert their rights. She also informed the gathering about different schemes and programmes available for women.

Mr. S Chatterjee, Member Secretary, National Commission for Women, spoke at length about the function of the Commission and stressed on the need for women to have equal rights

After the inaugural session, the second half of the Conference was devoted to the technical session focusing on different topics and issues concerning women. The Resource Persons were drawn from various fields and discussion was held on the Basic Rights of Women with special emphasis on Health, Education, Economic and Decision Making with special reference to the North East. Other topics of deliberations included Socio-Economic and Political Rights of Women; Women and Legal Rights Awareness, Role of Media in Sensitizing Women's Rights; Role of Police/Judiciary in Combating Crime and Violence Against Women; Role of NGO's In Prevention and Rehabilitation of Women in difficult circumstances; Empowerment and Development of Women through Self-Help Groups and Violence Against Women in Conflict areas.

The final session which included feedback and recommendations was chaired by Mrs. S Marak, Chairperson State Commission for Women, Meghalaya.

22 VILLAGES AWARDED NIRMAL GRAM PURASKAR FUNDS

Twenty one villages from West Garo Hills District were awarded with the Nirmal Gram Puraskar (NGP) monetary funds under the Total Sanitation Campaign (TSC) Programme in a grand function held at the Tura District Auditorium, Tura on February 22, 2010.

Mr. Sanjay Goyal, Deputy Commissioner, West Garo Hills graced the occasion as the Chief Guest and awarded the funds to the beneficiaries. Besides NGP funds, TSC funds were also distributed to hundred and twenty villages from the eight blocks of the District for construction of Individual Household Latrines (IHHL) for BPL families under the Total Sanitation Campaign Programme. Cash awards of rupees ten lakhs each were also given to two NGOs namely WGHCRMS and BAKDIL.

Speaking in the occasion, Mr. Sanjay Goyal stated that six hundred IHHLs have been built so far from the year 2004. He further informed that around 130 odd villages have come forward willing to take up the sanitation project and 8500 households have been credited with funds to built IHHLs in their respective villages.

NEWSREEL

Visit of His Excellency,
Krit Kraichitti,
Ambassador of the Royal Thai
Embassy to Meghalaya
on February 1, 2010



NEWSREEL

Sonia's visit



Umsawli



UPA Chairperson,
Mrs. Sonia Gandhi's
visit to the
State capital
on March 5, 2010



NEIGRIHMS, Mawdiangdiang



DBCIC, Mawlai



NEWSREEL

Meira Kumar's visit



Speaker of the Lok Sabha,
Mrs. Meira Kumar
attending the 12th NERCPA
Conference on January 29, 2010.



NEWSREEL

January 21, 2010

Meghalayaday



Republicday

January 26, 2010

MEGHALAYA DAY CELEBRATED

The 38th Meghalaya Day was celebrated throughout the State on January 21, 2010. In Shillong, the Day was celebrated in a befitting and grand manner. As part of the celebration, prominent personalities of the Hill State movement were felicitated by the State Government at a solemn and grand function held at Pine Wood Hotel, Shillong.

The prominent personalities who were felicitated were (Late) Captain Williamson A. Sangma, (Late) Brington Buhai Lyngdoh, (Late) Prof. Radhon Singh Lyngdoh, (Late) Stanley D.D. Nichols Roy, (Late) Prof. George Gilbert Swell, (Late) Edwinson Bareh, (Late) Sandford K. Marak, Mr. Albinstone M. Sangma, Mr. Bindo M. Lanong, (Late) Darwin Diengdoh Pugh, (Late) Grohon Singh Marak, (Late) H. Enowel Pohshna, (Late) Hoover Hynniewta, Mr. Hopingstone Lyngdoh, (Late) Humphrey Hadem, (Late) Humphrey Nongrum, (Late) Jormanik Syiem, (Late) Martin Narayan Majaw, Mrs. Maysalin War, (Late) Rev. Meshak Kharkongor, (Late) Modi K. Marak, Mr. Pati Ripple Kyndiah, (Late) Peter Garnette Marbaniang, (Late) Plissibon Marbaniang, (Late) Rose Warjri, Mr. Standlington D. Khongwir, Mr. Salseng C. Marak, (Late) Theodore Cajee, (Late) Mrs. Viola War and (Late) Wilson Reade.

A silver plaque, eri stole and a bouquet each was handed to all the awardees while the relatives of those personalities who were no more, received the mementoes on their behalf. The mementoes were distributed by the Chief Guest, Dr. D. D. Lapang, Chief Minister of Meghalaya.

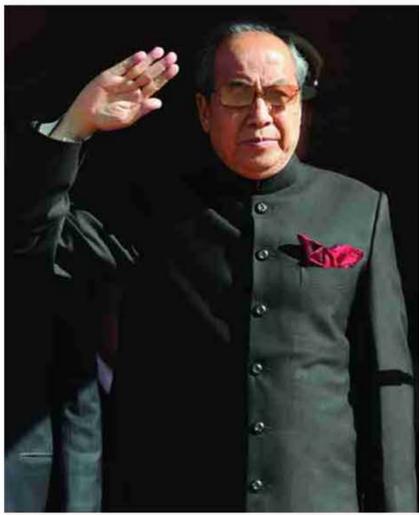
Speaking on the occasion, Dr. Lapang said that the slogan “We want Hill State, No Hill State No Rest” formed the foundation for the Hill State Movement, adding that after 18 years of non violent struggle, the State of Meghalaya became a reality.

Quoting Late Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. saying “I have a dream” Dr. Lapang called upon the people particularly the youth to have vision and be a part of the developmental process of the State.

Others who spoke on the occasion included former Union Minister Mr. P. R. Kyndiah, Deputy Chief Minister Mr. Bindo M. Lanong and Mr. Hopingstone Lyngdoh. While the Chief Secretary Mr. W. M. S. Pariat delivered the welcome address, the Commissioner and Secretary I&PR Department Mr. Arindam Som proposed the vote of thanks.



REPUBLIC DAY CELEBRATED IN THE STATE



Along with the rest of the country, Meghalaya too celebrated its 60th Anniversary of Republic Day with much pomp and gaiety in all its District Headquarters, Civil Sub-Divisions and Administrative Units of the State.

At Shillong, the Governor of Meghalaya, Mr. R. S. Mooshahary unfurled the National Flag at Polo Grounds and took the salute at an impressive march past of nine contingents which included State Police, Assam Regiment, BSF, CRPF, Home Guards, NCC boys and girls, Scouts and Guides.

Speaking on the occasion, the Governor remembered with reverence the patriots of the State – U Tirot Sing, U Kiang Nongbah and Pa Togan N. Sangma who made supreme sacrifices for the country. He also highlighted the growth of various sectors of the State such as Agriculture, Horticulture, Transport, Tourism and Health Services besides others while acknowledging the efforts of various departments such as the Community and Rural Development Department, the Animal Husbandry & Veterinary Department, Information and Communication Technology and many more.

At Tura, the Deputy Chief Minister, Dr. Mukul M. Sangma hoisted the tricolor at MP stadium, Tura and took the Rashtriya salute followed by an inspection of the parade contingents which included paramilitary forces, state police, Bharat scouts and guides and schools students.

Addressing the gathering, Dr. Mukul Sangma, stressed on the implementation of various developmental schemes initiated by the State Government under the support of the Central Government for the upliftment of the rural as well as the urban populace. Stressing on the need for the existence of a peaceful environment for successful developmental initiatives, he discouraged groups from resorting to violence and bandh, saying such forms of agitation were detrimental to the development of the state and appealed to the youth to shun such activities and come forward in building a strong and prosperous Meghalaya.

Other highlights of the day included prize distribution for the best tableaux, sports for children and final match of the Captain Sangma memorial running trophy and tennis ball cricket tournament.

At Jowai, the Minister of Forest and Environment, Dr. R C Laloo unfurled the National flag and took the salute of an impressive marchpast comprising of 16 contingents from Police, Home Guards, Colleges and schools students.



Other highlights of the day included distribution of the Meghalaya Day Awards where Ailad Kharngapkynta received the U Kiang Nongbah Award for Sports, Bikromjit A Sangma the U Tirot Sing Award for Arts and Literature and Smti. Bluebell W. Marbaniang the Pa Togan N. Sangma Award for Social Service. Tableaux by government departments and NGOs were also presented on the occasion wherein the first prize was bagged by 'Pla iew' carrying a message on environmental awareness. The second and third place went to Tourism and Agriculture Department respectively.

Other highlights of the celebration included presentation of Tableaux by different government departments of the district, cultural programmes, display of fire balloons, tug of war competition, free cinema show for children and distribution of food packets to inmate of various hospitals at Jowai.

At Nongpoh, the celebration was held at the NSCA Mini Stadium Pahamsyiem, Nongpoh. The Minister in-charge of Education, Mrs. Ampareen Lyngdoh unfurled the National Flag and took the salute of an impressive march past of 14 contingents including Police and students from different schools. Tableaux were

were also presented by different government departments highlighting their works and schemes.

Other highlights of the day included songs and dance presented by students and prize distribution to the winners in the tableau presentation and marchpast which was bagged by PHE Department and SOS Children's village respectively. The day ended with a friendly football match played between Officers XI and Staff XI.

At Baghmara, Minister of Transport and Communication, Shri. Ismail R. Marak unfurled the National Flag and took the Rashtriya salute of an impressive march past

At Williamnagar, the Meghalaya Minister of PWD, Mr M. M Danggo unfurled the National Flag and took the Rashtriya salute to marching contingents of students, scouts & guides and police.

Other highlights of the day were presentation of tableaux by various government department, sports, cultural programmes, patriotic songs and dances which were presented by school students.

At Nongstoin, the Chairman of the Meghalaya

Tourism Development Corporation (MTDC), Mr. Ronnie V. Lyngdoh unfurled the Tri-Colour and took the Rashtriya Salute of the 12 parade contingents which included the police, NCC and school students at a function held at St. Peter's Higher Secondary School playground, Nongstoin. Besides the ceremonial parade, tableaux presentation by five government departments comprising of Forest, Soil Conservation, Agriculture combined with Irrigation, Education, and PHE department added colour to the celebration. The best tableau presentation was awarded to the Soil Department.

Other highlights of the day included cultural programme, basketball between the Women Officers and the Seng Longkmie New Nongstoin, prize distribution, distribution of food packages to patients of Civil Hospital, Green Pastures Home and St. Peter's Orphanage at Pyndengrei.



VIP Unfurling Flag in Civil Sub-Divisions

Sohra Civil Sub Division,	Mr. Paul Lyngdoh, Minister for PWD (Building), GAD, etc,
Mairang Civil Sub Division,	Mr. B. M. Lanong, Deputy Chief Minister,
Mawkyrwat Civil Sub-Division,	Mr. J. A. Lyngdoh, Minister of Agriculture
Khliehriat Civil Sub Division,	Mr. E. Kharmalki, SDO (Civil)
Amlarem Civil Sub Division,	Mr. Pynshngain Syiem, Parliamentary Secretary, Health & Family Welfare
Resubelpara Civil Sub Division,	Mr. Samuel M. Sangma, Parliamentary Secretary
Ampati Civil Sub-Division,	Mr. A. T. Mondal, Minister for Taxation etc.
Dadenggiri Civil Sub-Division,	Mr. L. S. Sangma, Minister of State

Information Book on Meghalaya Elections 1972-2009 released

The Chief Secretary, Government of Meghalaya, Mr. W M S Pariat, recently released a book entitled Information Book on Meghalaya Elections 1972-2009 at Shillong. The book is being published by the office of the Chief Electoral Officer, Meghalaya in connection with the Diamond Jubilee Year celebration of the Election Commission of India.

The book contains all relevant statistical information on elections including bye elections right from the inception of the State in a consolidated form along with graphical presentation, analysis, pictorial presentation, etc in a similar colourful format of the books published by the office of the Chief Electoral Officer Meghalaya on 2008 General Elections to the State Assembly and 2009 General Elections to Parliament. The book will be made available to members of the public.

SOCIAL WELFARE DEPARTMENT

The Department organized a 5 day Community Based Rehabilitation Portage (CBR-Level -2) Training at the State Institute of Rural Development, Nongsder, Barapani from 7th to 11th December 2009. 30 participants, comprising of officers and staff of the Department from all Districts, officials from the District Rehabilitation Centers and NGOs working in the field of Disability attended the training.

The aim of the Community Based Rehabilitation Portage Project is to reach out to the un-reached disabled children especially in rural/tribal areas and urban impoverished areas and inclusion of disabled children in the ICDS Programme. It is an early Intervention and Stimulation Programme strategy through which children in the age of group of 0-6 years are identified as early as possible for inclusion in Early Stimulations Activities Programmes to prevent secondary disabilities and for enhancing growth and development of the child.

The objective of the Training is to provide information about the needs and requirements of special children, skill to identify disabled children and the Intervention Strategies.

The valedictory session concluded with the presence of the Commissioner and Secretary to the Government of Meghalaya, Social Welfare Department, Mr. A Som, I.A.S who was the Chief Guest at the function. The Director of Social Welfare, Mr. C C M Mihsil, the Assistant Director of Social Welfare, Mrs. E Basaiawmoit and Principal AWTC SIRD, Mrs. S Lyndem were also present at the function.

The certificates to the participants were distributed by the Commissioner and Secretary, Social Welfare Department.

Construction of Anganwadi Centres

The Department through funds received from the Central Government has undertaken construction of Anganwadi Centre Buildings in the whole State in a phased manner. The total number of completed construction of Anganwadi Centres is 1217. 126 Anganwadi Centres are under construction.

Workshop on Care and Protection of Children and Women in Disaster Situation

The National Institute of Public Co-operation and Child Development (NIPCCD) Guwahati organized a workshop on Care and Protection of Children and Women in Disasters situation from February 3-5, 2010 at NIPCCD, Guwahati. The Department deputed 2(two) Officers to attend and participate in the workshop. A total of 25 participants from all the North Eastern States participated in the workshop.

Job Training to Anganwadi Workers and Helpers

The Department through the Anganwadi Training Centre (AWTC) Shillong conducted Job Training and Refreshers Training for Anganwadi workers and helpers.

Up to the 3rd quarter, ending December 2009, the total of 399 Anganwadi Workers and 142 Anganwadi Helpers completed job training. 76 Anganwadi Workers and 97 Anganwadi Helpers completed refresher's training.

Expansion of the ICDS Scheme

The Government of India through the Ministry of Women and Child Development envisaged that all the uncovered villages be covered under the ICDS Scheme for the welfare and development of women and children. A rapid expansion of the ICDS Scheme is under progress.

The total number of Anganwadi Centres sanctioned by the Government of India upto 2009-2010 is 3881 and the Department has been able to operationalise 3655 Anganwadi Centres upto January 2010.

The total Mini Anganwadi Centre i.e villages/hamlets above 150 but below 300 population has been sanctioned by the Government of India for 1234 Anganwadi Centres during 2009-2010 and the Department has been able to operationalise 1232 such centres upto December 2009.

GROWTH PERSPECTIVE CHALLENGES IN NEW DECADE

Dhurjati Mukherjee

Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee recently stated that growth this year would be around 7.5 per cent, while the Prime Minister's Economic Adviser, Dr. C Rangarajan, projected the economy would expand by 8 per cent during the next fiscal. The growth rate slipped from 9 per cent to 6.7 per cent during 2008-2009 on account of the global recession. However, driven by stimulus packages and signs of recovery in the international market, the growth in the current fiscal is expected to be quite commendable, despite the poor contribution of the agriculture sector, which was plagued by droughts in several parts of the country.

The economy has, however, been facing other problems such as fiscal deficits, food inflation and unemployment. Though there are hopes of food inflation being steadily brought under control, deficits have been bothering the system. Some experts feel that subsidies need to be trimmed, leaks in disbursements through the massive welfare schemes plugged and improvement ensured in transparency and accountability. There is need to seriously ponder whether in a situation where over 35 per cent of the population languishes in poverty and squalor, welfare schemes targeted for this sector can be curtailed.

The other big worry is that economic growth has not spurred job creation. One reason for this is the sharp increase in the labour force, which has grown around 2.95 per cent between 1999-2000 and 2004-06 and has been double the population growth. Even though the employment growth rate had risen by 2.89 per cent during the same period, it was not sufficient to tackle the situation arising from unemployment and underemployment. The impact of NREGS cannot be doubted but it has not had the desired effect to transform the situation.

It is well-known that liberalization resulted in the induction of labour-saving equipment, thereby causing lay-offs and ban on new recruitment. New service sector occupations have no doubt been coming up but the scope of jobs has become limited. There are apprehensions that compared to the large number of engineering colleges that have come up in the last few years, the job potential is much less as a saturation-like situation has already set in.

Indeed, the challenges for the new decade are enormous, principally because of the widening disparity between the rich and poor, the urban and the rural

sector and also the poor social infrastructure of the country, specially in the realm of healthcare and education. Both these sectors cannot be considered areas of profit but the poor and the economically weaker sections of the society must be provided facilities at minimum cost. Massive resources would obviously be needed if the Government is sincere to ensure 100 per cent literacy, proper homes for all (including those displaced) and adequate and affordable health care facilities.

How this will be done remains a big challenge before the Government but with India's emergence as a super power, resources have to be marshaled in this direction. Development experts believe, and quite rightly, that even if there are deficits, funds for the welfare of the poor, the tribals and the backward communities cannot be curtailed for it is very necessary to bring them into the mainstream of life and activity.

Apart from this, development of physical infrastructure is another crucial area, specially the construction of roads and ensuring connectivity to the interior districts of the country. Work in this sector has been going on and one can hope that this should be completed by the end of the present decade or even earlier.

But generation of power to the rural areas remain possibly the biggest challenge as there are 76 million rural households that are yet to switch on their first light bulb. Power Minister Sushil Kumar Shinde has stressed on rural electrification and making access to power across villages by the year 2012. Though this may take a few more years, determination and right policies may take this task possible. About Rs. 5,000 crores was released for rural electrification in the 10th Plan and in the present Plan the amount has witnessed a quantum jump at Rs. 38,000 crores.

The Planning Commission estimated India will need to generate 700,000 MW of additional power by 2020 to meet the demands of a growing economy. The 2006 Expert Committee on Energy estimated the country's power needs at 960,000 MW based on a 9 per cent GDP growth. Coal, hydel and non-conventional (or renewable) energy were expected to meet at best 75 per cent of the needs. While the thrust would need to be on renewable energy, specially solar power, nuclear power would also have to be developed.

The immediate driver to growth is investment,

which has risen from 26 per cent of GSP in 1999-2000 to almost 40 per cent today, supported by a corresponding rise in both domestic savings and capital inflows from abroad. Most of the increase occurred during the previous decade's second half, thus accounting for the sharp growth acceleration during the period. Significantly, private investment has doubled to over 28 per cent at present while public investment remained more or less static at around 9-10 per cent. It needs to be pointed out that though public investment has not grown, its composition has changed from investment in a wide range of manufacturing and services to more focused areas of infrastructure in recent years.

What is imperative at this juncture is to ensure that the fruits of development reach all segments of society in a somewhat equal manner. The 11th Plan focused on 'inclusive growth' which the Prime Minister has been emphasizing time and again. But putting this into practice is indeed an uphill task which not only calls for prioritizing what is called 'alternative development' but also strengthening the panchayat system. Ensuring good and effective governance is the need of the day and with it more transparency and accountability of Government officials and politicians to make the system responsive to change.

The transformation of the rural sector particularly assumes a very crucial role as it has to be brought about by development of infrastructure facilities, incentives to the farming community, special attention for skill development for rural artisans and development of horticulture, floriculture and other agro-based industries. It may be useful that the suggestions of the expert group formed on agricultural indebtedness (under the chairmanship of Dr. Radhakrishnan, Director, Indira Gandhi Institute of Development Research) need to be considered seriously specially on increasing agricultural productivity, enhancing investments in agricultural infrastructure, research and extension and putting in place an effective system of rural mitigation, both in production and marketing.

Lab-to-land approach is yet to become effective and thus research from agricultural universities and the Indian Council Agricultural Research (ICAR) should reach the farm sector. It is quite obvious that rural regeneration would no doubt improve the condition of a major section of the population and make it an effective work force. We may recall the observation of Dr C Rangarajan way back in 1982: a mere one per cent increase in agricultural output led to a 0.7 increase in the national income, most of it which reached the developmental needs of rural India. – INFA

State Women Farmers Felicitated

Two farmers from Meghalaya, Mrs. Bernadette Khongsngi, from Umran village, Ri Bhoi District and Mrs. Merry Corelia A. Sangma from West Garo Hills were felicitated by the Union Ministry of Agriculture at a function held in Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi on 26th February 2010. Both the farmers have been selected for their innovative skills and entrepreneurial success in their respective horticulture enterprises. Mrs. Bernadette Khongsngi, a homemaker and mother of seven children through sheer hard work has turned her hobby into a money making enterprise with assistance from the office of the District Horticulture Office, Ri- Bhoi district. She has also inspired many other farmers from her village to take up floriculture as a self employment venture.

Likewise, Mrs. Merry Corelia A. Sangma had made cultivation of Anthurium a successful venture and also motivated others to take to growing flowers as a profit making enterprise.

The success stories of these two women farmers have been published in the ministry's coffee table book "Harvest of Hope" on 101 success stories of farmers from across the country which was released by the Union Minister for Agriculture, Mr. Sharad Pawar. Speaking during the function, the minister congratulated the farmers and said that these farmers have not only helped their families by increasing their incomes but also have been more than inspirational for others by sheer dint of innovation and hard work. Commending the farmers present on the occasion, Mr. Pawar said that many of them have not kept their new found knowledge to themselves but felt it necessary and worthwhile to share with fellow farmers.

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LIVING ROOT BRIDGES

A bio-engineering wonder



◆ The Khasi and Jaintia people have been known to have the capability of building bridges from secondary roots of trees, in this case from rubber tree. These bridges are locally known as “Jingkieng Deingjri” literally meaning bridge of the rubber tree. Most of these bridges are made from the roots of a single tree and stretched and planted on the other side of the stream or river. The time period taken to build these bridges is about thirty years.

The two tier living root bridge at Nongriat is an example of this bio-engineering wonder. This is the only existing double - decker bridge and it lies south of Tyrna village in Cherrapunjee. The trek to the bridge is two and half hour steep decent of approximately 2200 feet from the village. Along the way one would encounter four smaller living root bridges of various shapes and sizes.

