



सत्यमेव जयते

SPEECH
OF
HIS EXCELLENCY
LT GENERAL NIRBHAY SHARMA
PVSM,UYSM,AVSM,VSM (Retd)
GOVERNOR
OF
ARUNACHAL PRADESH
63RD PLENARY OF
NORTH EASTERN COUNCIL
AT
SHILLONG
ON
02 JANUARY 2015

- Hon'ble Chairman of the North Eastern Council Dr. Jitendra Singh Ji,
- Your Excellencies, the Governors of Northeastern States,
- Hon'ble Chief Ministers,
- Respected Members of NEC,
- Secretary, DoNER, Secretary, NEC and Senior Officers from Govt. of India,
- Ministry of Home Affairs, DoNER, Civil Aviation, Railways, Transport, Telecom
- and representatives of the State Governments,
- Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the very outset, on behalf of the people of Arunachal Pradesh and on my own behalf, I extend warm greetings and heartiest felicitation to you for assuming the charge of the Ministry of DoNER. I am confident that under your dynamic leadership and guidance, the region will touch new heights of development and prosperity.

I also extend my New Year greetings and good wishes to all the esteemed members present in this august meeting. I look forward to a meaningful discussion. I am confident that we can draw up viable ideas, innovative methods and a fresh roadmap to effectively accomplish the objectives behind setting up the North Eastern Council.

Adhering to the given time slot, I would like to emphasize on few vital points of my speech, which is laid on the table.

The North East region requires a systematic and balanced pace of development in each of its State. Although there is a common thread running through, we must appreciate that one size does not fit all. You will notice that the region is divided by River Brahmaputra into two halves, i.e. north and south. It is realized that epicenter of development is essentially concentrated in the southern part of the region. To bring equitable growth and progress of this region, we have to have another centre of development in the north of River Brahmaputra. **In this context, trans Brahmaputra connectivity and need based locating/ shifting of certain administrative headquarters of the Central Government is a must.**

Arunachal Pradesh has a long international boundary with Bhutan, China and Myanmar. **The people of the State have trade relationship with the people across the border since ancient times.** Some still persist in formal and informal forms in some border trade points, such as Pangsua Pass at Nampong in Indo-Myanmar Border and Bleting (Namtsering), Dongshengmang and Bongkhar at Indo-Bhutan Border. **These practices need to be institutionalized for socio-economic upliftment of local populous and State and Country as a whole.**

At Pangsau Pass near Nampong in the eastern part of my State, a Land Customs Station was inaugurated by the then Union Minister of State for Commerce in November 1997. But, it has practically been lying dysfunctional for these years. Now, it needs to be re-activated for which certain back-up services like proper road connectivity, banking etc. are required. Thereafter, we may look for establishment of a full Customs Post and make trading a regular feature at Pangsau and make the town a trading hub like Moreh in Manipur. This can serve as gateway to other rich South East Asian nations and be a part of Kolkata-Kunming initiative. **NEC must take up this issue with the Ministry of External Affairs and find out modalities for providing access to the international neighbours in a regulated manner.**

Lack of Connectivity is the biggest hurdle to the development in the region and is holding up unlocking of the vast economic potential of the region. Particularly in my State, Arunachal Pradesh, due to harsh climate and topography, road, railways and air connectivity to the region needs to be properly planned and strengthened. Owing to its vastness and tough geographical terrain, Arunachal Pradesh is largely dependent on helicopter services for its connectivity requirement. **NEC funded Tezu Airport is being developed. The progress of Airport project is not at the expected pace and the Airport Authority of India (AAI) may be urged to speed up the work.** The site for Greenfield Airport at Holongi has been finalized and it is required to expedite the development of this lone airport of the State. This forum is requested to take up this issue with the Ministry of Civil Aviation.

At this point, I want to reiterate that until the time these projects are commissioned, reliable air service from fully developed Airport at Lilabari must be made operational on highest priority. This air connectivity at Lilabari must have fixed scheduled and preferably a direct flight from Delhi- Guwahati-Kolkata-Lilabari and back would most ideally suit the requirement. **While welcoming the NEC's Memorandum of understanding with Alliance Air, I would like to emphasis for use of bigger aircrafts with direct flight scheduled from Lilabari to Delhi and Delhi to Lilabari either via Kolkata or Guwahati.**

There are 8 Advance Landing Grounds (ALGs) coming up in the border districts of State of Arunachal Pradesh. Concerned agencies may be advised to expedite work in a time bound manner. It is imperative that the infrastructure so created is utilized not only for Defence purpose and carriage of civil passengers and goods, but utilized for ferrying construction materials for infrastructure development as well. **It is suggested that aircraft services be planned simultaneously to avoid any delay in starting the service.**

Railway line connecting the State Capital with the rest of the country is ready to be operationalized. Rajdhani Express service must be started soon between Naharlagun and Delhi. Further, the work on other strategic lines to Tawang in the west and Pasighat in the east in Arunachal Pradesh is yet to be kicked off. **The progress of Bogibeel Bridge must be monitored to ensure that it meets the revised timeline of mid 2017.** Its completion will not only fill the strategic void in Trans-Brahmaputra movement, but be a major factor in the socio-economic development of this region.

Our immediate requirement is construction and up-gradation of roads in Arunachal Pradesh involving 5,000 kms. It includes the Trans-Arunachal Highway, District Connectivity Roads, Indo-China Border Roads and some other link-roads. These are to be constructed by the BRO, State PWD and MORTH. As of now, out of 1575 km, only 200 kms of Trans Arunachal Highway is complete. **Going by the present road construction capacity of around 150 to 200 kms of roads per year, it will take us more than 30 years to complete roads, which is clearly unacceptable.** We need to cut down this timeframe drastically and achieve construction of at least 500 kms of road per year so that we reach our target by 2025 at least.

In order to achieve this target, capacity constraints in terms of engineering equipments, construction materials, skilled and non skilled manpower have to be enhanced many fold to global standards. Streamlining of procedures and processes of clearances and award of contracts based on the international best practices has to be brought in. Encouraging local entrepreneurs and focus on R & D will also be needed.

In order to harness the mega Hydro-power potential of the State the impasse due to environmental and social issues has to be broken in a balanced manner. Also a number of projects need to be revisited to ensure full compliance of the private players in their execution. Lower Subansiri Hydro Electric Project (2,000 MW) has to be completed on priority. 45% of the work of this project has been completed, but the construction was stalled in 2011 with a recurring loss of Rs.10 crore per day. Completion of this project in the next 2 or 3 years will not only give 2,000 MW power, but demonstrate the economic benefits accruing to the society / region and thus encourage progress of other projects as well. The constraint is likely to be multiplied by 'basin studies' being conducted on most of the rivers on which dams are being constructed. In that, the projects which are built 'run of the stream' need to be liberally and expeditiously looked into.

The coverage of telecommunication networks like AIR and DD needs to be enhanced urgently in the region. There is a void in the entire border belt calling for an immediate focus and enhancing their reach even beyond the border. Many fold advantages will accrue from this. DD through DTH transmission can cover 100% population and 100% area of the State. It is important that for reaching every corner of the State, specially the border belt, the DTH sets be made available immediately to the border area, may be free of cost which may not involve funding more than 2-3 crore.

Proper education, career guidance and entrepreneurship programmes on skill development and job oriented education should be provided to the youth of the region. NEC should have special focus on quality education through investment in teachers' training and evaluation. As advocated by Hon'ble Prime Minister, we must use distance education infrastructure and latest scientific methods. The social, gender and regional gaps in education need special attention.

The State and District Hospitals need up-gradation with NEC and DoNER's support. Due to non-availability of specialized treatment facilities, large numbers of serious and critical patients of my State are referred outside. **You will be surprised to learn that my State does not have even one hospital /doctor with cardiographic facility.** In such situation, NEC can help in establishing a medical college, a regional one, in the State in the line of Regional Institute of Medical Science, Imphal, which was established and being funded by the NEC.

It is imperative that private sector must be involved in Health and Education sectors in association with Central and State Governments. Therefore, I strongly advocate PPP mode in the social sectors.

The North Eastern Region, particularly my State Arunachal Pradesh, is basically an agricultural region with most of the working population being engaged in agriculture and other related activities. My Government has promoted income-generating crops in the State. Local youth are encouraged for tea, rubber and coffee cultivation , intensifying piggery, poultry, dairy, fishery and sericulture activities and involving Self Help Groups in post harvest management and setting up of cottage industries. **NEC can help in storage and marketing initiatives by creating corpus fund for State Agriculture Marketing Board for market intervention and market infrastructure assets maintenance, setting up of rural godowns, cold chain facilities and retail outlets, providing transportation facilities for movement of farm produce and fixing Minimum Support Price for marketable commodities.**

The Northeast Industrial and Investment Promotion Policy 2007 has played an important role in the development of the region. However outcome could have been much more than what is realized had the infrastructure development in the region taken place at fast pace. It is important that industries can be attracted by providing subsidy in investment, transportation and interest rate but in order to set up and sustain industries, **it is essential to have adequate availability of power, land, labour, water supply and security.** So it is vital that in the coming times, the Northeast Industrial and Investment Promotion Policy is reintroduced quickly with special focus on infrastructure also.

The council has to be the 'Think Tank' and voice for the region and should guide the policy makers. With changing environment and time, it has to develop innovative economic endeavours in a concerted and planned manner to eliminate the bottlenecks in the path of development of the region. It should not only become fund disbursing agency but a strategic planning institute.

With its parent body, the DoNER which has Central Ministries' 10% of their Annual Plan Budgets earmarked for the North Eastern Region to address the development deficit of the North Eastern region, the issue of fund paucity for the region must be resolved and the fund must be made available for the region. Therefore, **NEC should be an institute of financial management and monitoring authority.**

This council should be a facilitator in preparing project reports. It has to take lead in suggesting pioneering ideas and proposals. This council must act as resource centre for the State Governments. It should monitor the planning process, resource allocation strategies and effectiveness of resource utilization.

I strongly stand that for peace, security and prosperity, development is a prerequisite. It cannot be other way around. Let us ensure that development reaches to every door, every corner how-so-ever remote it may be or isolated it may be. Irrespective of any precondition, NEC has a paramount role to play in it. Let us prepare ourselves for the bigger picture. **Let us prepare ourselves to be contributors and main stakeholders of our Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi ji's 'Act East' and 'Made India' crusades. In that North East has to be seen more than a transit route, but be an economic power house influencing South East Asia in general and countries like Bangladesh, Bhutan and Myanmar in particular.**

As I conclude, once again I thank the Hon'ble Chairman for having given me this opportunity to put forth my views. On behalf of the people of Arunachal Pradesh, I extend an invitation to you to my beautiful and picturesque State.

I also thank the distinguished members of the Council and other dignitaries present here for giving me a patient hearing. I shall be eagerly waiting for the proceedings of the meeting to be compiled, documented and sent to the State Governments at the earliest so that meaningful action can be initiated early. I also compliment the organizers of this meeting for the meticulous arrangements they have made for this important event.

I once again wish the organizers well, and the plenary, a grand success.

Jai Hind.