



SPEECH

OF

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HIS EXCELLENCY

GOVERNOR OF ARUNACHAL PRADESH

ON THE OCCASION OF

**RELEASE OF VISION 2020 DOCUMENT
FOR NORTH EASTERN REGION**

AT

Vigyan Bhavan, New Delhi

July 02, 2008

Hon'ble Prime Minister of India, Dr Manmohan Singhji, Hon'ble Chairman of NEC and Minister for DoNER Shri Mani Shankar Aiyarji, My colleague Governors from the North Eastern States, Hon'ble Chief Ministers of the North Eastern States, senior officers from the Central and State Governments and dear friends,

It is indeed a moment of pride for the entire North-eastern region that today our beloved Prime Minister has released the 'Vision 2020 Document' for the North Eastern Region which has been conceptualized and finalised by the North Eastern Council and Ministry of DoNER with the involvement of all the states of the North East. Framing a Vision 2020 document covering the aspirations of extremely diverse areas of North-eastern region has surely been a monumental effort, and deserves to be wholeheartedly appreciated and applauded by all of us. The process of evolution of this document has also not been very easy and on many occasions it has gone through rough weather. But the brains behind this document were always open for all kinds of constructive criticism and positive suggestions. The unique method of public hearing followed by discussions in the plenary sessions, small group sessions, participations of the civil society, NGOs, student groups etc, makes the document a symbol of the people : the 'Peoples Document'. Our warm hearted salute to dear Shri Aiyarji and your team, for this historic achievement .

Incidentally, Hon'ble Prime Minister of India during his maiden visit to Arunachal Pradesh on 31st January this year had chalked out a strategy for the development of Arunachal Pradesh and I quote *'Today, we have a definite strategy for the development of Arunachal Pradesh. There are four major areas where we need to work if we have to ensure the rapid development of the State, ie good connectivity by roads, rail and air, good infrastructure, better education and health facilities, and all round economic development. "unquote"*.

The six pronged strategy adopted in the Vision document is absolutely in tandem with the four pronged strategy evolved by our Hon'ble Prime Minister for the development of Arunachal Pradesh.

The Vision document has made an excellent analysis of the impact of the partition on NE region. Such kind of analysis is extremely useful as a backgrounder when we plan for the future.

I am very happy to see a separate chapter on the poverty eradication and also happy to note the Hon'ble Chairman's initiative on the formulation of a complete document on poverty eradication in the North Eastern region, with the support from NIRD Guwahati. In fact, augmenting the income generating capacity of the poorest of the poor in this region should be our foremost priority. The mega-infrastructure projects will come in due course, but certain sustained income generating activities for the common citizen should start immediately. And these activities do not have a long gestation period such as major projects like roads, railways and airports. However, one needs to have an innovative approach to create such income generating opportunities for the people of this area.

The nature is very generous in North eastern region. However, we remained poor amongst plenty in this region because of ignorance and isolation. Some of the activities like fruit production and processing, growing orchids and flowers, organic farming, bee keeping, handloom and handicrafts, bamboo based industries and most importantly tourism, can generate lot of jobs and financial empowerment for the indigenous people. I am sure with Vision 2020 in place, the concerned State Government and the Planning bodies will pay due attention to increasing the income generating capacity of the common man in the North Eastern region. This is going to be the key for achieving our Vision.

It is an undisputed fact that the Northeastern Region is important for its geographical location. It not only occupies a central position in East and South Asia, but is also a bridge connecting the subcontinent with east and South-East Asia. In one of the articles published in Telegraph on January 10 this year, I have specifically said that '*Look*

at the map with Guwahati Itanagar or Shillong as the hub. If one were to draw an arc with 1000 km as the radius, the circle will encompass as much as eight countries and also include cities like Kolkota, Dhaka, Varanasi, Kathmandu, Gangtok, Thimpu, Lhasa, Kunming, Mandalay, Chittagaong and the border areas of Vietnam, Laos and Thailand. Therefore, the North East of India assumes geo-strategic importance as the land-link between India and the Far East.' In the same article I have elaborated on the vibrant culture of NER, its great natural resources, and beautiful, peace loving and hardworking people of this area. I have also discussed about the importance of industrialization to generate employment and income, developing NER as a sports hub, river navigation, and development of tourism etc, as a part of the Look East policy.

The 'Vision Document' also stresses on creating a centre for trade and commerce to reap the benefits of the Look East Policy. Though the term Look East was coined in early nineties, for centuries together the people of North-Eastern region had cultural and economic linkages with the neighbouring countries. Today, when we are talking seriously about opening of border trade, way back in 1907, the British Assistant Political Officer of the Mishmi Hills, Neol Williamson, explored the possibility of opening a trade route to Tibet along the Lohit River. He obtained information pertaining to the feasibility, distance from the main trading centers and attitude of the local people. He was so fascinated by the response of the people and the terrain of the valley that he called it '*the natural highway into Tibet*'! He even dreamt of the railway line from Sadiya to Lhasa. All the same, we need to have *imaginative, bold and ambitious plans* to convert our dreams into reality. Briefly, in order to make LEP successful, what we need today is a very strong and innovative foreign policy backed by a massive dose of infrastructure building, coupled with sound policies for defence, internal security and international trade.

I am sure that this Vision 2020 document will serve as a great planning tool for the present and future planners of this region. We understand that the resources required to convert this vision into a reality are running into thousands of crores, and are likely to be made available in phases. However, the document gives us a good road map on which we

can charter our journey for various development projects spread out over the next 5-10 years. As for the recommendation of the second Administration Reforms Commission regarding the Ministry of DoNER, the Arunachal Pradesh Government strongly feels that the existence of Min of DoNER is vitally important for us as it is our friend, philosopher, guide and advocate in the corridors of powers in New Delhi and not for NLCPR alone. We the North-eastern states must think beyond NLCPR and start using MoDoNER to help in our development and to progress our cases with the Centre. Arunachal Pradesh has successfully done so, with regard to some of the important projects like Border Village Illumination program etc. and results have been extremely encouraging.

In conclusion, I once again congratulate Shri Mani Shankar Aiyarji and his very capable team for the production of this historic document “The VISION 2020 for the North East”. I also extend my sincere gratitude to Hon’ble Prime Minister for sparing his valuable time for this landmark occasion in the developmental history of the North Eastern Region. I also thank the organizers of this function for all the meticulous arrangements made for the event. Thank you ladies and Gentleman

Jai Hind