



SPEECH

OF

HIS EXCELLENCY GEN JJ SINGH,
PVSM, AVSM, VSM (RETD),

GOVERNOR OF ARUNACHAL PRADESH

ON THE OCCASION OF

STATE NIRMAL GRAM PURASKAR
AWARD CEREMONY-2009

ON

TUESDAY, 24 NOV, 2009

AT
BANQUET HALL,
ITANAGAR.

Shri Chowna Meinji, the Hon'ble Minister in charge of Public Health Engineering & Water Supply Department, Arunachal Pradesh, Parliamentary Secretary, the awardees of Nirmal Gram Puraskar 2009, Secretary (PHE&WS), the Zilla Parishad Chairpersons and Members, Deputy Commissioners, dear school children, officials of PHE&WS departments, media persons, ladies and gentlemen.

I shall start with a quote from the Father of the Nation Mahatma Gandhi, who said 'Sanitation is more important than independence'. How true and appropriate are these words! For, proper sanitation is a harbinger of good health, better quality of life and a developed and prosperous nation.

Well, coming to our state, Arunachal Pradesh, located in the remote north-eastern tip of the country with its scanty population of just over 1.2 million, spread over a vast track of 84,000 Sq. km, and with the untouched beauty of its snow peaked mountains, its fast flowing rivers, its pollution free environment – I would not be wrong when I say that this is a veritable heaven on earth. Yes, the state in these sixty years after independence, has witnessed significant achievements. It has made great strides in many fields such as: road communication, health, education etc. But we are still far behind other developed states in indices of social development, especially in rural areas where majority of our population lives. Over 70% of rural

habitations in the state are still without proper sanitation facilities and nearly 65% without adequate drinking water provision. Due to the lack of proper awareness, the traditional practices of open defecation are still common in many places. Problems of drainage and liquid and solid waste disposal also persist.

The State cannot achieve real development, if its people, particularly in rural areas, continue to live in unhealthy and unclean surroundings lacking in access to safe potable drinking water and proper sanitation facilities. This may thus cause serious impact on the health of the population. A direct link exists between water, sanitation, health, and human well being. Improper disposal of human excreta, consumption of contaminated water, lack of personal hygiene and improper disposal of solid and liquid waste – these have been the major causes of many diseases which afflict the children, particularly the young ones. The girls, and women are also the most affected ones. Lack of separate and decent sanitation facility is one of the reasons why many girls drop out of school. Women often suffer from lack of privacy and harassment in the absence of household toilet facilities. Illness due to improper sanitation results in many diseases like diarrhoea, cholera, plague etc. and results in loss of precious manpower and man days. This in turn makes the whole economy less productive. Without access to safe potable drinking water and proper sanitation

to the people, sustainable development may thus not be possible.

I am, therefore, delighted to note that the Department of Public Health Engineering & Water Supply is making efforts to address the issues of rural water supply and rural sanitation through the two flagship programmes of the Centre namely the National Rural Drinking Water Programme and the Total Sanitation Campaign. The objectives of rural water supply and rural sanitation programme cannot be achieved only through the efforts of a department. These goals cannot be reached without the active involvement of the beneficiaries and the community as a whole. Therefore, associating with the community leadership and development of state specific Information, Education and Communication (IEC) tools is necessary to ignite the minds of the people to adopt behavioral changes. It is also necessary to strengthen grass root level institutions like Panchayats and Anchal Samities and their participation in the programme. The indigenous and traditional institution of Gaon burahs can play an important role in bringing such behavioral changes. Priority also must be given for school sanitation which not only can help to trigger but also sustain the change.

In this regard achievements in school sanitation made in Arunachal Pradesh, covering about 87 % of the existing

schools, is appreciable. But, as important as the construction of sanitary toilets in the individual houses, schools and the anganwadis, is the need to inculcate hygienic habits. The Public Health Engineering Department together with the PRIs, NGOs, community based organizations, SHGs etc. can give momentum to this and accelerate coverage of sanitation programme in rural areas so that the national goal of providing access to toilets to all the citizens could be achieved by the year 2012. While the TSC programme provides financial support only to the BPL families, economically better standing APL families must also set examples by constructing toilets in the houses on self supporting basis with technical assistance from PHE department.

I am very glad that the Deputy Commissioners and Zilla Parishad Chairpersons and members are attending this important function. The DCs and Zilla Panchayat Chairpersons should play active roles in selection of schemes, formulation of project reports and implementation of the works. They should monitor the pace of progress and quality of scheme implementation in their areas on a day to day basis. The progress and quality of the programme implementation should also be brought under the public domain with free access of information by the citizen and other stakeholders like NGOs, CBOs, SHGs, and the print and electronic Medias.

In the end, I would like to congratulate the Department of PHE & WS for their efforts in organizing the first state level Nirmal Gram Puraskar award giving ceremony in the country after the National NGP awards ceremony held recently in New Delhi on November 17, 2009, when Her Excellency the President of India gave away the District level, Block level and NGO level awards. I am sure that the NGP award will trigger a silent revolution in rural sanitation all over the country and all across the state. I congratulate all award winners from the state, and hope that their missionary zeal will trigger further revolution in the field of sanitation and basic hygiene and hope that their example would be emulated by other Panchayats in our State. Let us all work together for a greener, healthier Arunachal Pradesh, with the basic toilet and sanitation facilities for all its citizens.

Jai Arunachal, Jai Hind !