

SPEECH ON THE OCCASION OF
76th Republic Day of India

Shillong, 26 January 2025

My dear fellow citizens of Meghalaya,

1. On the momentous occasion of the 76th Republic Day, as we celebrate ‘SWARNIM BHARAT: *Virasat aur Vikas*’, I convey my warm greetings to all the citizens of the State. On this auspicious day, we honour the spirit of democracy and pay homage to our Constitution. We respectfully pay tribute to our leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, Sardar Vallabhai Patel and Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose. We also remember with reverence patriots from our very own State - U Tirot Sing, U Kiang Nangbah and Pa Togan N. Sangma. We take this opportunity to salute the unwavering dedication and sacrifices of our Armed Forces, Paramilitary Forces, and the Meghalaya Police Force. Their vigilant efforts ensure our safety and security.
2. During the last year the overall law and order situation in the State was peaceful. In the year 2023-24, the three new Criminal Laws namely the Bharatiya Nagrik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS), Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) and Bharatiya Sakshya Adhinyam (BSA) were implemented with effect from 1st July 2024. However, the Autonomous District Council Courts will continue to function under the provision of the Sixth Schedule. The new laws mark a significant shift in the administration of criminal justice with emphasis on the use of technology and forensics. In line with this, the State government has also upgraded the Forensic Sciences Lab in Shillong to a full-fledged Directorate of Forensic Sciences and also approved the creation of Mobile Forensic Science Units in each district. Further, the Directorate of Prosecution has also been operationalized with the appointment of a Director and Assistant Public Prosecutors.
3. The vision of our government is to make Meghalaya a 10 billion U.S. dollar economy by 2028, by doubling our State’s GDP. We are poised towards achieving this goal and strategies are

being developed across sectors, and investments are being mobilized. The GDP of our State increased from Rs 23,235 crore in FY15 to Rs 53,057 crore in FY24. Key areas like roads, housing, water supply, power, tourism, and IT are driving growth. Over the past five years, the State has built more than 2,500 km of roads under PMGSY. The government is in the process of expanding the Shillong Airport to accommodate larger flights and improve connectivity.

4. The Government of Meghalaya is dedicated to enhancing the State's road infrastructure, to ensure better connectivity, and fostering economic growth. Over the past two years, the Government has sanctioned road works covering 568 kilometers, to enhance connectivity in the State. Work on the Shillong- Dawki Highway and Tura-Dalu Road is progressing well, and a new alignment for the Pynursla Bypass is approved. Additionally, significant projects like Shillong Western Bypass, and a high-speed corridor from Mawlyngkhung to Panchgram are also advancing.
5. Through externally aided projects, regional road infrastructure of almost 500 kms has been developed and maintained which includes Garobadha-Dalu Road, Pasyih-Garampani Road, Umling-Patharkhmah Road, and Umsning-Jagi Road, aimed at improving road connectivity in all the regions of the State. Based on the State's good performance in the road sector, Government of India, has recently approved Mega Project for improving the road sector with an investment of Rs. 2500 crore. Under this project more than 300 Km of double-lane climate resilient road corridors shall be developed and this will contribute to realising our 'Mission 10'.
6. The government is committed to making urban spaces more sustainable and dynamic, with New Shillong City leading the way. Foundation for the New Secretariat in Mawdiangdiang was laid on Meghalaya Day this year. New growth-oriented projects like Skills Hub, Unity Mall, New Shillong Water Supply Scheme and Sports Infrastructure have been initiated. The road connectivity between the administrative city, Mawdiangdiang and the Knowledge city at Mawkhanu has been built via Ummir village. Three new roads are being constructed to improve connectivity between Shillong and New Shillong. Planning for development of Mawkhanu Knowledge City is underway, and it is expected that the city will become a tourism, skilling, and educational hub. The Shillong Integrated Command and Control Centre, which

will facilitate the coordination of urban service delivery and traffic management has been inaugurated. The Centre is a state of art facility deploying 328 cameras and will streamline city-level responses to tackle various challenges and emergencies.

7. The State is making significant strides in waste management, with more than 1 lakh metric tons of legacy waste cleared at Marten and 15,000 metric tons at Rongkon Songittal landfill in Tura. The commitment is to transform these sites into cleaner, healthier spaces in the coming years. Initiatives to de-congest urban areas, especially Shillong are being implemented. Commercial infrastructure at Nazing Bazaar, Tura was inaugurated last year. Long pending work at lawmusiang market, Jowai has also been revived. The STEMS Shared School Bus initiative is a success, and 30 new buses are being added this year. Redevelopment of junctions and urban spaces are being taken up at Shillong, Tura and Jowai.
8. The government is mobilizing private investments to promote growth and provide employment to our youth. As per the Meghalaya State Investment Promotion & Facilitation Act 2024 and the State Industrial Policy, 90% of the non-managerial jobs generated in new industries are reserved for local people. New Land banks are being created in full compliance with the provisions of the Meghalaya Transfer of Land (Regulation) Act, 1971 and the laws and rules of the three Autonomous District Councils. The State government is committed to promoting growth, without any compromise on the rights of our people. It is possible to protect our culture, heritage, & traditions and generate opportunities for our youth.
9. The government is committed to providing housing for all. Since the launch of PMAY(G), the State has constructed 1.18 lakh houses under the scheme, till date. Out of this figure of 1.18 lakh houses, 82,995 rural houses were constructed in the last two years alone. Under PMAY (U), 3097 of the 4554 sanctioned houses have been completed.
10. The goal of the government is to supply tap water to all 6.5 lakh rural households in the State. In 2019, Meghalaya had fewer than 4,500 functional tap connections. Today, clean drinking water under the Jal Jeevan Mission is provided to over 5.29 lakh households, achieving 81.4%

coverage which is above the national average. Between August 2019 and December 2024, about 270 tap connections were installed daily in the State. The government is committed to ensuring tapped water connection to the remaining households.

11. The government is striving to ensure reliable power supply in the State. In 2024, there has been no scheduled load shedding, due to various measures undertaken by MeECL to improve the power sector in the last five years. We expect no load shedding in 2025 as well. The government has been able to reduce the Aggregated Technical and Commercial Losses from 32% to 16%. The government is also committed to increasing the generation capacity of the power sector that will promote economic development and growth.
12. The tourism sector will be a key driver of economic growth and livelihood opportunities for the people of the state. Substantial investments in improving the tourism infrastructure are underway at key tourist locations. The work on the Shillong Peak Ropeway Project has been initiated. Further, the government has taken up redevelopment of two iconic projects for MICE infrastructure at Mawkhanu and Umiam lake. The Meghalaya Tourism Homestay Scheme has emerged as a flagship success, transforming the state's tourism landscape. With a 70% subsidy of up to Rs 7 lakh, the scheme has facilitated the creation of attractive homestays and fostered sustainable livelihoods for residents. Since its inception, around 600 homestays have come up in the State.
13. According to the 'Travel Trend Report' by Skyscanner; Shillong, the State Capital has been declared as the most popular destination for Indian travelers in 2025. It is the only Indian city in the list surpassing even Baku, Azerbaijan and Langkawi, Malaysia. This reinforces the strategy of the government to promote the state as a the 'Music Capital of India'. In 2024, the State hosted top international artists, blending them with local cultural festivals during various events including the Cherry Blossom & the Me Gong festival. The government is also committed to attracting private sector investment through the Public-Private Partnership model in the tourism sector. The foundation stone for the redevelopment of the Orchid Hotel, Shillong into a 5-star Aurika Hotel by the Lemon Tree Group has been laid. Another three 5-star hotels are in the pipeline, which will be opened in Umiam, Sohra and New Shillong. Further, the tourism sector has now been declared as an industry under the Meghalaya Investment and

Industrial Development Policy, 2024, and is now eligible to leverage subsidies under the new central scheme UNNATI.

14. The IT sector has potential to provide job opportunities for our youth. The Shillong Tech Park in New Shillong successfully employed over 1000 youth. Expanding on this initiative, construction for Shillong Tech Park Phase 2 will be completed by 2025 and has a target to employ 3000 youth. The Hon'ble Vice President of India during his maiden visit to the state has also visited the Shillong Tech Park and lauded the efforts of the state government to promote IT & ITeS. A Technology Park is being developed in Tura, and it aims to employ more than 1000 people.
15. The primary sector continues to be the top priority for the state, with Agriculture being important to state's economy and livelihood. Agriculture's contribution to the State's GSDP, has doubled in the last five years. The government has been undertaking several initiatives to support farmers to help them realize better market price and the government recently launched 'CM Assure', a market intervention scheme to support small & marginal farmers through fixed price procurement during market price decline for crops like Arecanut and Broomstick, this will benefit 2,500 farmers.
16. The government is making investments in the food processing sector, which plays a pivotal role in fostering robust linkages between agriculture and industry. Meghalaya has emerged as a promising hub for food processing, strategically positioned as a gateway to Southeast Asia. In 2021, the Government of Meghalaya launched the Zero Interest Loan Facilitation Program. This initiative provides aspiring food processing entrepreneurs with interest-free, collateral-free loans of up to Rs 10 lakhs, encouraging business growth and innovation in the sector. Under this scheme 414 cooperatives have been supported, and infrastructure development support has been provided to 44 cold storage facilities, 68 warehouses, and 160 micro processing spokes, including working capital assistance. The State has made commendable strides by establishing over 200 aggregation centres, 170+ micro processing units, cold storages, warehouses and farmers' markets. 7 PRIME hubs dedicated to secondary processing have been established with an investment of 160 Cr.

17. Meghalaya also participated in the 3rd World Food India as a focus state where 21 local brands showcased their products, and an MoU was signed to promote organic farming. With sustained efforts, the area under organic cultivation increased from 18,000 hectares in 2018-19 to 24,000 hectares in 2023-24. The brands under 'Meghalaya Collective' were launched to support FPOs, cooperatives and SHGs.
18. The government targets to expand fish production in the state by supporting fish farmers. To ensure sufficiency of fish production, the State has been implementing schemes like the Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana and Meghalaya State Aquaculture Mission 2.0. In 2024, 748 hectares were added to fish production, bringing the total to 5,439 hectares, improving the state's fish production up to 20,000 MT. Together with local communities, 83 fish sanctuaries have been established that has helped in preserving the indigenous species of fishes.
19. The animal husbandry sector is critical for generating rural livelihoods. Under Rural Development Backyard Program, piglets, poultry units and goatery units have been distributed to various beneficiaries. Under the CM - Elevate Scheme, the highest demand has come from the animal husbandry sector. To ensure that the sector positively contributes towards boosting entrepreneurship and income of livestock farmers, maximum number of schemes have been allocated to piggery development with more than 1300 beneficiaries, followed by goat farming, dairy farming and poultry farming.
20. The government keeps women at the forefront of its development policy fostering spirit of entrepreneurship, financial inclusion and promoting holistic growth aligned with the Matrilineal society. Recently, during the first Cabinet Retreat in Sohra, the Chief Minister and the Cabinet Ministers interacted with Self Help Groups from various villages of the Shella-Bholaganj C&RD block, who spoke about the impressive work being done by them to uplift the economic wellbeing of their members. These SHGs, together with the 51,000 SHGs across the State, are driving the creation of women-led enterprises and championing financial inclusion in Meghalaya. The State government recognizes the vital role of the sericulture and textile industries in providing livelihoods for thousands in Meghalaya. These industries support 48,430 families engaged in sericulture and 25,157 families in weaving, with 95% of the workforce comprising women. In the spirit of community-based growth, the State has been at

the forefront of promoting and regulating the 3,056 cooperative societies which advance the community driven process, thus helping generate self-employment and incomes.

21. The State has been promoting the indigenous products which are ingrained to the identity of the local communities. With the effort of the State government, in 2024, four more products of Meghalaya received the GI Tag - Meghalaya Garo Textile (Dakmanda), Lyrnai Pottery, Meghalaya Chubitchi, and Lakadong Turmeric. This certification is a testament to the uniqueness of our local products and the richness of our cultural heritage. The government is also facilitating a GI application for Ryndia that is produced from Ri-Bhoi District and will further boost the production and value of Ryndia.
22. The Meghalaya government has an unwavering commitment of uplifting its citizens' quality of lives through its social development plans. For this, a life-cycle approach has been adopted encompassing social security services, health, child welfare, education, and sports.
23. The State has formulated the Meghalaya Early Childhood Development Mission which focuses on the holistic development of children (birth to 8 years) and pregnant/nursing mothers, emphasizing motor skills, cognitive growth, health, nutrition, and early education. We aim to upgrade Anganwadi Centers into Saksham Anganwadis for modern early childhood care & education and train 10,000 educators from the SHG cadre to support ECD Centre activities and co-locate new Anganwadi Centres construction with government primary schools for implementation of the NEP 2020. Through our Drug Reduction Elimination and Action Mission (DREAM) project, India's first of its kind comprehensive and collaborative anti-drug initiative, we have united communities, educational institutions, and faith organizations to tackle substance abuse effectively.
24. The State has made significant strides by reducing maternal deaths by over 53% and infant deaths by 40% in the last five years. Our institutional deliveries have significantly improved due to intervention under the Chief Minister Safe Motherhood Scheme, wherein over 3 Lakh pregnant women benefitted from improved transportation, diagnostics and delivery services. We are taking healthcare services closer to people by activating the First Referral Units at Community Health Centre level. New FRUs have been completed at Bhoirymbong,

Resubelpara, Ranikor, Mawphlang and Pynursula. 65 new Sub Centres have been successfully completed in the last one year, and the aim is to complete the construction of another 90 new Sub Centres by the end of 2025.

25. The Health Department has fostered partnership with international agencies to bring in more knowledge, expertise, and investments into the health sector in the state. MHIS has seen the highest number of claims in the last year which shows trust in the system. Medical colleges are also being set up in Shillong and Tura with a plan for intake of 100 MBBS students per year in each of them. The Shillong Medical College will start operations from this year.
26. The government is committed to ensure better learning outcomes and improve the quality of education in Meghalaya. Particularly focused on improving the Pass Percentage, the government has launched a new initiative for distribution of guidebooks through 'CM IMPACT' for students as well as teachers. This month the first state university, Captain Williamson Sangma State University was inaugurated. The University Grants Commission has recognized the establishment of the University as per section 2(f) of UGC Act, 1956. Affiliation with the state university will ensure that the students will not be required to appear for the Common University Entrance Test (CUET) for under-graduation and post-graduation courses. The formal affiliation applications have been received from 8 colleges. Further, the government has decided to also set up the Shillong campus of the State University. To improve access to higher education, the model degree college at Rongjeng has started the academic session from 2024 and the Patharkhmah Model Degree college will be commencing session in 2025.
27. Meghalaya is a young state with 30.6% of the State's population falling in the age bracket of 15-29, which is higher than the national average. To ensure the best possible opportunities for our youth, fostering excellence in sports is central to our youth agenda. Football is deeply rooted in the culture of Meghalaya. To further promote the sport, the government plans to launch Mission Football 2.0, aiming to train athletes, build 100 grassroots infrastructure, and support the development of clubs and academies, creating more than 3000 direct and indirect jobs through football events.

28. The Meghalaya Games has been revived to make it an annual event. The 2024 edition was inaugurated by the Honourable President of India in Tura and the 2025 edition was held in Jowai. The prestigious Durand Cup tournament was hosted in the city of Shillong which saw record number of attendance from football enthusiasts. We are pleased to announce that this year we will be hosting Indian Super League (ISL), where three matches will take place in JN stadium, Shillong. The State is also aspiring to host the Indian football team in the coming year.
29. The government also seeks to harness the creative power of the youth by enabling creation of a 'creative economy'. The state launched the Hello Meghalaya OTT platform on 11 July 2024. This platform streams feature films, short films, music videos and infotainment videos by local content creators in Garo, Khasi and Pnar. With 3.14 lakh app downloads, the Hello Meghalaya platform has become a source of income for our young content creators & film makers. The government is providing direct funding support up to 35 Lakhs for making films in Khasi, Garo, Pnar, to ensure creators' income generation. The app has recorded 7.3 Lakh content download.
30. Skilling youth for future employability is an important focus of the government. Several schemes to improve skilling and training of the labour force are being implemented by the government. The Hon'ble Vice President of India laid foundation for the Meghalaya Skill and Innovation Hub in 2024-25. This initiative with ADB's assistance aims to set up a state-of-the-art skilling and innovation centre in Shillong in the next two years.
31. The government aims to establish a world-class skill development ecosystem in the state. The government will train 1 Lakh persons for domestic placements and 10,000 people for international placements. More than 50 nurses have been placed in Japan after language training and are undergoing documentation process. These nurses have become our ambassadors in Japan and have already joined the hospitals. They are sending remittance in tune of Rs 1 Lakh per person per month.
32. For the State government, it is crucial to ensure that Meghalayan start-ups remain competitive and grow to new heights. Recognising this, the government has set a target to upgrade the skills of around 1,800 MSMEs in 2024-25. This initiative is being implemented through tailor-

made Executive Training programs under the Raising and Accelerating MSME Performance (RAMP) scheme.

33. One scheme nurturing the startup ecosystem in the state has been the PRIME (Promotion & Incubation of Market-driven Enterprises) program. It has catalyzed the growth of over 322 startups, with an additional 75 to be incubated in March 2025. The program has also supported startups and academic institutions in securing funding of over Rs. 28.76 crores to date. The PRIME hubs at Shillong & Tura have benefitted more than 6,000 individuals providing entrepreneurs with co-working spaces, free Wi-Fi, knowledge support, credit assistance, and connections to markets. Two more PRIME Hubs are in the process of being established.
34. The government is committed to publicize and promote arts, culture, and heritage. The Tagore Cultural Centre at Rilbong, Shillong, funded by Ministry of Culture, Govt. of India, is a key ongoing project of the State. To conserve the natural heritage of the state and as part of the first community nomination under UNESCO system, the Meghalaya government has made the first ever attempt at large scale community conservation of Living Root Bridges. 131 Living Root Bridges across 74 villages have been mapped and 42 Cooperative Societies have been formed for conservation effort. Recently, the Chief Minister alongwith the Cabinet Ministers visited the Living Root Bridge at Siej village and interacted with the local community leaders who are at the forefront of the conservation.
35. The government is taking steps to safeguard Meghalaya's land, water, and vegetation from the threat posed by population growth, resource mismanagement, and climate change. India's biggest Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) program - Green Meghalaya - is being implemented in the State, whereby communities are incentivized to protect forest. An amount of ₹ 48.3 Crore has been disbursed to communities across the state to protect 51,200 hectares of forest. Another 50,000 hectare to be covered under the scheme this year, taking the particular area to 1 lakh hectare.
36. For ensuring soil and water conservation measures, the government is implementing the Climate-Adaptative Community-based Water Harvesting Project. 532 water harvesting

structures are being created under this scheme with a total pondage area of 385 hectares and storing 12.08 million cubic meters of water.

37. In November 2024, the Meghalaya Biological Park at Umtrew, Ri-Bhoi District was inaugurated. Under the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972, 109 Community Reserves have been notified in the State up till 2024 and are being managed by the department with the assistance of local communities. These projects emphasize the government's efforts in biodiversity conservation, sustainable forestry, and climate change mitigation. We are one of the first States in India to adopt aerial surveys for forest conservation, utilizing advanced technologies such as LiDAR and Hyperspectral imaging. The project mapped 330 species across 32 reserve forests.
38. The State has augmented administrative infrastructure to make government more accessible to the people throughout Meghalaya. The government has undertaken construction of Administrative Complex at Jowai. Further, an Integrated Secretariat Complex has been proposed to be constructed at Tura, at the earliest. Block offices at Samanda and Betasing have been inaugurated in 2024 and while twelve other C&RD Block offices have been completed to provide organisational infrastructure at rural areas to bring administration closer to the people.
39. Citizens are at the core of all government programmes. To ensure the highest efficiency and quality in service delivery to the people, CM Connect, a dedicated helpline has been launched to address citizen grievances. More than 20,000 calls have been received and 900 grievances have been resolved. To provide opportunities for youth & improve last mile service delivery, more than 1,300 Village Data Volunteers have been deployed across the State. The government has been providing financial support under the FOCUS scheme and social assistance to old and infirm citizens under CM Care scheme. To ensure accurate Public Distribution System, e-weighing scales have been installed in all 4,743 Fair Price Shops statewide.
40. We congratulate the Meghalaya Day Awardees of 2025 - Shri Sembertush A Sangma, who has been awarded U Tirot Sing Award for Arts & Literature, Rev. W. C. Khongwir, who has received

the Pa Togan Sangma Award for Social Services and Kong Kmoin Wahlang, who has been awarded U Kiang Nangbah Award for Sports & Games.

41. 76 years ago, on this day, the citizens of India conferred upon themselves the sovereignty of this nation. As heirs to that legacy, we will forge closer partnerships amongst Meghalaya's youth, women, farmers, entrepreneurs, and traditional institutions.
42. Let us strive together to contribute towards the growth and development of our beautiful State of Meghalaya. Once again, I wish you a very happy Republic Day.

KHUBLEI! MITELA! JAI HIND!