

GOVERNMENT OF MEGHALAYA, OFFICE OF THE CHIEF MINISTER
Media & Communications Cell
Shillong

Press Release | February 26 | Shillong

Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad K. Sangma on Friday attended the Outreach and Familiarization programme for Local Bodies of Meghalaya and the other North-Eastern States organized by the Parliamentary Research & Training Institute of Democracies (PRIDE), Lok Sabha Secretariat and the District Council Affairs, Government of Meghalaya.



The programme was inaugurated by Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla in presence of Meghalaya Legislative Assembly Metbah Lyngdoh, Union Minister of State for Food Processing Industries Rameshwar Teli.

The programme aimed to enhance participatory democracy through greater awareness of the procedures and processes followed by democratic institutions functioning at various levels from the grassroots to the apex level.

Speaking at the inaugural function, Chief Minister Conrad K Sangma expressed his gratitude to the Lok Sabha Speaker for holding the programme in Shillong. “We are certain that under your guidance, we will be able to add value to the functions of the District Councils and local bodies in our region”, he said.



On the importance of the ADCs, the Chief Minister said, “Meghalaya has three major tribes and we have three District Councils. The importance of the District Councils remain in its ability to protect the tribes of the North East and therefore, we must make an effort to recognize its role, take it forward, uplift it and protect their traditions and cultures. With this mindset, our Constitutional Fathers carved out the Sixth Schedule Areas to safeguard the interests of the tribal and conservation of age-old traditional practices. ADCs are tribal-oriented, formed and recognised with the sole objective of uplifting and protecting the tribal, their varied cultures, traditions, customs, dialects, faith, etc and therefore, the ADCs are an integral part of governance in Meghalaya”.

On the relevance of District Councils today, the Chief Minister positively stated, “Many individuals have questioned if the District Council has failed, or if the purpose of its existence is irrelevant or if it is performing its objective. Individuals draw their conclusions seeing things on the surface, seeing the management and functioning of the District Council but I would like to say that the purpose of setting up the District Councils has been accomplished. They have managed to protect the identity of the tribal population through the ADCs and I believe in the coming years, we must strengthen them”.

Talking about problems in district council, he said that the most important challenge the council face is fund crunch. Quoting Article 280, he said that the provision for funding are included for Panchayati Raj, Municipal bodies, however, district councils are not included.

“The biggest hurdles District Councils face today is the issue of funds and funding. In Article 280, Panchayati Raj, Municipality Board has provision for funding but District Councils do not receive funds through the Finance Commission devolution”.

Stating the example of the GHADC, the Chief Minister stressed, “The Garo Hills Autonomous District Council’s expenditure is more than the revenue it generates and this is because ADCs do not get much support from Govt. of India and the Finance Commission. Because of this, District Councils appear to be failing but if they are not getting the financial support and without financial inclusion, the performance of their duties is hampered”.

Touching on the absence of the Anti Defection Law or the Tenth Schedule, the Chief Minister said, “Because of the absence of the Tenth Schedule or the Anti Defection Law in District Councils, there is political instability. There is a lot of movement and instability in grassroot politics, therefore, it is very important.”

On the ‘Sixth Schedule Amendment Bill’, the Chief Minister stated, “I am happy that we were given the chance to submit our views and opinions on the ‘Sixth Schedule Amendment Bill’, sent through the Select Committee. Through the views and opinions of all the District Councils we can move towards amending this I am happy that we were given the chance to submit our views and opinions on the Bill to strengthen the District Councils”.

The Chief Minister suggested the inclusion of Khasi and Garo language in the Eighth Schedule by saying, “We have taken up the resolution in the Assembly for the inclusion of Khasi and Garo language in the Eight Schedule. To assure our people and the tribal people of the North East that they are given the same importance, the recognition of our languages is very important. And not just for Meghalaya but for all the 40 languages seeking inclusion in the Eighth Schedule. More than anything else, the integration of the country is most important and it starts from recognising our languages”.

On the inclusion of North East chapters in the national syllabus, the Chief Minister commented, “The inclusion of chapters on the North East will play a huge role in national integration. Children from other States must learn about the culture of the North East and in doing this, we are moving forward as a country taking everyone along and leaving no one behind”.

The Chief Minister also suggested a Presidential Retreat be set up in the North East to promote national inclusion.