



# 75<sup>th</sup> Republic Day of India

**26<sup>th</sup> January 2024**

# Speech on the Occasion of 75<sup>th</sup> Republic Day of India

Shillong, 26 January 2024

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My Dear Citizens of Meghalaya,

1. It gives me immense pleasure to extend my heartfelt greetings to you on the momentous occasion of India's 75<sup>th</sup> Republic Day. On this auspicious day, we reaffirm our commitment to the ideals enshrined in our Constitution and pay solemn tribute to leaders like, Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, Sardar Vallabhai Patel and Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose. We also salute patriots from our own soil - U Tirot Sing, U Kiang Nangbah, Pa Togan N. Sangma and other unsung heroes.
2. We respectfully remember the martyrs from the armed forces, paramilitary forces and police forces who have laid down their lives in protecting the rule of law.
3. During the last year the overall law and order situation in the State was peaceful. We made significant progress in resolving the border dispute between Meghalaya and Assam. Following the historic signing of a memorandum of understanding in March 2022 for six areas of difference, the process of survey has been initiated to demarcate the interstate boundary. The two Chief Ministers met again in May 2023 to initiate the process of resolving the dispute in the remaining six areas of difference. Regional Committees have been formed for these areas and they have conducted meetings with their Assam counterparts.
4. The Government is committed to bring lasting peace to the State and once again reiterates that it is open to having talks with the HNLC within Indian's constitutional framework and as per the guidelines of the Union Ministry of Home Affairs.

5. The Home (Police) Department has augmented the district-level police infrastructure and Police Housing. The Fire Emergency Services are being strengthened on priority. Recruitment to nearly 3,000 vacant posts will also be completed in a time bound manner.
6. Meghalaya has adopted a State Anthem which celebrates the land, the people and their culture with emphasis on unity. The Anthem has been composed in the official languages as per the Meghalaya State Language Act, 2005.
7. In a historic development, a life-size statue of U Tirot Sing will be unveiled on 16<sup>th</sup> February 2024 in Dhaka, Bangladesh. A high-level delegation led by Hon'ble Deputy Chief Minister and comprising of senior cabinet ministers, senior officials, traditional heads, academics, artists, civil society members and journalists will be representing Meghalaya at the inauguration.
8. Meghalaya was honoured to host the maiden visit of the Hon'ble President of India, Smt. Droupadi Murmu earlier in January. The Hon'ble President attended civic receptions at Tura, Baljek and Mawphlang during which she opened the 5<sup>th</sup> edition of the Meghalaya Games and interacted with members of women's Self-Help Groups. The Hon'ble President also laid foundation stones for a number of crucial infrastructure projects like the Shillong Peak Ropeway, the Tura Integrated Administrative Complex, and Village Tourist Accommodations. She also inaugurated the newly upgraded Rongjeng Mangsang Adokgre Road and the Mairang Ranigodown Azra Road.
9. The Government operationalized the Raj Bhavan at Tura which was inaugurated by the Hon'ble Governor of Meghalaya Shri Phagu Chauhan on 12<sup>th</sup> January. Situated within a sprawling 28.45 acres plot and constructed at a cost of 24 crore rupees, the new Raj Bhavan is a fulfilment of the long-time aspirations of the people of Garo Hills.
10. In resonance with the Hon'ble Prime Minister's vision of transforming India into a 5 trillion US dollar economy by 2025, the Government has set the ambitious target of making Meghalaya a 10 billion US dollars economy by 2028, thereby doubling the

State's GDP. To achieve this, the Government is preparing growth strategies for all sectors and is mobilizing investments.

11. Infrastructure like roads, water supply, power and IT are going to be key drivers of growth in the State. The Government envisions building 1,600 km of new roads, upgrading close to 6,000 km of existing roads and converting 7.5 km of timber bridges to permanent bridges over the next 5 years. Unconnected habitations will also be connected with all-weather roads under the CM Rural Connectivity Program.
12. When the Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM) started in 2019, Meghalaya had fewer than 4,550 functional tap connections. Today we have provided clean drinking water to more than 4.7 lakh households across the State - a coverage of 73.2% which is at the national average. The target is to cover all 6.5 lakh rural households with tap water connections at the earliest. A detailed plan to protect about 4,000 water sources is also being made to ensure sustainability.
13. Providing uninterrupted power supply to every household in the State is among the top priorities of the Government. To that end, the Ganol Hydroelectric Project was completed in August 2023. Currently 24 new sub-stations are being constructed and 48 existing sub-stations are being renovated under the Meghalaya Power Distribution Sector Improvement Project with support from the Asian Development Bank. The Revamped Distribution Sector Scheme is also being implemented to improve the efficiency and financial sustainability of Meghalaya's power distribution system.
14. Meghalaya's beautiful capital city, Shillong currently has 40% share of the state's GDP. To further expand this, the Mawdiangdiang Administrative City in New Shillong has already undergone considerable development. The new Legislative Assembly building is nearing completion and plans for building a new Secretariat Complex are being finalized. The Government is also working on plans for a new Knowledge City at Mawkhanu.
15. A comprehensive plan is being developed to improve connectivity between Shillong and New Shillong City. As part of the plan, 3 new roads connecting Lumshyiap with

New Shillong, Mawpat with Umsawli and Diengpasoh with Shillong Bypass are being built.

16. To make urban transformation environmentally sustainable, a fleet of 100 Electric Buses will be introduced by 2025 that will reduce fuel emissions in the cities. The process of reclaiming the Marten landfill site using advance bio-mining technology has been initiated.
17. To ensure a socially responsible urban transformation, the Government has notified the Street Vendors Scheme and Act. The act will regulate vending on the streets in a systematic way and protect the livelihood of the street vendors; 1,263 of whom have already been surveyed in Shillong. The 'My City Campaign' has been launched to ensure community participation in beautification and enhancement of our urban areas. Other significant urban rejuvenation projects include the development of the Polo Riverfront, Ward's Lake and the Golf Course area of Shillong.
18. The Government is exploring possibilities of introducing regular flights between Shillong and large metro cities like Delhi, Mumbai, Hyderabad and Bangalore. Plans to fully operationalize the Baljek Airport with regular flights to Shillong are also underway. Plans to provide internet connectivity to every village in the State by developing last-mile IT infrastructure is being finalized.
19. The primary sector of Meghalaya is integral to the Government's vision of increasing the prosperity of the State. 2023 was a year of great achievements for marketing Meghalaya's agricultural produce. About 700 metric tons of produce from the State, including ginger, turmeric, pineapple, cashew and broom grass have been exported to national and international markets leading to an increase in farmers' income. Oranges and pineapples from Meghalaya have been showcased in premium retail outlets in Europe and the Middle East. 166 processing units, 154 warehousing facilities and 34 cold storages has been set up covering the remotest locations in the State.

20. In recognition of the Government's efforts to promote Meghalaya's products, the State was awarded the second runner-up trophy at the One District One Product Awards held during the Aatma Nirbhar Bharat Utsav in New Delhi.
21. Meghalaya's Self-Help Group network of 4 lakh women continued to grow over the past year with formation of 1,511 new SHGs. The SHG women continue to inspire and contribute to livelihood and employment in the rural areas.
22. Animal husbandry and fisheries have the potential to generate livelihoods for a large section of the State's population. Under the Piggery Mission, 367 cooperatives have been supported, and more than 63 crore rupees has been disbursed as interest-free loans. Currently, there are 100 dairy cooperative societies in the State involving almost 1,000 members. Another 100 dairy cooperative societies with 1,500 producer members are about to be set up.
23. The Government aims to increase fish production by 10,000 metric tons. For this, an additional water area of 2,000 hectares will be brought under fish culture and 15,000 fish farmers will be trained. Agriculture and animal husbandry are expected to generate 3 lakh livelihood opportunities in the next 5 years.
24. In addition to the primary sector, the Government recognizes tourism as a growth driver. Meghalaya will be transformed into India's most preferred tourist destination and the share of the tourism sector will be increased to more than 10% of the State's GDP.
25. Several schemes which will both facilitate tourism and generate livelihood opportunities are being implemented. One such scheme is Meghalaya Tourism Homestay Scheme under which a subsidy of up to 7 lakh rupees is being provided to tourism entrepreneurs for developing tourist accommodations, restaurants and crafts emporiums. The scheme has been availed by almost 320 entrepreneurs since inception. A large number of tour operators in Shillong and Tura have benefitted from the PRIME Luxury Tourism Vehicle Scheme. Under the scheme a 50% subsidy on the cost of luxury vehicles is being provided.

26. The reputation of Meghalaya's local music culture is being leveraged to attract tourists. 3,000 local musicians have been provided a platform to showcase their talents through the Meghalaya Grassroot Music Program. Festivals like the Cherry Blossom, Me'gong, Shillong Literary Festival and the Meghalaya Film Festival are also contributing to promoting tourism and enhancing livelihoods.
27. The IT sector has been a crucial growth driver in the last few years. The first phase of the Shillong Tech Park saw tremendous success by generating over 1,500 direct and 5,000 indirect jobs opportunities. The second phase of the Tech Park is in progress. It aims to create another 3,000 direct and 9,000 indirect new jobs. An ambitious project for building a Tech Park at Tura at a cost 125 crore rupees is in the pipeline. The tourism and IT sectors are expected to generate about 1.2 lakh jobs in the next 5 years.
28. The Government has been promoting entrepreneurship for making the State's youth job creators. In recognition of these efforts, Meghalaya was recently named 'Top Performer State' at the National Startup Awards.
29. The PRIME Program is currently supporting more than 5,500 young entrepreneurs and 210 startups. 50 startup incubation centres called PRIME Hubs are being set up to provide entrepreneurs adequate infrastructure, capacity building support and market linkages. Nine of these PRIME Hubs have already been operationalized.
30. The Government launched the CM-Elevate program in September 2023 with the target of supporting 20,000 entrepreneurs over the next three years. Under the program individual entrepreneurs, registered and unregistered entities are provided financial support of 35% to 75% of the project cost through credit linkages with private and public sector banks. This umbrella program alone will generate about 80,000 employment opportunities in the sectors of horticulture, logistics, animal husbandry, sericulture, tourism, entertainment, and wellbeing.
31. To provide impetus to Meghalaya's industrial sector, the Government is finalizing the Meghalaya Industrial & Investment Promotion Policy. Under the policy, key growth sectors like tourism & hospitality, IT & ITES, green industries, power generation,

logistics and food processing are being granted industry status. A lucrative package of incentives is being provided with a target of attracting about 2,000 crore rupees of investment in the next three years.

32. The Government aspires to create a job-ready workforce by training 1.5 lakh youth over the next 5 years. In the past year, more than 35,000 youth have been trained in technical skills under the flagship 'Skills Meghalaya' program and in soft skills under the ASPIRE program. A world-class Skills & Innovation Hub will be constructed at New Shillong City. The PRIME Hubs will also function as skilling centres and provide training by engaging local training partners.
33. Betterment of the human condition forms the bedrock of the Government's social development plan. For this, a life-cycle approach has been adopted encompassing health, child welfare, education, sports and social security services.
34. Significant improvements have been made in healthcare over the last few years. There has been a 50% drop in maternal death between 2020 and 2023 as an outcome of the Chief Minister's Safe Motherhood Scheme. 87% of all eligible infants have been brought under the routine immunization target resulting in a 30% decrease in infant mortality.
35. To meet the requirement of trained medical personnel, establishment of 3 medical colleges in Meghalaya has been announced. Treatment facilities in all civil hospitals and community health centres will be upgraded with latest healthcare technology. Operationalization of the Medical Recruitment Board has resulted in filling up 47% of vacant posts in a single recruitment cycle.
36. Meghalaya has been named the 'Best Performing Small State' by the Government of India for highest number of treatments and for gender equity under the Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Aarogya Yojana. The National Health Authority also recognized Meghalaya for full utilization of allocated funds.

37. The Meghalaya Early Childhood Development Mission is being implemented. Under the mission the process of augmenting the Anganwadi network by upgrading 2,000 existing centres and setting up new centres in 1,566 uncovered villages is ongoing.
38. Imparting quality education in an improved learning environment characterises the Government's approach to education. Construction and renovation of close to 2,000 school buildings has been taken up in a phased manner Under Mission Education. These schools will be provided with safe drinking water and uninterrupted power connection as part of 'assured minimum facilities'. 38 Eklavya Model Residential Schools are being established. Two of these schools will admit their first batch of students this year. The Government has also approved the establishment of Meghalaya Education Recruitment Board to expedite recruitment of vacant teaching posts.
39. In Higher Education, augmentation of infrastructure in government colleges in Williamnagar, Baghmara and Sohra is underway. Additionally, Grants-in-Aid are being provided to 21 People's Colleges. Efforts are being made make the Captain Williamson Sangma State University functional as early as possible. The Shillong Government College of Engineering has also been inaugurated and awaits affiliation from the North-Eastern Hill University.
40. Fostering excellence in sports is central to the Government's youth policy. With that objective, the 5<sup>th</sup> Meghalaya Games were organized in Tura for the first time. The games brought together more than 3,000 athletes from across the State who competed in 23 sporting disciplines and won over 400 medals.
41. Meghalaya's athletes brought home a number of prestigious sports awards for the State in 2023. These include bronze and silver medals in Kayaking at the Khelo India Youth Games and gold and bronze medal in athletics at the National School Games. The Meghalaya Boys' Team finished runners-up in the 76<sup>th</sup> National Football Championship for Hero Santosh Trophy.

42. State-of-the-art sports infrastructure at all levels is being built. The most iconic of these projects include the recently inaugurated Wahiajer Multisport Complex at West Jaintia Hills and the Pa Togan Nengminja Sangma Athletic Stadium in Tura, West Garo Hills. Upgradation of the JN Stadium and construction of the new Polo Indoor Stadium in Shillong is steadily progressing. The P.A. Sangma Sports complex in Tura is about to be upgraded with Olympic-standard swimming pools, tennis courts and indoor halls.
43. To extend the State's athletic infrastructure to the grassroots, the Government is building more than 50 natural and artificial athletic turfs and multi-disciplinary sports facilities across the State. Prominent ones among these include the Kiang Nangbah Football Grounds in Jowai, the NDSA Playground at Mawkyrwat, the Dalu Football Ground, the DSO Complex in Baghmara and the Football Turf in Riango.
44. To combat the challenge of substance abuse and ensure a healthy future for Meghalaya's youth, the Government has introduced the Drug Reduction, Elimination & Action Mission in 2023. Financial assistance is being provided to almost 66,000 senior citizens, about 36,000 single mothers and more than 14,000 persons with disabilities under the CM CARE program.
45. Latest technology is being leveraged to make citizen-centric services available at the doorstep of every household. End-to-end digitization of the public distribution system has drastically reduced leakages and has given a greater number of citizens access to PDS benefits. Citizens are now able to avail 135 government services through the integrated web portal of Meghalaya State Public Service Delivery Commission. The soon-to-be operationalized CM Connect Helpline and portal will provide citizens scheme-related information and grievance redressal services through a single toll-free number.
46. A cohort of 6,500 Village Data Volunteers are about to be deployed who will make government services more accessible to citizens in remote areas.
47. The Government is taking steps to introduce a Family ID system in the state to ensure better delivery of government programs and benefits to individuals and families.

Flagship programs like FOCUS, FOCUS+, YESS Meghalaya and the Mission Mode interventions in the agri & allied sectors will be delivered through the Family ID mechanism.

48. Meghalaya is blessed with a 76% unspoilt forest cover, more than 50,000 natural springs and 30,000 hectares of wetlands. This natural abundance is increasingly threatened by the perils of climate change. To mitigate environmental risks, the Government has earmarked 15% of the State's annual budget for 'Green Governance'.
49. India's biggest Payment for Ecosystem Services program - Green Meghalaya - is being implemented in the State. Under the scheme, communities are paid an annual grant for conserving forested areas. Till date, 1,500 communities have been supported for preserving almost 27,000 hectares of natural forest.
50. The Government has constructed more than 27,000 water harvesting structures through MGNREGA. Additionally, another 600 Small Multi-Purpose Reservoirs are being built at a cost of 750 crore rupees with support from the Asian Development Bank. 382 of these reservoirs have already been constructed covering a total catchment area of more than 12,500 hectares.
51. The Chief Minister's Solar Mission was launched in 2023 to make renewable solar power accessible to citizens in the remote areas. The scheme provides up to 90% subsidy on solar inverters to rural households and will benefit about 4,000 households and institutions over the next three years.
52. The State Government is striving to bring improved infrastructure, public health, education and livelihood opportunities to every single citizen. While prioritizing growth, we will also conserve the natural abundance and celebrate the cultural richness of Meghalaya.
53. 74 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. Let us strive together to contribute towards the growth and development of our beautiful State of Meghalaya.

Once again, I wish you very happy Republic Day.

**KHUBLEI! MITELA! JAI HIND!**