

**ADDRESS BY THE HON'BLE PRESIDENT OF INDIA  
SMT. DROUPADI MURMU  
AT CIVIC RECEPTION IN MEGHALAYA**

**Shillong: January 16, 2024**

Meghalaya as its name suggests is a land of celestial beauty. With its exceptional serenity, Shillong has inspired writers, seers, freedom fighters and revolutionaries. Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore's creativity got stimulated by the surroundings of this region and he wrote the novel 'Shesher Kobita'. At St. Edmund's College, Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose delivered a stirring speech for freedom. Swami Vivekananda in Quinton Memorial Hall, presently known as the Ramakrishna Mission Vivekananda Cultural Centre, famously compared life as akin to a pilgrimage. I would also recall freedom fighter U Sib Charan who supported the non-cooperation movement. It was here in Shillong in 1945 that youth hoisted the Indian national flag on the Rilbong ground with the slogan "Vande Mataram".

It is indeed a great privilege to visit Meghalaya - the land where nature's bounties and people's simplicity are in abundance. I am deeply touched by the warm reception given to me by the Government and people of Meghalaya.

Known for its unique hospitable culture, crystal-clear Dawki River, famous root bridge, numerous natural caves, beautiful climate and breathtaking landscape, Meghalaya seems like a place right out of a fairy tale where clouds dwell and magic abounds.

It gives me immense pleasure to say that I have inaugurated various projects which will boost the economy of Meghalaya and the country and aid in the process of inclusive and holistic development.

My visit coincides with the laying of the foundation stone for the new integrated administration complex at Tura. I hope this enhances good governance and helps make administration more people-centric.

Ladies and Gentleman,

Meghalaya holds great opportunities and potential for tourism-related activities. The government is implementing many projects for the development of tourism infrastructure. Some projects which are being undertaken include: Development of Umium Lake View and Orchid Lake Resort, Khudoi and Kohmang falls in West Khasi Hills, Krang Suri falls in Jaintia Hills, Nokrek Reserve, Katta Beel, and Siju Caves in Garo Hills.

During this visit, I have also inaugurated many projects such as the improved Rongjeng Mangsang Adokgre, and the upgradation of Mairang Ranigodown Azra Road. The foundation stone was also laid for the Shillong Peak Ropeway Project and village accommodation in Kongthong.

I congratulate and extend my best wishes to Governor Shri Phagu Chauhan Ji and Chief Minister Shri Conrad Sangma Ji for the successful completion of these projects.

Last year, in November, the 11th edition of the International Tourism Mart was also organised in Shillong. I am happy to know that a bigger platform is being provided to interact and create awareness about the tourism potential of North East Region. It will be a great help in highlighting unique tourism products, rich biodiversity, and unique intangible heritage including local traditions, dance forms, arts, handicrafts and handlooms to not only domestic but also an international audience.

In June 2023, the Meghalaya Tourism Policy 2023 was also launched. I congratulate CM Sangma Ji for this as it will help Meghalaya to increase and augment tourism potential sustainably and responsibly.

Ladies and Gentleman,

Not only in areas of tourism but in other sectors such as agriculture, information technology, horticulture etc Meghalaya holds great potential. Initiatives like the Shillong IT Park and the Meghalaya Broadband Policy 2018 have helped Meghalaya's IT sector achieve new heights. A vibrant IT ecosystem, educational institutions such as NIT and IIM combined with pleasant weather and lower operational costs give Meghalaya a comparative advantage to be a global hub for IT services in this era of data and information.

With a high average annual rainfall and a diverse range of soil types, Meghalaya has emerged as the leading producer of not only traditional crops such as rice, maize, pulses, oil seeds, cotton, jute etc but also of non-traditional crops like tea, cashew nuts, tomato, mushroom, wheat, etc. The state produces a significant amount of fruits and spices too.

Ladies and Gentleman,

Meghalaya's heritage can be traced from the prehistoric times of the Stone Age. And next week you will be celebrating 52 years of statehood. Let me congratulate you in advance for completing this fascinating journey of statehood.

Meghalaya is one of the "Ashta Laxmi" states. When Indians turn to East in obeisance", we pray to Sun God as the source of light and seek to dispel the shadows of ignorance and evil. That's why Ladies and gentlemen, it will be correct to say that there cannot be "Bharat Uday" without "Purvodaya". The government is working in mission mode to ensure connectivity, employment, and infrastructure in North East. With Look East evolving into Act East, the government envisages the north eastern states as India's gateway to Southeast Asia.

Ladies and Gentleman,

Last month I addressed the Lakhpati Didi programme of Self-Help groups in Rajasthan. I addressed SHGs here also. I am delighted to know that SHGs are playing an important role in value addition and

supply chain. I was told that the "Meghalaya Collectives" brand showcases diverse products and connects communities. The "Meghalayan Age" initiative builds customer networks and enhances market responsiveness. Platforms like the North East Food Show and APEDA foster buyer-seller interactions. The FOCUS program identifies and promotes production clusters of marketable produce like the Queen pineapple, known for its exceptional sweetness.

Meghalaya government's objective of making the state an ambitious centre of economic growth is aligned with the national goal of making India a developed country when we celebrate the 100 years of our independence.

The journey towards this ambitious goal won't be without its challenges but I am sure we will meet each target, scale new heights and overcome hurdles to attain our objective. With moral leadership, right direction and hard labour we will surely emerge as a role model for the world. In the end, I thank you all for your love and affection and wish you a very bright future.

Khublei Shibun,  
Jai Hind!  
Jai Bharat!