



Address

Of

Hon'ble Vice President of India

Shri M. Venkaiah Naidu

To

The Legislative Assembly of Mizoram, Aizawl

On

10th March, 2022.

KA UNAU DUH TAK TE U, CHIBAI VEK U LE!

IN BUL-A KA LO AWM THEI HI KA LAW M EM EM ANI.

Dr. Hari Babu Kambhampati, Hon'ble Governor of Mizoram

Shri Lalrinliana Sailo, Hon'ble Speaker, Legislative Assembly,
Mizoram

Shri Pu Zoramthanga, Hon'ble Chief Minister of Mizoram

Hon'ble members Mizoram Legislative Assembly

I am delighted to be here today amongst you all, to meet and address you in this august House, which for the people and the beautiful state of Mizoram is the highest law-making body and truly epitomises our democratic principles and ethos.

I thank the Speaker, the Chief Minister, Dy. Chief Minister, Ministers and all the Members of the Mizoram Legislative Assembly for giving me this opportunity.

At the outset, I convey my greetings and my best wishes to the people of Mizoram. I was told that this year is the 50th Anniversary of the Mizoram Legislative Assembly with the Golden Jubilee Celebration slated in May.

I congratulate all the Members - past and present- of this august House on this historic occasion. It is a happy coincidence that this year we are also celebrating the 75 years of development as an independent nation. Your Assembly's Swarna Mahotsav and the country's Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav celebrate India's remarkable progress on its democratic journey. 50 years ago, Mizoram became a separate entity and started its journey as a Union Territory and later became a full-fledged state of the Union of India on 20th February 1987 becoming the 23rd state.

I am specially pleased at the way Mizoram has deepened our country's democratic roots by peaceful electoral processes, graceful conduct of legislators in the Assembly and sustained, inclusive development endeavour over the last five decades.

We need to recognize the exalted place that law making bodies occupy in public perception. It is, indeed, the sacred place where people's voices are articulated and heard, where their hopes and fears are

debated, where laws that protect them, foster their growth and enable fast-tracked national development are formulated.

It is gratifying to note that the sessions of the House are conducted with utmost discipline, diligence and decorum. You have, indeed, upheld the trust, hopes and aspirations that people have reposed in you as their representatives. I congratulate all of you in setting a high benchmark that other state legislatures and even the Parliament can emulate.

Mizoram has demonstrated the power of dialogue and peaceful settlement of disputes so essential in a democracy. The signing of the historic Memorandum of Settlement between the Government of India, the Government of Mizoram and the Mizo National Front in 1986 ended more than two decades of unrest and strife and ushered in peace and progress. This Peace Accord has served as an example upon which similar peace agreements have become a reality in other parts of the North Eastern region.

You must be proud that Mizoram today is not only counted as one of the most peaceful states in the country but has embarked upon the developmental journey with a rare earnestness. This is ultimately what our constitution makers had dreamt of. They wanted our country's governance to be responsive to the needs and aspirations of the people and resolve differences through peaceful, democratic conversation.

I must congratulate the people of Mizoram for their total involvement which gave an extra-ordinary momentum to the political process, as a result of which the State witnessed the restoration of peace and order.

It is quite remarkable that your state has had peaceful elections right from the first State Assembly elections in 1987 to the recent 2018 elections. Significantly, I am told that there has never been a single instance of coercion or booth capturing in the history of Mizoram.

I am very happy to note that your state has taken the laudable initiative of strengthening grassroot level democracy as well. The Hon'ble Governor Dr. Hari Babu Kambhampati has informed me that regular elections have been held in the State at local levels in a peaceful, harmonious environment with the active involvement of the Church, the non-governmental organizations and the civil society.

This is truly a tribute to the character of the people determined to enhance the quality of our country's democratic ethos.

Mizoram occupies a special place in my heart—its rich history and splendid cultural diversity, its rolling hills, lakes and rivers, and breathtaking scenic beauty, have always held enduring appeal for me. It is indeed commendable that you have carefully nurtured and preserved this fascinating mosaic of ethnic and cultural traditions over centuries. Warmth, generosity, gentleness, kindness and compassion are defining and endearing attributes of the Mizo people.

I feel greatly enthused and inspired when I visit the North Eastern region. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has often spoken about the strengths and possibilities of the region and the immense collective potential it possesses. Truly, the eight states - Ashta Lakshmi as some have called them- are the pride of our great nation. Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, while pronouncing the Act East Policy in 2014 underlined that the North-Eastern Region would be its fulcrum under which this region would emerge as an effective growth engine for shared benefits. He further stressed that Culture, Commerce, Connectivity and Capacity Building would propel this Policy.

Mizoram occupies an area of strategic importance in the north-eastern corner of our great nation by virtue of being sandwiched between Myanmar in the east and south and Bangladesh in the west. Within the renewed Act East Policy of the Government of India, Mizoram is set to occupy the centre stage as it will serve as the all-important gateway of South East Asian economies into the region as well as into the country. I am confident that in the coming years Mizoram will become a fulcrum in the region's growth and development through the important Kaladan Multi Modal Project, which when completed will transform the economy of not just Mizoram but the entire North Eastern region and help accelerate economic growth and development.

Even though Mizoram was a late starter in the developmental process as compared to other North Eastern states, I am extremely pleased to note the rapid strides being made by this important state towards socio-economic development with completion of several infrastructure projects. This kind of transformation is clear evidence of resurgence, what I had earlier called 'NER in NER' which means 'The New Era of Resurgence in the North-Eastern Region'.

The Covid-19 pandemic has tested our nation's strength and resilience. I am told that Mizoram continues to be amongst the hardest hit states. I am happy to note that Mizoram has been able to fight the pandemic effectively due to the untiring efforts of communities, churches and community-based organizations. This unique model based on 'Tlawmngaihna' - the Mizo code of ethics and life as the guiding principle has been the mantra of Mizoram's fight against the pandemic. The synergy of collective efforts has apparently contributed to low mortality and low hospitalization rates.

Mizoram has exemplified the essential dimension of democracy in its recognition of making development people-centric and empowering people to become active agents of positive change.

The truest measure of a progressive State is the welfare of its people and their development. It should be the effort of the government to ensure that the benefits of growth reach all sections of the society. I am happy to learn about the State Government's flagship programme, the Socio-Economic Development Programme (SEDP), which seeks to bring about socio economic development that is inclusive and people-centric.

It is heartening that in the latest Sustainable Development Goals- SDG India Index 2021, Mizoram has improved its ranking from the 21st position in the 2019-20 Index to the 12th position in 2020-21 Index. The resources and assets, whether they are - agro-forestry based resources, particularly the bamboo rich resources of the state, the river resources, the congenial weather must be harnessed in all possible ways to make sustainable development a reality. Under the leadership of the able Chief Minister, I am sure that the state government will achieve its SDGs.

Mizoram's impressive track record has enabled it to draw upon a substantial support from the Union Government and various agencies for its developmental endeavours. This is evident in the allocation of funds to the tune of Rs. 600 crores in the Union Budget this year for two projects under the newly announced Prime Minister's Development Initiative for North-East (PM-DevINE) Scheme. These two projects - Construction of Aizawl By-Pass on the Western Side (from Sihhmui to Muallungthu) for Rs. 500 crores and Rs.100 crore for the Pilot Project for Construction of Bamboo Link Roads at

different locations in various districts in the State will go a long way in boosting the State's economy and securing livelihoods for many people.

I would like to emphasize the crucial importance of physical infrastructure, particularly transport infrastructure, as a key prerequisite for economic development. I am aware that the State Government is focusing on this and I would encourage them to continue their efforts. I am happy that certain projects like Champhai-Zokhawthar road, Tlabung-Kawrpuchhuah and Chhumkhum-Chawngte road constructed with World Bank fund and Serchhip-Buarpui road constructed under Asian Development Bank were completed last year. I am told that the construction of the broad gauge line from Bairabi to Sihmui, near Aizawl is making good progress. Once it is completed, it will open up new growth avenues and usher a new era of progress and development.

Along with infrastructure development, you are quite appropriately focusing your attention on agriculture and allied activities like horticulture and floriculture. In Mizoram, like in many parts of the country, agriculture is the main occupation and some of the major festivals like Mim Kut, Chapchar Kut and Pawl Kut in Mizoram are connected with agricultural activities. Development of agriculture is essential for bringing about overall prosperity and for attaining food security. Sustainable agricultural practices must be promoted and encouraged.

In addition, Mizoram has a great potential for expanding horticulture and floriculture. Orchids and Anthuriums, for example, can, not only generate additional income to farmers but also make Mizoram a favourite tourist destination. The Anthurium Festival and the traditional festival of Chapchar Kut which you celebrated just last week can also help in the promotion of tourism.

Mizoram is blessed with rich forest resources which need to be preserved and protected. We have inherited a beautiful planet and it is our moral duty to leave enough resources for future generations. This requires an attitude of caring for nature, avoiding wasteful consumption and increasing the use of renewable sources of energy namely hydroelectricity, solar, wind and biomass.

Mizoram has great scope for small scale industries based on bamboo and timber products, agro-industry, handloom and handicrafts, as well as medicinal and aromatic plants. The beautiful Mizo shawls and Puan of different designs reflect the weaving skill of the Mizo women.

Your state is, indeed, richly endowed with natural resources and you are nurturing human resources well through education and health.

I am happy to note that Mizoram attained a literacy rate, second only to Kerala among the states. With their high literacy levels and English-language skills, the youth of Mizoram enjoy a distinct advantage. This talented large pool of human resources is, today, scripting Mizoram's development journey and of the nation as well.

While you have steadily strengthened our country's democratic fabric and have set a shining example of ideal democratic traditions, I thought there are a few areas of further improvement that you may like to take note of.

Two days ago, on the 8th of March, the world celebrated the International Women's Day. It was an occasion to recognize that our development strategy must fully involve women. Their participation in all walks of life can accelerate development and make our development process more inclusive. This is also in keeping with the central principle of a vibrant democracy where each person has equitable opportunities to grow and contribute to the growth of the country.

An issue that I would like to flag is representation of women in the legislatures of our country. It is generally perceived that the women enjoy a better position in the socio-cultural and political matrix of this region given its cultural ethos. But I find representation of women in the Legislative Assemblies of the North-Eastern States is on the lower side. While the Assemblies of Mizoram and Nagaland do not have any women Members, it ranged from two in case of Manipur to five in the Tripura Legislative Assembly. Of the total 498 Members in the eight Legislative Assemblies of the region, there are only 20 women Members constituting only 4%. There is a strong case for involving more women Members in the law making in the region. Even in the Parliament women constitute only about 11%.

I sincerely hope that in the years to come, women will get elected in considerable strength to this Assembly.

You may also like to examine if the Assembly sessions should also be planned over a reasonable period of time so that there is enough time to deliberate, discuss, debate and finally, decide. We must have more sittings of legislatures and more constructive debates in each session. The legislatures, including that of North-East States need to meet more often and for longer duration and devote themselves to law making, ensuring accountability of the executive and discussing issues of larger public interest.

With ample natural resources and a conducive atmosphere, the close-knit Mizo society can aspire to become one of the most prosperous states in the country. I am touched by the warm welcome and colourful reception you have accorded me today. I would like to thank the Hon'ble Governor, the Hon'ble Chief Minister, the Hon'ble Speaker, the Hon'ble Deputy Chief Minister, Ministers and MLAs and the Government of Mizoram. Hon'ble Governor of Mizoram has been a long-time friend and colleague having worked together in public life. I am happy to visit Mizoram while he is here.

I once again convey my greetings and good wishes to each one of you, Hon'ble Members of this august House, and all the people of Mizoram for your dedication, hard work and your untiring efforts to make your beautiful state into one of the most prosperous and peaceful states in our country.

Let us continue to work as Team India, capitalizing on each other's strengths with the ultimate aim of transforming the lives of our people in this region as well as the country as a whole. As we celebrate 75 years of development in independent India, *Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsava*, we must resolve, take a Maha Sankalp, to strengthen the grand democratic tradition of our nation. We must ensure that our State Assemblies and the Parliament become effective instruments for shaping the new India, we all are dreaming of. Our democracy is one of the oldest and the largest democracies in the world. Let us make it the best.

Jai Hind !

KA LAWM E