



1. Hon'ble Chairman, North-Eastern Council (NEC), Shri Amit Shah ji;

Hon'ble Vice Chairman, NEC, Dr. Jitendra Singh ji;

Hon'ble Governors and Chief Ministers of North Eastern States;

Other Distinguished Members of the Council;

Ladies and Gentlemen;

2. I consider it as a great honour to be present amidst you all here in the 68th NEC Meeting as a representative of the 37 lakh people of the state of Tripura.

2.1 Since the Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi ji has assumed office, he has directed special attention towards North Eastern States. This has given the region visibility and recognition across the political, social and cultural realm and brought the region closer to the rest of the Nation and development of economy, infrastructure, employment, industry, and culture.

2.2 I welcome Union Home Minister, Shri Amit Shah ji, the Chairman of the NEC. I am more than confident that under his able guidance the development initiatives in the North East region would bring progress and prosperity in the entire region.

2.3 I am extremely thankful to the Union Minister of State (I/C), Ministry of Development of North-Eastern Region (DONER), Dr. Jitendra Singh ji who has been a guiding light for the development of North-East. As the Vice Chairman of the Council, his valuable support is always available for the holistic growth of the region.

2.4 Government of Tripura simply believes in PRT i.e. Perform Reform and Transform, the State as Model State in the next 3 years.

3. During the last 17 months, the State Government of Tripura has undertaken several path breaking initiatives to bring about a sea change in the socio-economic scenario of the State. Few of these are:

3.1 For the first time, the State Government and Food Corporation of India jointly have taken an initiative for Paddy procurement at Minimum Support Price. Under this initiative, 10,406 MT Paddy was purchased in 2018-19 and 16,470 MT Paddy in 2019-20 at Rs.17.50 per Kg. This has increased the profit margin of farmers by Rs.5 to Rs.7 per Kg.

3.2 Queen Pineapple, after being declared as State Fruit of Tripura by the Hon'ble President of India last year, has made it to the Domestic and International markets to Dubai and Qatar, in addition to Bangladesh and other states in India. During 2019, 3,500 MT Queen and Kew pineapples have been exported outside the State, of which, 300 MT or so was exported to Dubai and Bangladesh. The farmers are now getting proactive Government support for cultivation and marketing pineapples.

3.3 To encourage afforestation and beautification of roads, the State Government formulated a new scheme Roadside Beautification and Plantation of Trees (RBPT) for 13,120-km stretch of roadways, including 853km-stretch of national highways in the State. In the first phase, the roadside plantation along a 125km-stretch between Badharghat in Agartala and Sabroom will be completed by next month. The State Government is committed to provide a monthly assistance of Rs. 200 per family for the upkeep of plants on the roadside in front of their houses.

3.4 State Government also launched a new scheme called Atal Jaldhara Mission with an objective of ensuring pure drinking water facility in every household by the year 2022 and it is for the first time in the State's history that such a scheme on its own at a cost of Rs.840 crore has been taken up.

3.5 The State Government has constituted Tripura Urban Development Authority (TUDA) last year and this Urban Body floated 3 township projects for constructing 1,000 flats in Agartala.

3.6 The State Government will soon launch a project to provide 10,000 cows to 5,000 farmer families through bank loans to help solve unemployment

problem to some extent, fulfill the demand of milk and help minimising malnutrition. Under the project, farmers will have to buy cows with the help of bank loans.

3.7 The State Government is proposing to set up an ambitious 'Cultural Hub' at a cost of Rs 200 crore to integrate and boost the diverse and traditional cultural harmony among the North Eastern States. Full-fledged branch centres of four autonomous bodies under the Union Ministry of Culture -- Lalit Kala Akademi, National School of Drama, Sahitya Akademi, Sangeet Natak Akademi - - would be accommodated in the hub. Recently, a regional centre of the Lalit Kala Akademi, India's national academy of fine arts, has been set up in Agartala to encourage and further develop the traditional life and culture of 19 tribes, who constitute one third of Tripura's population.

3.8 The State Government would soon have an IT hub to provide more employment opportunities in the state and also for the entire North Eastern Region. The tender process for setting up an IT hub has already begun and the Government is determined to raise the project. Once the project is implemented, youth of the North Eastern Region would not have to rush for Bangalore, Hyderabad or Chennai to get job in IT sector.

#### **4. NEC Issues:**

4.1 In the 66<sup>th</sup> Plenary of the North Eastern Council, the normative allocation of NEC Budget among NE states was approved and it was decided that 12% of allocation would be made to Tripura as per a formula based on various development indices like the geographical condition, population and human index, etc.. However, based on the releases made during the last 5 years (2014-15 to 2018-19), it has been observed that the share of Tripura over these years has been only 7.20%. It is indeed an area of concern for our State. It is requested to adhere for providing 12% share to Tripura.

4.2 Presently, 60 % of the NEC budget is distributed among the 8 NE states and the remaining 40% Budget is set aside for Central component for Central

Ministries and agencies for taking up regional projects. Instead, it may be well thought of whether 90% NEC Budget may be distributed to the NE states and the remaining 10% may be retained by NEC for taking up such regional projects which are necessary for the region and the projects for the State be finalised by a committee headed by state's Chief Secretary like that of MoDoNER system of sanctioning projects. This will expedite sanction as well as speed of NEC projects implementation in the state. State Government may be given freedom to increase or decrease project cost as per their requirement and also make component-wise changes in the projects.

4.3 The outlay for Rs. 580 crore for 2019-20 to NEC is too small to take care of the ongoing incomplete projects leaving hardly any worth mentioning amount for new projects in the pipeline. In order to address the problem of regional disparity, NEC may be adequately funded and its budget during 2019-20 may also be substantially enhanced.

4.4 NEC liabilities for the ongoing projects of Tripura is perhaps the lowest among the North Eastern States. I would, therefore, request Ministry of DoNER to sanction some new projects, particularly, "Regional Nursing College at Hapania" for an estimated cost of Rs. 65.14 crore, "Construction of 132 KV D/C Transmission line from Surjamaninagar Sub-station to Udaipur Sub-station (40 KM) including 2 (two) feeders bay at Udaipur, Banduar" at an estimated cost of Rs. 38.77 crore and "Improvement and up-gradation of road from Hmunpui (NH-44A) to Damcherra (Tripura-Mizoram Border) via Monchuang in the State of Tripura" at an estimated cost of Rs. 82.47 crore under the scheme North East Road Sector Development Scheme(NERSDS).

4.5 NEC may be reoriented from time to time according to the shifting demands of NE Region so that it can play a pivotal role as a Regional Planning Body.

## **5. Government of India Issues:**

5.1 Tripura faces fund constraints in implementation of Centrally Sponsored Schemes(CSS) and schemes under Central Assistance to State Plan (CASP). Even though the funding pattern between Central Ministries and State Governments of NE States is 90:10, it is still a difficult to meet even 10% State share due to fund constraints. Consequently, many programmes under CSS do not get implemented, resulting in not only the State losing out, but also the Central Ministries not being able to spend the required 10% of their budgets for the NE Region. As a matter of fact, the situation is unlikely to be different in the other North Eastern States. In this context, NEC funding for schemes/projects of NE States may be provided 100% grant. It would be appropriate if NEC sets apart some of its yearly budget for meeting the 10% State share of the NE States for the schemes under CSS and CASP. This would be of immense help to the NE States for mobilizing adequate central funds for implementation of Centrally Sponsored Schemes (CSS).

5.2 Ministry of Road Transport and Highways may arrange notification of all the National Highways declared In-principle declared in the State at the earliest. For renovation, repair and maintenance of existing National highways, Ministry may provide adequate support to the State Government.

5.3 River based transport from Bangladesh to India and vice-versa will help the goods movement from Chittagong Port to Tripura and other North-Eastern States like Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram, etc., thus making Tripura to become a gateway to North East. This project may be expedited and grounded at the earliest by declaration of River Gumti as Indo-Bangladesh protocol route, etc. Urgently.

5.4 The public sector companies in India may be permitted to spend 10% of their CSR funds in the NE States. This will pave way for early implementation of 'HIRA' the grand initiative of Hon'ble Prime Minister, which will boost not only tourism sector but also many other sector in the state.

5.5 Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE), Government of India has launched the Grid connected solar roof top scheme Phase-II and the Central grant has been reduced to 40% for upto 3 KW and beyond 3 KW it is 20%. The actual price discovered through tender in Tripura is much higher than bench mark cost due to high transportation cost, etc. The actual Central Financial Assistance (CFA) may translate to 30% instead of 40% and balance burden has to be borne by beneficiary. Due to very high burden on the part of the beneficiary, the solar roof top scheme and solar pumps and solarisation of existing pumps for farmers would not be attractive and viable. Therefore, 90% grant and 10% beneficiary share of the project cost is required for successful implementation of the project.

5.6 In many schemes share of State has been kept at much higher than 10% as per earlier practice. For example in Smart City project, the state share is 50%. The North East states are finding it difficult to contribute such a share because of financial constraints. The issue needs to be looked into.

5.7 In NEC and many central schemes, the state is being asked to release the state share first. This is a clear deviation from the earlier practice. The releases from NEC and central ministries may not be made conditional i.e. release of state share first. This delays the implementation of the projects and puts severe constraints on the finances of the State. The issue needs to be favourably looked into.

5.8 Most of the NE states are revenue deficient. The Finance Commission recommends revenue gap grant in addition to normal devolution. It has been seen that there is an additional gap in shortfall with regard to normal devolution in share of central taxes because of short collection of GST etc. For example, Tripura is expected to receive Rs. 1461 crore less share of taxes than recommended by the 14<sup>th</sup> Finance Commission. The revenue deficient states are required to meet the entire shortfall in share of central taxes by themselves. For the NE states it becomes very difficult to meet such shortfall because of narrow resource base. Hence, Government of India is requested to consider

compensating the same through additional revenue gap grant to revenue deficient NE states.

I am confident that the deliberations and the decisions of this NEC meeting would go a long way in ensuring the comprehensive development of North East India.

**Thank you.**

**Jai Hind.**