

5th January 2015

Upon arrival met Chief Minister, Manipur and discussed the steps taken to make NLCPR process more transparent and consultative. He requested that action be taken to approve four projects of critical importance to the State. Of these, three have been approved and the remaining one passed by the EFC, is being sent to NEC to sanction. He was also briefed on the amount given for ongoing projects of the State. In regard to NER funds, I requested the State to let us have details of roads that were of strategic nature or those that were inter-state and which had been neglected by the other State in view of its lesser relative importance. Further, I explained our plans with regard to organic farming and requested the State's participation to make the programme a success given the success of other livelihood related programmes in the State.

A discussion was also held with Joint Director Planning who is overseeing the watershed development programme and the NERCORMP in the State. I explained the overall approach of the proposed Organic Farming scheme in terms of the Anand pattern with which she was familiar. The present situation is that women bring their small quantity of produce to the town market and individually market. The group approach for vegetables and fruits will facilitate this process. She said that the existing IWMP watershed programme would also be converged with this programme.

In regard to NERCORMP, she said that there was considerable interest in introducing this programme to more blocks/districts as it was considered to be very popular and successful. The new Programme Director of NRLM also attended this discussion. The programme was new and staff had not yet been appointed.

Left for Moreh post-lunch and arrived late evening. Halt.

6th January 2015

Visited Moreh town. Suggested to the Sub divisional officer and the District Deputy Commissioner that a redevelopment plan coupled to an urban plan for Moreh that would improve its attraction as a tourist point and also the living standards of the residents could be attempted. The present main roads were narrow and costs of acquisition for broadening were stated to be high. In such a case, the cooperation of residents could be sought by providing development services of Sites & Services: supply of water, sewage systems adopting a block approach where the block taken up was redeveloped with a good road and permitting commercial establishments in the ground floor all around and residences upstairs. Such a pilot could be funded by NEC as a new urban planning initiative in a sector currently not considered by NEC. In any case, Government would provide such services in the future and acquisition costs would only go up. Such a redeveloped town cum market would greatly support the development of the area including for the formation and development of a smart city.

Inspected the project for renovation of Yatri Niwas funded by NEC on 100% basis. This project is learnt to have been set up by BADP under MHA barely seven years ago and was already run down with even illegal occupants from surrounding areas, who had to be evicted for the work to commence. The project under implementation has been visited by several officers of the NEC including the Planning Adviser as the latest. The work done as seen at site was for some quarters for staff with galvalume sheeting, PCC pavement in front yard including for parking area, raising the height of compound wall all around, a raised water tank under construction, replacement of floors in building corridors and rooms with vitrified tiles and renovation within rooms although electrical

fittings remain external. A few rooms remained in original condition and it was surprising to note that the tile flooring was of good quality and may not have needed replacement at all. Renovation cost for 22 rooms is projected in the estimate at roughly Rs 10 lakhs per room but not much evidence of such expenditure could be seen. The building is only 80'x70' or 5600 sft external plinth and the reported CPWD rate for overall cost of a building is Rs 1500 per sft which indicates a new building cost of Rs 1.68 crores at most for this kind of two storey galvalume sheeted building. The progress report shows 40% completion of landscaping but the paved yard and parking area do not permit any such luxury and expenditure is not much in evidence. It was observed that for the 22 rooms, the previous ground level sump was large enough to pump to a few plastic overhead tanks that would serve guests making the water tower unnecessary. The overall estimate of costs seems also highly exaggerated and two or more buildings of the same type could have been constructed with the Rs 4.078 crores granted for this 'renovation' project. It is also moot that renovation projects cannot normally be included in the budget head for this sanction and this needs to be verified. Quite apart from the implementing agency, this project calls into question the competence and propriety of appraisal in NEC, the consequent sanction and the nature or purpose of several visits made to the site by senior officers of NEC including the need and utility of the visit subsequently learnt to have been proposed on 10/1/2015 by JS&FA, NEC. A full report with details of persons who processed these files may be obtained from Secretary, NEC immediately. SE, Shri Borooah may be requested to examine the issue and submit his views.

On the return journey to Imphal, visited the Jivan Hospital, a private venture at Kakching, a busy market town near Pallel (Chandel district) in Imphal East district on the NH. NEC has funded acquisition of a CT scan and other equipment for this hospital on 100% basis for a trauma cum emergency centre. An MOU is learnt to have been signed between the NEC, State Government and the Jivan Hospital. However, the contents of the MOU in regard to providing free or subsidised treatment to poor patients is not clear nor in terms of how these provisions can be enforced. From past knowledge of such agreements in the rest of the country, these are uniformly, failures in ensuring that public resources have been properly bestowed. In this case, the selection of beneficiary should perhaps have followed CVC guidelines and have been made by open advertisement followed by negotiation of terms for ensuring enforcement of benefits. In the instant case, clearly only some portion of the capital costs have been met while remaining capital costs and operating costs are borne by the hospital. The benefit to poor patients could therefore, have been quantified for the equipment provided and declared in a notice board and by information to all local bodies - official and community followed by routine monitoring. A report in this matter may be obtained from Secretary, NEC along with a copy and relevant notings regarding the MOU.

Inspected a Water Supply scheme funded by NLCPR at Sapam (Thoubal district) and adjoining villages for a cost of Rs 4.07 crores. The project obtains water from an unlined percolation pond that draws from an adjoining perennial stream. The water is reported to have been tested and found to be not contaminated by the surrounding paddy fields (separated from the pond by the above-mentioned stream) which use chemical fertilisers particularly urea. The water is drawn with a 10HP pump to a collection tank, filtered, aerated and then stored in a large reservoir from which water is pumped twice a day to villages with a 40HP pump. The Village Committee which has taken charge of the assets is collecting Rs 150 per household per month and expects this amount to be enough to cover costs. Since water quality is found to be good by villagers, 70% collection percentage is achieved and more is expected. The safety of the unprotected water source may need to be assured

including for examination of the option of adding a collector well within the pond adjoining the stream but this will need investigation by ground water experts.

On return to Imphal, jointly reviewed the status of NLCPR and NEC projects in the State with the Chief Secretary and all officers. Minutes may be referred for details. The issue of NLCPR bearing some of the DPR and project cost expenses were discussed for consideration by M/DoNER (since done on 9.1.2015).

The meeting was followed by a Cultural Programme organised by the Government which depicted the cultural perspectives of different communities in the State.

7th January 2015

Visited Hengbung village in Senapati district. A KVK has been established by the Foundation for Environment & Economic Development Services (FEEDS), Hengbung by the local village chief and former MLA (Kipgen). A number of activities have been taken up by this KVK which is under the leadership of the villagers themselves and fits into the model that I had earlier proposed in 2012 to ICAR for the Nilgiris for a near-defunct KVK operated by UPASI and for which I had spoken at the annual review of KVKs at ICAR in August 2014 and letter sent to Agriculture Minister. This KVK also took the initiative to establish an Orchid Research & Development Centre for conserving orchid gene plasm of the eastern Himalayan region with DST support and had obtained some DBT funding. The Centre examines orchid DNA with a PCR and mapping supported with outsourced DNA analysis. Tissue culture plantules are being disseminated to villagers for expanding orchid production for commercial exploitation. They report that they have developed protocols for several orchid types native to the region. The organisation along with the KVK is a potential Support Organisations for the new commercial organic programme.

Visited a water supply scheme funded by NLCPR for Hengbung and nearby villages for Rs 4.23 crores. Commenced in February 2011, the project was completed and handed over to the Village Committee in October 2014. The scheme draws water from a weir built to impound water on a jungle stream and after collection by gravity in a GLR of 301 KL capacity, further transmits the water 24x7 hours to four villages in tanks located near each street from which each household may draw water. Rs 50 is being collected every month which appears to be insufficient to meet maintenance costs including for the watchman who has to be located at the GLR and control the valves if needed. This is despite the fact that the supply did not involve any pumps or electricity costs. It was suggested that house connections would enable higher collection to offset a cross-subsidy offered to families that depended on the common tap facility. Government policy in this sector appears to differ in the state in comparison to other states in the country but the principle of village stakeholder ownership is as recommended and the policy followed is economically rational as the fees collected are directly relatable to the service provided.

Proceeded to Maram village area where a large number of Self Help Groups have been organised under NERCORMP. Facilitating NGO is SEEDS. A public meeting had been organised where the SHG group members from different villages in the area (Maram Nagas) expressed their views on the programme and their pressing priorities. They felt that the programme finished too early but they had made substantial savings and had improved and diversified their livelihood styles especially in organic production of vegetables and its marketing. Some of the issues raised were: Access to bank facilities was poor. It was noticed that the SBI charged a transfer fee apparently because the funds were held in a more distant branch and had to be transferred to their local branch. There also appeared to be no banking correspondent. On inquiry, it was learnt that in Manipur, the slower

progress in JDY was because of the lower enrolment of the hill villagers including this one. Other demands included: Tailoring centre, Weaving centre, Bigger corpus fund needed to increase fund availability, that Government officers found it difficult to visit these areas, water supply schemes, that the NERCORMP programme had left uncovered nearby villages which had caused dissatisfaction, and the need to develop ecotourism.

In response to the issues raised, I advised the villagers that the excellent example of the road built by villagers themselves, to this assembly area was an example of what progress could achieve and that infrastructure co-evolved with their efforts to enhance their livelihoods. In this respect, the Government was ready to work with the villagers. After explaining the context of SHGs in the rest of the country, in many places of which, Agricultural Cooperative Banks already existed and yet the SHGs had prospered considerably and accumulated large savings. I explained Government of India's and the Prime Minister's determination to ensure that these areas achieved parity for this region in infrastructure and economic development as in the rest of the country. This was also the purpose of the Jan Dhan Yojana for which I requested their cooperation in enrolment since these areas still lagged behind. As for the Banking Correspondent, I explained that the SHGs could themselves suggest a trustworthy person who could be taken on contract by the distant bank as a BC and this was accepted policy in banks in other parts of the country. In this connection, I also referred to the new programme initiated in the Ministry of DoNER for Organic Farming and requested their cooperation to ensure that the programme yielded ample benefits to farmers in this and other regions of the State. A local organisation, Maramai Namdi NaRM-G Association, presented a petition for some construction proposals including for a marketing complex, public library, office complex for SHGs, and extension of SHG scheme to new areas. The last aspect perhaps also points to a defect in the NERCORMP scheme since it selects some villages and leaves out some (it appears, as a matter of strategy) but this defect has been avoided in the GOI's NRLM and also does not figure in the new Organic Farming scheme of DoNER. On the gaps in appointment of Banking Correspondent in unbanked areas, we may write to Indian Banks Association under copy to Dept of FS to establish some norms given that many SHGs had been established in the north east and the need for wider bank presence including, at the very least with BCs who could be got recommended by the local SHGs so that they also took responsibility for the BCs work.

Since the tour programme was delayed, the district hospital funded by NLCPR and which continues to be under implementation even after eight years, could not be inspected but seen from the road, it is an impressive building. Typically, such remotely located hospitals should provide accommodation for doctors and essential supporting staff and some minimal facilities for companions of patients, both of which appear not to have been designed. It has been observed after visiting both the places that there is acute shortage of Radiologists and other specialised doctors and without proper provision of residential accommodation for them in such remote areas, chances to get will much more difficult.

Met Senapati town representatives who gave a joint representation, pressing their request for a stadium for the town with a gallery and developed grounds. The DC was requested to formulate proposals through the State Government for NEC/NLCPR. They also requested some additional needs for the district hospital: staff quarters, solar PV hot water, rain water harvesting to meet water needs for the dry season in the hospital, a dormitory for companions of patients, and proper roads in the approach. The DC was requested to seek State Government support and that NEC may support a few areas only after verifying that the original scheme did not include those items.

Returned to Imphal to review the stage of NERLP with the Project Director and to acquaint myself with its progress. He also advised of the slow stage of progress in Mizoram because of the misuse of funds by the Project Officer and on inquiry, of inadequate support from the Government in investigating the lapses and for appropriate punishment of the depute from Social Welfare Department of the Government of India who had since been reverted and had escaped punishment.

A meeting was then held to complete the adjourned discussion for selection of new projects for Mizoram State with the Secretary, Planning. The review determined that most of the proposals were inadequately studied and posed. A complete review was suggested for a final discussion over videoconference so that any spill over of funds could be passed on to other needy states or programmes. I also expressed my unhappiness to the Secretary on the misuse of funds by the previous NERLP officer and that the same level of competence was being seen in proposals or quality of work. In this connection, they were also advised that the previous two bamboo development roads for which jungle clearance alone had been done after start eight years ago and where the jungle had grown back, the entire amount would be adjusted against new or pending sanctions and the appropriate department should be advised of the matter for suitable action.

A discussion was held with Principal Secretary, Finance, Power & RC and the Secretary to CM on various developmental issues including Sports and culture.

A discussion was then held with the Project Engineers of NESRIP project. There was some delay in the State government releasing funds already disbursed (though late) by DoNER. We may write to the State Government to expedite release since the CSC has threatened to withdraw. It also appears that the PMC is not competent and the last person sent by them did not know the difference between WBM and WMM! Further, they said the PMC had not evinced any greater interest in the project work. We will need to review the work of the PMC to avoid being placed in a situation where we would have to proceed for recovery of overpayments and blacklisting.

8th January 2015

Visited the Sports Stadium. The track had been refurbished recently and looked good. The facilities are being put to good use with a large number of children.

Kangla Fort Museum: A small museum has been set up. Trash is being thrown among overgrown weeds at the back of the museum. I suggested that the open grounds could be taken up to grown trees and medicinal plants, etc endemic to the region and a butterfly park which will make the museum an educational centre for botany and zoology students while also promoting a clean environment. Director, Culture requested to approve the project of Light & Sound Show for Kangla Fort which has already been retained by the Ministry under NLCPR.

Cultural Centre cum Auditorium: Visited the nicely built and excellently furnished centre.

ICAR Research Complex for NEH region cum KVK: Visited the institute and was advised of the new crop varieties introduced for rice and the improved variety of groundnut. They have ample staff to serve as a Support Organisation for training as well as for preparation of training manuals and for development of suitable agronomic packages and practices.

Regional Centre for OF: Visited the institute located within the same campus and inspected the former section containing the biofertiliser production equipment of autoclave and fermenter. Two are available and can be quickly installed but more may be required. An assessment will need to be

made in other states on an urgent basis so that supply can be effected even during this financial year to target villages.

Interaction with the Press: An impromptu interview was sought by the local correspondent of Assam Tribune on the purpose of the visit and our plans and programmes. I mentioned our review of the NLCPR/NEC schemes with the Chief Secretary, the importance given to the North East by the Government of India and the frequent visits and interactions planned to speed up programme implementation and the new programme especially of Organic Farming intended to improve people's livelihoods.

Loktak Lake: Visited the world famous lake and its main floating island on which a café has been built and leased out and a guest house is being constructed. The overall approach and quality of development of such an attractive structure is very poor and this is being attributed to the fact that till 2008, this area was infested with insurgents. I suggested that they could take the model of a similar but quite inferior facility in Japan called 'Amanohashidate' or Gateway to Heaven and restrict access only to pedestrians and cyclists and build up both the small hills on the floating island with suitable facilities including a cable car. Secretary, Planning was accordingly advised to develop a suitable concept rather than take up adhoc improvements.

INA Museum, Moirang: Visited the museum and location where the Indian flag (tricolour) was raised at the first time. Improvements may be funded by NEC including their Son et Lumiere at this location or at Red Hill where a major battle between Japan cum INA and the British took place where only some huts seem to have been set up by the Japanese in memory. A request was made to approve the project of Light & sound Show for the INA Museum which has been retained under NLCPR Scheme.

Discussion with former CM Shri Keishing on the funding and stage of progress of his project for which he had earlier deposited Rs 1 crore from his MPLADS. I promised to look into the matter.

Left Imphal thereafter by the flight which departed at 1510 hours.



R. Vijaykumar
Secretary, Ministry of DoNER,
New Delhi

January 10, 2015