

## **Visit Notes on tour to Mizoram (12-15 May 2015)**

**12<sup>th</sup> May 2015**

- 1) This visit to Mizoram was primarily aimed at interacting with the State officials and others on the proposals for organic farming evolved in the Ministry in discussion with the States and on the proposals under formulation for development of self-sufficiency and marketable quantities of meat protein for domestic consumption and exports. Along with this, it was intended to review the stage and inspect a few works to assess the nature and quality of works executed in the State.
- 2) Arrived at Lengpui Mizoram airport, and visited Cricket stadium at Sihhmui constructed under NLCPR. An excellent ground, said to be of size equal to MCC grounds, with a few galleries have been constructed. The complement of hostels with dining facilities along with other requisites dressing rooms, medical/media rooms, practice pitch and drainage system was requested by the Cricket Association of Mizoram representatives present. This will enable the Association to host inter State and other tournaments. During a later meeting that day with the Hon.CM, who is the President of the Association, the development of the stadium was discussed given its unique location and ambience.
- 3) Called on the Hon. Chief Minister at 530 PM and discussed a number of issues of importance to the State. These included, besides the cricket stadium, the handover of the security at Lengpui airport to CISF since 19 companies of CRPF are already in the State including for security of the airport complex. Proposals have been sent to the Ministry of Civil Aviation and need to be pursued given the overall security issues in the North East. The proposals for Organic farming and as proposed for Animal husbandry development particularly, Piggery, were briefly outlined and our present focus on these sectors and also drinking water supply. The Hon. CM drew attention to the overcrowding of Aizawl and the growing population ingress from rural areas. He referred to 3-4 EAPs that the State had proposed and requested early examination of these proposals in DoNER. He particularly referred to the State's flagship programme of Land Use Policy in which several activities and funding sources had been converged and suggested greater scope for convergence of schemes which I said we would examine after getting full details.
- 4) A discussion primarily on Organic Farming was held with officials later in the evening centred around the proposals for developing farmer-led Anand pattern institutions. The officials were in agreement with the strategy but suggested that in Mizoram, men and women both engaged in farming, although more responsibility was assumed by the women. A compulsion to have only women members may not be acceptable in all locations. They suggested that linkages could be promoted with big and small buyers for offtake of produce. In particular, they emphasised the importance of truck to rail transfers by RO-RO and other

means and the critical importance of rail connectivity to the mainland. During the discussion, the State representatives made a presentation which cohered with the GOI proposals for organic farming but also suggested promotion of the biovillage concept of ICCOA that promoted commercialisation of the entire village farm activity, commodity specific units and action on organic certification. It was pointed out to the officials that any change should be gradual and while jhumming had developed over the years certain unsustainable elements, the object should be to replicate some of its positive elements of lower intensity, multicropping, promotion of animal husbandry or source of animal protein, and to achieve volumes by aggregating over a large area. This permitted each villager and village to also produce their subsistence needs and give them the scope to study alternatives as they grow and prosper and then devote more and more lands as they consider fit for commercial cropping. I reiterated that jhumming had developed in these areas as an ecologically appropriate response and to condemn it would be the wrong approach to the issue of improving farm incomes and livelihoods.

- 5) An interesting aspect that was mentioned during the discussions was that the new road to Tuipang was being built along the river which was good and they felt that gradually settlements will move towards the road sides to benefit from the better access to Silchar and beyond.
- 6) An incidental discussion was on the NPV and viability of hydropower projects in the State which made most of the run of the river projects identified not viable and they requested some solutions to the issue. This also came up later in the discussion with Chief Secretary. We may take up this issue with Ministry of Power since this is critical for self-sufficiency of power in the State. I, however, pointed out that the state had a great competitive advantage in tourism revenues coming from the high forest proportion and possibility of adventure tourism which could more than offset revenues lost in purchasing power.
- 7) An issue was raised on converging NRLM, NERLP and the new programmes with the State's Land Use Policy. I requested the State Government to send us full details of the SLUP to examine this possibility since these were livelihood programmes primarily targeted at the poor on a saturation mode.

**13th May 2015**

- 8) Visited Sainik school under construction at Chhingchhip with NLCPR funds. The importance of this school for Mizoram apparently lies in the large number of officers from Mizoram in the armed forces long back and their present diminished share. The Sainik School will enable better local representation and for that reason, merits full support since the State has little funds. The construction materials including aggregates come from distant locations. On inquiring the cost of cement, it was learnt that the delivered cost was `350 in contrast to Itanagar, Arunachal Pradesh where I was told that cement costs were `500. The costs in Itanagar need thorough investigation as this will simply boost work costs. Adviser

Transport, NEC may look into this and send a report in 15 days by 10<sup>th</sup> June. The school construction has been entrusted to Hindustan Construction, a CPSU, and is progressing well. However, the State needs to develop local sources of aggregates, sand and especially bricks since the supplied bricks were also chipped and warranted greater reliance on cement plaster for smooth finish which is a waste of resources. An alternative is to add about 5 per cent cement to local soil and make pressed bricks at site which may yield better and cheaper results.

- 9) Returned to Aizawl and visited the Melriat 133/33 KV substation around Aizawl town funded by NEC. Construction is complete and awaits charging.
- 10) A meeting was held with Chief Secretary and officials to discuss the progress of NLCPR and NEC works and the views of the State on various issues and on which support from DoNER could be provided. I clarified the idea of holding a camp Secretariat and that it did not mean opening an office of DoNER in each State. It was advised to them that senior officials of DoNER would visit frequently and be available for interaction and ideas with non-officials, officials and any member of the public. The following issues were then discussed:
  - a) Regarding NLCPR, it was stated that 21 building construction projects were pending for want of instalment payments by DoNER. These files may be traced and put up by month-end.
  - b) A request was made for a Museum in Aizawl which they could propose to NLCPR/NEC depending upon the cost of project. Similarly, the funding of incomplete Polytechnics could be posed to NEC.
  - c) The state requested review of KDZT road project funded by NEC to permit extension of time of completion for various project related reasons.
  - d) In this connection, a discussion arose on the need for funding the maintenance of roads built under various schemes. I pointed out the relevance of State funds for this purpose but also that the NERAMS software developed under the ADB projects treated roads as depreciating assets that need regular checks to assess condition of various sections and based on this assessment, maintenance priorities could be determined after keeping traffic in view. I also said that the Ministry would be happy to train the officers of the PWD in this software or with funding from NEC.
  - e) In regard to the new changes in CSS, the Finance Secretary mentioned that the budget head of NLCPR in GOI currently suggested 100% funding for 35 schemes including NLCPR and NEC which would be preferable in view of the low benefits obtained under from the 14<sup>th</sup> Finance Commission. The State Govt was advised that a decision was being taken by a Committee appointed by NITI Aayog. The Finance Secretary said that their Government wanted continuation of treatment as a Special Category State. I said that the Ministry would take up their request with the NITI Aayog for which Sr Adv (BC) may prepare suitable analyses using feedback from the eight States. The State's

suggestion to increase resources under NLCPR and NEC would also be taken up but absorption capacity was not adequate and a large number of projects remained ongoing which reflected badly on the programmes.

- f) Secretary Health requested attention to a retained project for funding quarters for staff in Lunglei Civil Hospital. While affirming the priority for quarters for doctors, I said that these will be reviewed shortly.
- g) On the subject of promotion of Agriculture and Horticulture including Floriculture, I suggested that the State Government could set up a Tissue development and Multiplication centre on the lines of models in Hengbung, Manipur and in Rumtek, Sikkim. Such a centre could be funded by NEC.
- h) A query was raised if ongoing projects funded by Tourism Ministry would be dropped for funding if the two new schemes (religious tourism, adventure tourism) were taken up. These will need to be clarified with that Ministry. For promoting tourism, I suggested the Tripura JV model with ITDC which could fund the project with state's land.
- i) The State Govt wanted a retained project for Aizawl fire station to be funded and it was agreed that it would be examined.
- j) In regard to irrigation projects, I suggested to them that participatory irrigation systems such as WUA should be invariably formulated with design features ensuring that tail end farmers get water first.
- k) I referred to the data on funding given by Ministry of Drinking Water & Sanitation which showed poor utilisation by Mizoram and that overlaps between years could not become an excuse. The State was urged to make maximum use of these funds and design innovatively so that energy needs for pumping were minimised and gravity flow systems used.
- l) In this regard, the PWD officials mentioned that they took the consent of land owners to draw pipes through their lands on condition that the work in that segment would be done by them. It was clarified to the officials that this was unobjectionable if a separate contract was drawn up and was irrelevant for a turnkey project since the contractor would settle terms with the land owner and ensure quality.
- m) A discussion arose on the use of departmental staff for some of the execution such as in the Melriat substation seen just previously that day. I mentioned our audit queries on this issue in NLCPR that it meant that the work was not being assigned on turnkey basis. The Chief Engineer had stated that they had a large number of staff on their rolls when the separation from Assam took place and they had to be employed since they were being paid in any case including for the period when they were not engaged in that particular funded work. In such a case, the officials argued, it was not reasonable to impose cuts or for audit to raise objections. I agreed to have this issue examined in the Ministry and to settle it amicably.

- n) Secretary Health raised the need for funding for a Drug Testing and another Food Testing Lab in the State. I explained that the Consumer Affairs Ministry was funding such projects proposed jointly by Consumer Federations and the concerned State Government for Food Testing. In the case of Drug Testing, both the allopathy wing and the AYUSH wing were separately funding such laboratories under the State's Drug Controller to assist him in his regulatory functions. The State should approach these Ministries for support and DoNER would be glad to be of assistance. We may also raise this agenda during our review with Health and Consumer Affairs Ministries (Sr Adv BC).
- o) On the need for development of Muga silk, the State was advised that many schemes were available with Sericulture dept and we would be happy to coordinate this function. The Ministry had already expressed its disappointment when it learnt that it required Germans to come to Meghalaya to teach eri rearers the method of degumming the eri yarn which was a rather trivial and well known technique for mulberry silk farmers and attested to the neglect by the huge establishment of the Central Silk Board. This would be taken up with the Ministry of Textiles.
- 11) A meeting was held later in the day with Member Secretary, State Planning Board Shri Thanga and Secretary, Planning. The object was to understand the nature of the State's Land Use Programme in the context of the request for convergence. Details of the programme objectives and coverage were requested and also if any evaluation had been done since this was entirely Centrally funded. Further, the proposed Organic Farming by Anand pattern was also discussed and valuable insights relevant to the programme shared.

**14th May 2015**

- 12) Visited Champhai district (by helicopter, returned by road). A meeting was held with the district officials, the district Panchayat President, members of the Young Men's Association and the Principal of the Govt Champhai college and some of his staff. They mainly wanted to improve tourist attraction in Champhai which is already an attractive tourist location. Suggestions included an auditorium cum convention centre and the need for cultural preservation of the megaliths etc found in the district for which a Cultural Centre was also important and a tennis court. I suggested that a tourism operators convention was to be held this year in Gangtok and the next could be held in this scenic location and requested the State Planning dept officials to press for this event.
- 13) A request was given to release funds for enabling electrification of the Khawbung WSS in Champhai. MDoNER may examine quickly since the scheme is pending only for this reason.
- 14) Inspected the newly constructed Arts and Science College in Champhai and suggested that the faculty could take up small projects funded by NEC to identify the biodiversity in flora and fauna in the region, the soil microbial composition and

also the genetic resource held by farmers. The College building has been done well and needs further support.

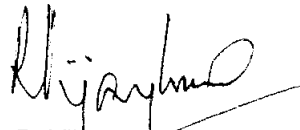
- 15) Visited a winery set up by a Grape Growers' Association. It appears that loan funds were taken for this purpose. The wine shows promise and currently a tie-up with a Guwahati firm for bulk marketing of wine has been arranged. However, maturation for long periods of time required working capital and a lot of capital for barrels or SS vats. It also appears that the State has not assisted the farmers with subsidy under the NEIPP for which they were clearly eligible – I recall the bar on wine was removed long back and may be verified. In any case, this is a farmer marketing linkage that deserves support and cheap capital.
- 16) Returned to Aizawl by road. Stopped en route at Khawzawl to discuss with a farmer and the local agricultural extension officer, the work done by him in developing his land. It transpired that he held a little above two hectares, which made him a large farmer, and had received support under the Land Use Policy of the State which was specially supported for five years till 2014-15 by the Planning Commission. He sells his pineapple grown in one hectare in Champhai. It appears the scheme made no marketing provision and left farmers to their own devices. It was also learnt separately that the pineapples grown in this region were of lower quality than elsewhere in Mizoram and in Tripura.

#### **15th May 2015**

- 17) Shri Zuaha and Shri Ranjit Mazumdar met me to discuss their suggestions on improvements in the State. In particular, they suggested an outlet for bamboo in the State by establishing a paper mill. I requested them to validate the technology and the needs of wood to be mixed with bamboo for paper production and then to take up the project and if they needed help, we could assist.
- 18) The Speaker of the Assembly presented a request to set up a Deputy Speaker's bungalow in the city and an MLAs' hostel to which I said we will examine and requested him to send the proposal through the Planning department. He also mentioned the need to support the backward areas of the three southern ATCs since the 14<sup>th</sup> FC had excluded the ATCs. I mentioned our plan to amend the NLCPR guidelines to specify such priorities and these would be borne in mind during sanction and these would be advised for NEC also. Proposals may accordingly be drawn up.
- 19) A representative of Thutak Nunguitu Team (TNT) presented a representation for establishing a rehabilitation centre for persons with disabilities, de-addiction, and orphanage home in Aizawl. He was requested to send proposals through the Planning dept.
- 20) A discussion on the State's piggery initiatives was arranged for which Adviser (Agri) NEC was present. The State has established a Regional Boar Semen station at Selesih and seven Satellite stations for boar semen with two boars each. Under LUP, selected beneficiaries (20542) are given one pig and a sty.

They explained their difficulties with high cost of pig feed and lack of organised breeding infrastructure. It was observed from the write-up provided that each sow was only producing 4.5 piglets per farrow which is far below the norm of at least ten piglets. Further, the scheme depended totally on subsidy for the feed and hence was not sustainable in the long term. A better model to support subsistence needs and for combining commercial availability was needed. For the Ministry, the Adviser set out the outlines of the programme which essentially adopted the model of Regional and Satellite stations but a NER station at Rani and a systematic programme of replacing the boars to prevent inbreeding. The Tripura model of entrepreneurs rearing and distributing piglets could be replaced by a village level system of upgrading the available and selected piglet (sow) with liquid semen from the Satellite station. For feed, the officials were asked to examine how each farmer could set aside a twentieth of his holding or five ares for producing feed material and centralised supply could be made at cost of mineral mixture and vitamins. A grinder at the village level would then suffice to meet the local needs of pig feed. Adviser, NEC was requested to coordinate this study and finalise his proposals for discussion with the relevant Ministries. Later, I visited the Veterinary Polyclinic funded under NLCPR and then proceeded to Lengpui airport.

- 21) Discussed the upgradation work done under NLCPR in the airport and inspected the runway and RESA (Runway End Safety Area) provided for safe operation of this table top airport. Other assets include apron extension, isolation parking bay and security fencing.



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