

**SPEECH OF HON'BLE GOVERNOR OF MEGHALAYA SHRI V. SHANMUGANATHAN**  
**ON THE OCCASION OF 1<sup>ST</sup> STATE LEVEL NSS MEET 2016**

Good morning every one. I am delighted to join you today to be a part of this state level meet. A day that I am sure all of you look forward to, a day to meet your fellow volunteers, share experiences and celebrate success stories. The National Service scheme has a wonderful legacy and carries forward the vision of our leaders that fought for independence from the British.

Our national leaders in their great wisdom felt that the students of India must, as part of their educational experience give time for social and labour service. They also felt that a national service scheme could be a powerful instrument for national integration. From the volunteers perspective, too there are benefits - students, are much more easily motivated to learn when confronted with real-life problems that need solutions, there is increased awareness of the community and world around them and their own responsibilities towards it. Most of all it teaches students to develop compassion and empathy for others. The social benefit is a deep appreciation of Indian society and its traditions. Volunteering to serve the community is a well-entrenched idea across the world.

In America in 1961, President John F. Kennedy inspired young people to serve their country through the Peace Corps, calling on Americans to "ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country." In the spirit of "doing for your country" the National Service Scheme was launched in Gandhiji's Birth Centenary in 1969 as a centrally sponsored scheme in 37 Universities involving 40,000 students with a primary focus on the development of personality of students through community service. It is perhaps one of the longest running schemes of the Indian Govt, being around for more than 42 years without any break. Since then volunteers, who devote 120 hours per year for two consecutive years, have covered a wide range of community related work such as Adoption of Villages, Construction and repair of roads, Afforestation, Conducting Literacy Classes, Water Shed Project, Plastic Eradication, Swatch Bharat Abhiyan, voluntary blood donation, eradication of polio and health awareness particularly HIV AIDS. The students enrolled under have shown

better understanding of social issues and have exhibited volunteerism at times of need.

I am told, that the total enrolment strength of student volunteers in the state of Meghalaya for the current year is approximately 22,000 comprising volunteers from 40 educational institutions (universities and colleges) and more than 100 Programme Officers. At the national level, has more than 3.2 million student volunteers on its roll spread over 251 Universities, more than 14,698 colleges and institutes of higher and technical education and 8174 Secondary schools all over the country. This is a huge network of young people and latent energy waiting to be unleashed. If leveraged fully, each of the 3.2 million volunteers can become role models for others. This is a good time for all of us to re-affirm our commitment to the spirit of national service and serving the community.

If every Indian in high school or college becomes a member, there would be over 200 million members in the future. Peak performance is possible only when all parts perform optimally. Inclusive growth is a real imperative. To my mind the National Service Scheme can play a major role in contributing to this inclusive model. How? Simply because volunteers are the bridges between development and the community. The proximity of volunteers to the people sensitizes them to their needs, thus they can channelize projects to meet societal needs. Community service in cities, villages may have completely different needs such as water management, adult literacy, disease prevention, child marriage, malnourishment etc. People with learning disabilities have difficulty understanding new information, learning new skills or coping independently. So the volunteer can help with activities, sports and crafts and social clubs, youth clubs and resource centres. Provide one to one support to families and assist at play schemes for children with learning disabilities. Discipline, teamwork, commitment and empathy are natural benefits of such initiatives specific inputs must be provided to all students to their communication and soft skills. How they walk, talk and conduct themselves when they interact with the larger community has a large bearing on their effectiveness and their confidence. Equipping them with these skills will hold them in good stead in their adult life when they join the world of work.

I am convinced that a stronger would make India stronger, a more participatory democracy; unite the youth of all backgrounds in a common cause; and help address many unmet social needs. The motto of the National Service Scheme is "Not Me, But You". Never before has the country needed to mobilize the enormous energies and talents of Indians through national service. Young volunteers almost invariably become better citizens themselves, enriching their families, communities and their nation over a lifetime. We know that those who participate in national service programs are often transformed into lifelong volunteers and civic leaders. They are more likely to enter careers in public service such as teaching, public safety, social work and military service. National service works as a training program for idealists, who then go on to take leading roles in non-profits and government agencies. Some may become social entrepreneurs, coming up with new solutions to social problems and implementing them on a large scale. The time has come for the program to capture the imagination and spirit of all Indians and mobilize them to work for the benefit of our nation.

India is one of the most youthful nations in the world, with over 65% of its population under 35. The government, under the leadership of Hon'ble Prime Minister, Shri. Narendra Modi ji, is fully committed for development and empowerment of youth so that they can realise their full potential and also contribute to the nation-building process .Not only that , the government is focussed on youth development and firmly hold the view that the youth should be active drivers and not just passive recipients of development process. Social participation plays a key role in development of personality of the youth.

It is necessary for one to have certain basic thoughts which are required for doing service. The attitude for service is important while rendering services. Service is care, concern and understanding of the pain and suffering of others. I call upon everyone to try and understand the pain that the underprivileged, the deprived and the suffering go through on a daily basis. There are multiple challenges confronting the state and an enormous amount of service is required to meet those challenges.