

**TELEVISED SPEECH BY SHRI V. SHANMUGANATHAN, HON'BLE
GOVERNOR OF MEGHALAYA, ON THE EVE OF INDEPENDENCE
DAY, 2015**

My dear fellow citizens,

1. On the occasion of our 69th Independence Day, I extend my heartiest greetings to each one of you. This is a solemn occasion for us to remember with gratitude the stellar contribution of the torch bearers of India's freedom movement - Mahatma Gandhi, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Vallabhai Patel, Maulana Azad, Lokmanya Tilak, Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, Subramanya Bharati and many others who provided the leadership to liberate the country from foreign rule. We also recollect with a nostalgic sense of pride, the contributions by the patriots of our own State- U Tirot Sing, U Kiang Nangbah, Pa Togan Sangma and many other for their selfless dedication to our struggle against the colonial rule. While honoring our freedom fighters, let us renew our pledge to re-dedicate ourselves to the service of our State and our Nation.

2. We, the people of Meghalaya, are part and parcel of our great motherland that is INDIA. India's diversity begins with its geography. In the far North, North East and North West are the great mountain ranges of the Himalayas - where stand the world's highest peaks - revered as holy by most of our

countrymen. Immediately below the Himalayas, a vast alluvial plain stretches in an unbroken surface across northern India, formed by the three great rivers, the Sindhu, the Ganga and the Brahmaputra. The Indo-Gangetic-Brahmaputra plain is one of the densely populated regions of the world. In the far west, lie the salty marshlands of the great Rann of Kutch. In the North East, India is decorated by seven sisters comprising the beautiful hill states of Meghalaya, Tripura, Mizoram, Manipur, Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh and Assam. A range of hills and rivers are making Central India fertile hugging its western side by Western Ghats and along the eastern coast are the Eastern Ghats. The Deccan Plateau occupies a major portion of the southern part of the country; it consists of a gigantic triangular block, with beautiful rivers like Cauvery, Krishna and Godavari. It contains much of India's mineral wealth.

3. The diversity of India is tremendous. It is fascinating to find how all people have retained their unique characteristics for thousands of years; with a common national heritage. This is our sacred land India that is Bharath. Swami Vivekananda explained about the concept of India in the following words – “If there is any land on this earth that can claim to be blessed punyabhumi – the land where humanity has attained its highest towards gentleness, towards generosity, towards purity, towards calmness, above all, the land of introspection and of spirituality – it is India”. William

James Durant popularly called as Will Durant, was an American writer; and historian. He is best known for “The stories of Civilization”. He has spoken many good things about our motherland. India is the motherland of our people and Sanskrit the mother of Europe’s languages; she is the mother of our philosophy; mother through the village community, self-government and democracy. Mother India is in many ways the mother of us all. Even across the Himalayan Barrier, India has sent to the West, such gifts as grammar and logic, philosophy and fables, chess, numerals and the decimal system. India teaches us the tolerance and gentleness of mature mind, understanding spirit and a unifying, pacifying love for all human beings.

4. The German Indologist, Max Muller who in his spiritual and philosophical quest traced the common roots of Indo-European civilizations to the ancient Vedic culture of India. He said, “If I were asked under what sky the human mind has most fully developed some of its choicest gifts, has most deeply pondered over the greatest problems of life, and has found solutions to some of them which well deserve the attention even of those who have studied Plato and Kant, I should point to India”. Similarly, Dr. Arnold Toynbee, the famous British historian has said - “It is already becoming clear that a chapter which had a western beginning will have to have an Indian ending if it is not to end in the self-destruction of the human-race. At this supremely

dangerous moment in history, the only way of salvation for mankind is the Indian way". Many scholars, thinkers have spoken like this from different parts of the world. We have to move forward taking those good experiences along with us.

5. Hard work and perseverance of citizens towards achievement of collective national goals have been the foundation of great nations like ours. While doing so, we have to also safeguard our nation from all kinds of disruptive tendencies. In this endeavour there is no room for violence in any form. Whatever the problem and whatever the reason, there is no issue that does not lend itself to solution through dialogue and reconciliation. This path can sometimes be difficult, but we must persist, as this alone gives lasting solutions. As we stand shoulder to shoulder with our brethren across the length and breadth of this great country and prepare to celebrate our freedom, I earnestly appeal to all citizens of the State to hold on steadfastly to our cherished democratic values as we proceed on our journey towards peace and progress.

6. The law and order situation in the State is well under control, though there are a few challenges. The situation in Garo Hills continues to remain a cause of concern as militant and criminal outfits continue to engage in unlawful activities. The

State police are keeping a close watch on trans-border movement of militants from the neighbouring country.

7. Development of good road infrastructure in the State is very vital for the socio- economic growth of the people. The State has 6 (six) National Highways with a total length of 1205 Kms. The State is availing funds under various Central programmes for construction of new roads, upgradation of existing roads including State highways and major district roads and providing village connectivity.

8. Meghalaya has come a long way in improving the health facilities for the people in the State. While the coverage and reach have increased over the years, the State has still a long way to go to achieve the desired goal of 'Health for All'. The State has launched the Meghalaya Health Insurance Scheme II (MHIS II) with enrolment starting in June, 2015. This modified Scheme has enhanced packages for surgical procedures, OPD benefits, critical care surgical benefits and follow-up care for critical illnesses. The scheme has also increased the coverage from Rs. 1,60,000 to Rs. 2,00,000 with an addition of Rs. 7,500 OPD coverage for weavers and artisans.

9. Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) and Integrated Child Protection Scheme (ICPS) have been restructured in a mission mode by the Government of India for

the welfare of nursing, mothers, adolescent girls and children in need of care and protection.

10. The Information Technology sector in the State seeks to create opportunities for employment for the citizens of the State. The State has also collaborated with educational institutions such as St. Anthony's College and Ramakrishna Mission for building capacities amongst the youth. The year has witnessed the launch of Smart and Digital Classrooms at several Government Schools in the State and more than 200 meritorious students of class X and class XII were given laptops under the scheme "IT Award 2014".

11. Tourism is a major source of revenue for many states in our country. Emphasis is being given on training, capacity building and skill development. To assist entrepreneurs in the construction and operation of Homestays, financial assistance to the extent of 30% of the project cost is provided. The Government is also trying to promote new places of tourist interest.

12. Conservation, documentation, research, promotion, development and augmentation of the rich cultural heritage of the State and the various art forms is a priority for the State Government. A prestigious project taken up recently is the

“Shillong International Centre for Performing Arts and Culture” (SICPAC), for which construction work is in full swing.

13. In conclusion, I call upon the people of the State to join hands in our continuing efforts to maintain peace and harmony and to march ahead on the path of growth and development. On 27th July, 2015 Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam former President of India came to Shillong and presented me a book “Beyond 2020 – A vision for tomorrow’s India”. In the opening paragraph he has given a quotation – “Let us recall a profound statement made by Maharashi Patanjali some 2500 years ago – When you are inspired by some great purpose, some extraordinary project, all your thoughts break their bounds. Your mind transcends limitations, your consciousness expands in every direction, and you find yourself in a new, great and wonderful world. Dormant forces, faculties and talents come alive, and you discover yourself to be a greater person by far than you ever dreamt yourself to be”. May the blessings of the Almighty be upon us all, and may God lead us on the right path so that we are able to see the Meghalaya of our dreams in our lifetime.

Khublei ! Mithela !! Jaihind !!!