

Hon'ble Speaker Sir,

With your permission, I rise to present the Budget for the financial year 2023-24.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. Sir, today is an occasion of immense pride and satisfaction as I stand before you to present the annual budget for 2023-24.
- 1.2. The 38 lakh people of our beautiful State has reposed their faith in this government by giving a stronger mandate. I would like to humbly acknowledge and express my gratitude to the people for entrusting us with the greatest of responsibilities. This is indeed a testimony to the efforts made by the government and the positive changes brought about in the lives of Meghalayans over the past five years.
- 1.3. Sir, I would like to begin by highlighting our key achievements from 2018 to 2023, despite losing almost two years to the COVID pandemic.
 - a. The government expenditure more than doubled from ₹ 9,528 crore during 2017-18 to ₹ 20,729 crore in 2022-23. This demonstrates improved governance and implementation capability. It also reflects the confidence of the Union government and other institutions in the capabilities of this government.
 - b. The cumulative funding from externally aided projects increased from ₹ 2,300 crore to over ₹ 10,600 crore from 2018 to 2023. As of today, we are implementing several projects in collaboration with agencies like the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, the Japan International Cooperation Agency, the New Development Bank and the International Fund for Agriculture Development. This again is an affirmation towards our commitment and execution capabilities from global institutions.

It must also be noted that 90% of these loans are repaid by the Union Government on behalf of the State Government.

- c. Several mission mode interventions have been successfully implemented in the sectors of horticulture, livestock and fisheries. These interventions have improved the income of over one lakh farmers and put us on track for doubling farmers' incomes.
 - d. Meghalaya has also been among the leading performers in implementation of various centrally sponsored schemes. Programs like MGNREGS, PMGSY and Jal Jeevan Mission are being implemented at an accelerated rate and have brought remarkable changes in the rural areas.
 - e. We have made noticeable progress in health indices over the last few years. The immunization rates have increased from 57% to 91% and institutional deliveries have increased from 46% to 64%.
 - f. We have given a never-before thrust to youth engagement, development of sports, building an entrepreneurial ecosystem and skill development.
 - g. We made a strong beginning towards resolving the five-decade long border dispute with Assam and achieved substantial progress.
- 1.4. Our strongest contribution over the last five years have been the development of a collaborative model of governance based on working together with traditional institutions, women's groups, farmers' cooperatives and youth organizations to create a strong 'Team Meghalaya'.

1.5. Sir, I will now outline the core development vision of the MDA 2.0 government, which we will prioritize over the next five years -

- I. We will bring policies and programs to double the GSDP to around ₹ 80,000 crore by 2027-28 and make Meghalaya a 10 Billion-dollar economy. The effort will be to increase both government expenditure and private investments through prioritizing trade, tourism, high-value agriculture and building a knowledge economy.
- II. We will strive to double farmers' income for the approximately 6 lakh rural households by focusing on horticulture, livestock, fisheries, and sericulture.
- III. We will endeavor to achieve nearly zero infant and maternal mortality by ensuring 100% institutional delivery and robust pre and post-natal services.
- IV. We will ensure that every child born in Meghalaya gets the best opportunities to reach their full potential. We will increase our investment in Early Childhood Development and improve the quality of education at all levels.
- V. We will strive to create 5 lakh employment opportunities for the youth, with a special focus on agri and allied sectors, knowledge and digital services, entrepreneurship and tourism.
- VI. We will create a robust sports ecosystem to nurture future Olympians. We will identify grassroots talents and provide world-class training opportunities. We will also develop sports infrastructure across the State, to engage and empower young people.
- VII. We will transform Meghalaya into the most preferred eco-tourism destination by leveraging the State's cultural and

natural resources and giving impetus to infrastructure development, connectivity, branding and skill development.

- VIII. We will connect every household with uninterrupted electricity and functional tap water and every village with motorable roads and internet connectivity.
 - IX. We will build New Shillong City as a growth hub and a knowledge and cultural center of the North Eastern region. We will also make substantial investments towards transforming Tura and Jowai into growth hubs.
 - X. We will take steps to increase border trade through improved border infrastructure in the form of Integrated Check Posts, Land Custom Stations and Border Haats. We will also take steps to improve connectivity with Bangladesh.
 - XI. We will work to promote and preserve our cultural heritage. To this end, we will pursue the inclusion of Khasi and Garo languages in the 8th schedule of the Constitution of India.
 - XII. We will continue to take steps for permanent resolution of the boundary dispute with Assam. We will ensure that the issues are resolved at the earliest and protect the interests of our people residing in these regions.
 - XIII. We will improve efficiency and transparency in governance through use of technology and improving both ease of doing business and ease of living in our abode of clouds.
- 1.6. Sir, this is a people's government, and we will govern based on the values of collaboration, care and commitment. I dedicate this budget to the people, and I would like to term this budget the 'People's Budget'.

- 1.7. Last year, as we celebrated the golden jubilee of Statehood, I made a promise that we will transform Meghalaya to be amongst the top 10 states of the country by 2032, when we celebrate the diamond jubilee of Statehood. The goal is to be amongst the top 10 States in terms of per capita GDP and achievement of Sustainable Development Goals. Together, we will strive to build a prosperous and a happy Meghalaya.

2. STATE FINANCES

- 2.1. Speaker Sir, continuing with the annual tradition of bringing reforms in the budgetary practices, we have improved the system of framing the revised estimates this year. From the next financial year onwards, we will endeavor to finalize the revised estimates by February so that the efficiency of spending can be further improved.
- 2.2. The GSDP of Meghalaya is estimated at ₹ 41,779 crore for the current financial year. For the next financial year, our GSDP is expected to increase to ₹ 46,600 crore, an expected growth rate of 11.5 percent.
- 2.3. The share of central taxes is the most important component of the receipts for the State Government. The revised estimates for the share of central taxes for the current financial year is projected at ₹ 7,386 crore. This is about 18% higher than the budgetary estimates of ₹ 6,264 crore. The total central transfers for the current financial year are expected at ₹ 8,706 crore including the Finance Commission devolutions and other transfers from the Centre while excluding scheme-related transfers. These increased transfers are consistent with the country's growth rates and improved tax collections. I would like to thank the Hon'ble Prime Minister for taking concrete steps towards strengthening the economy. In the financial year 2023-24, I am estimating the share of central taxes at ₹ 7,834 crore and a total amount of ₹ 8,908 crore as central transfers.

- 2.4. Sir, I am happy to inform this august House that the Hon'ble Union Finance Minister has enhanced the size of the 'Scheme for Special Assistance to States for Capital Investment' to spur investment in infrastructure. For the current financial year, we have already drawn our share of ₹ 742 crore and invested in critical capital projects. Given our effective utilization, we were allocated an extra ₹ 307 crore by the Union Government, taking our total allocation to ₹ 1,049 crore for 2022-23. For 2023-24, I am estimating the allocation under this important scheme to be ₹ 1,003 crore.
- 2.5. The State's economy has been growing at an encouraging pace. Despite the massive disruptions caused by the pandemic, our growth rate for the period 2018-23 is at 6.75%. Importantly, the year-on-year growth rate for the next year is projected at 11.5 percent. Extrapolating this trend for the next 5 years, I expect the State's economy to grow to about ₹ 80,000 crore by 2027-28 making Meghalaya a 10 Billion-dollar economy.
- 2.6. The State's own-tax and non-tax revenues have also been increasing steadily. As per the revised estimates for the current financial year, our own-tax revenue will reach ₹ 2,636 crore. For 2023-24, I am estimating our own tax revenue to increase by about 22% to reach ₹ 3,205 crore. This includes ₹ 1,785 crore as GST, ₹ 792 crore as taxes on sales and trade and ₹ 413 crore as excise.
- 2.7. The State's own non-tax revenue for the current financial year is expected to reach ₹ 590 crore. This is an increase of 12.5% over the previous year's collections of ₹ 525 crore. For 2023-24, I am expecting the State's own non-tax revenue to further increase by about 26% to reach ₹ 742 crore. The process of obtaining mining leases for starting scientific mining from the Union Ministry of Coal is at an advanced stage.
- 2.8. I have estimated the total expenditure for 2023-24 at ₹ 22,022 crore. This comprises ₹ 17,186 crore of revenue expenditure and ₹ 4,836

crore of capital expenditure. I am pleased to announce that the projected capital outlay for 2023-24 is an increase of 14 percent over the year 2022-23 and 38.5 percent over the year 2021-22. This substantial increase in capital expenditure will be the foundation for the projected increase in economic growth.

2.9. I will now move on to the second part of my speech deliberating on various sectoral interventions.

3. PRIMARY SECTOR AND FARMERS' PROSPERITY

Mission mode interventions in agriculture

3.1. Investing in the well-being of our farmers is our core priority. The government will continue to implement the numerous mission-mode interventions to increase the production of niche agricultural and horticulture crops. The persistent work of five years under the Lakadong mission is showing results. The income of the 10,000 plus Lakadong turmeric farmers has increased by more than 50 percent. I expect similar benefits to accrue to the 40,000 farmers under the ginger mission, 20,000 farmers under the spice mission covering traditional crops like pepper and new crops like vanilla. The Mushroom and the Honey Missions are also showing significant results providing additional income to about 10,000 growers. The Aroma mission has been a huge success benefiting 2,000 farmers growing aromatic grasses of lemongrass, citronella and geranium. We have started experimenting with newer and high value crops like lavender, saffron and buckwheat. I am allocating an amount of ₹ 50 crore for the continued implementation of mission mode projects in agri and horti sectors.

3.2. The rich diversity of the soil and the climatic conditions of the State allow us to grow a range of fruits, vegetables and flowers. Meghalaya's 'kew' variety of pineapples are one of the best in the

country with an average brix value of 17. We are also home to the citrus gene pool. I am allocating ₹ 11.3 crore for investment in fruit development with particular emphasis on improving the value chains of pineapple and orange benefitting about 50,000 farmers. I am allocating a further ₹ 5.6 crore for vegetable development to benefit the 10,000 growers of potato, carrot, cabbage and other vegetables. The construction of the Centres of Excellence at Jongksha, East Khasi hills and Dawagre, East Garo Hills will be started in 2023-24.

- 3.3. There is immense potential to increase the income of farmers through floriculture. The nascent floriculture industry in the State was disrupted by the COVID pandemic. We will revive the sector through a dedicated Floriculture mission focusing on cut flowers like Gerberas, Carnations, Anthuriums, Roses and Orchids.

Agri processing, marketing and logistics

- 3.4. Marketing of agricultural produce and protecting farmers against price fluctuations is an important priority for the government. We are working with a network of 500 collectives including Cooperative Societies, Farmer Producer Organizations and Village Organizations to provide decentralized agri-marketing support. At each production cluster, a collective marketing center comprising an aggregation cum mini-processing facility is being constructed and handed over to a local collective. Interest free working capital loans of up to ₹ 50 lakh are also provided to the collectives to directly buy the produce from the farmers. About 200 such Collective Marketing centers have already been set up in clusters producing turmeric, pepper, ginger, arecanut, cashewnut, broom grass and potatoes. We target to handhold and strengthen the existing 200 collective marketing centers and establish another 200 centers in the next financial year. I am also increasing the upper limit for interest-free working capital provided to Cooperatives from ₹ 50 lakh to ₹ 1 crore. PRIME Hubs, which will be higher level aggregation and processing centers are operational at five locations.

Another 20 are under construction with an investment of ₹ 88 crore. All these agri-marketing initiatives will be primarily implemented through the Megha-LAMP program for which I have budgeted an amount of ₹ 240 crore for 2023-24.

- 3.5. Other critical investments in the agriculture sector include the setting up of a State-of-the-Art food testing lab at Upper Shillong with an investment of ₹ 27 crore. This lab will be completed in the next financial year and will enable testing of our food produce, increasing their marketability and export potential. We will also build a new tissue culture lab to ensure availability of high-quality planting material. I am allocating an amount of ₹ 10 crore for this initiative. Efforts to GI tag our unique products and to promote digital agriculture, including establishing traceability of the produce of the State will also be prioritized.
- 3.6. We had launched the 'PRIME Agricultural Response Vehicle' program for providing pickup vehicles at a 50% subsidy to identified agricultural groups and entrepreneurs. 113 registered farmers' associations have already been shortlisted and will be provided with a vehicle to transport agri-produce. This benefit will be extended to another 200 beneficiaries in 2023-24. I am allocating ₹ 15 crore for the implementation of this very important program.

Organic Meghalaya

- 3.7. The government recently adopted the 'Meghalaya State Organic and Natural Farming Policy 2023'. So far, 15,000 hectares of area in State is organically certified and another 2,000 hectares is in the process of being certified. We target to increase the total area under organic certification to 1 lakh hectares in the next five years and the process for this will be initiated in the next financial year through the launch of a State organic mission. I am allocating an amount of ₹ 25 crore for this ambitious program, which will make Meghalaya the national leader in organic cultivation.

Collectivization of farmers

- 3.8. The FOCUS program was launched two years ago to facilitate collectivisation and empower the producers of the State. As part of the program, a group corpus of ₹ 5,000 per member is being provided as grant to all the producer households. We also initiated the FOCUS plus program to provide a direct cash transfer of ₹ 5,000 to the individual bank accounts of one member for every rural and urban household in the State. FOCUS plus provides an untied grant aimed at empowering individuals and households to make investment decisions.
- 3.9. In the next financial year, the FOCUS and FOCUS plus program will be expanded. We will also initiate a 'Household ID' program to identify the unique households in the State and ensure that all the eligible households are covered. While providing the benefit of FOCUS plus, the 'Household ID' will also streamline the implementation of welfare and development programs across departments.

Improved emphasis on livestock, fisheries and weaving

- 3.10. The livestock sector is an important contributor to people's income and nutrition. We have a 50-60% deficit in beef, pork, milk and egg production, which is met by importing from other states. About 9,000 Metric Tons of pork valued at ₹ 300 crore is imported annually. Several programs are being implemented with the twin missions of becoming self-sufficient in livestock production and to increase the incomes in rural areas. The PROGRESS - Prosperity of Grassroot Families through Livestock Interventions - program seeks to provide high yielding piglets, poultry birds and goats free of cost to the poorest households. An amount of ₹ 40 crore will be spent on this intervention in 2023-24.
- 3.11. The Piggery Mission and the Milk Mission will continue to be implemented through cooperative societies and will benefit another 10,000 individual members.

- 3.12. We will redouble our efforts and investments in the fisheries sector. The emphasis will be on improving production, productivity, marketing and infusion of new technologies. Integrated farming involving paddy-cum-fish farming and livestock-cum-fish farming will be taken up in a cluster mode. I am allocating ₹ 44.7 crore for the fisheries sector in 2023-24.
- 3.13. The Textiles sector is key to improving the incomes of the weavers, particularly women, in several pockets of the State. A large program for cluster-based skill development and building common facility centers for the weavers will be implemented in 2023-24, targeting 10,000 weavers. A similar intervention will be undertaken in the handicraft and bamboo clusters to benefit another 5,000 crafts persons.
- 3.14. The overall investment in the Primary sector for 2023-24 is at ₹ 1,560 crore, an increase of ₹ 384 crore from the revised estimates of the current financial year.

4. LIVELIHOODS FOR ALL

- 4.1. As we start the financial year 2023-24, it's worth recognising the substantial influence that MGNREGS has had on the income levels of rural households. The expenditure on the program has steadily increased from ₹ 913 crore in 2018-19 to ₹ 1,300 crore in the current financial year. This has resulted in an income transfer of approximately ₹ 13,000 to each rural household. While continuing the high expenditure, we will prioritize taking up natural resource management works for the next financial year.
- 4.2. As the population in urban areas increases, creating programs for improving livelihoods becomes important. We will initiate a State-

government funded program for livelihood support for the urban areas focussing on workforce in the informal sectors.

5. INFRASTRUCTURE

- 5.1. My government's vision of making Meghalaya a 10 Billion-dollar economy is contingent on sizeable capital investments. It has been established that investments made on infrastructure have a significant multiplier effect on economic growth.

Road connectivity

- 5.2. In the last five years, my government has built more rural roads than during the previous 20 years. Despite these stupendous efforts, rural connectivity remains a challenge given our difficult terrain and climatic conditions.
- 5.3. Further, connectivity to many villages involves crossing streams and rivers. To systematically address the last mile connectivity issues, I am announcing the 'Chief Minister's Rural Connectivity Scheme'. Through the scheme, we will connect villages not covered under PMGSY. We will also build suspension and foot bridges across streams and rivers to improve connectivity for villages that face huge challenges during the rainy months.
- 5.4. In addition to the rural roads, several large roads projects costing over ₹ 3,000 crore were initiated by the government in the last three years. Some of these include the Dawki-Bholaganj road, the Balat-Shella road, the Mairang-Ranigodown-Azra road, the Demthring-Sohmynting-Moodymmai road, the Nartiang-Nongpoh road and the Rongram-Phulbari road. We will make every effort to complete all these critical roads and dedicate them to the people of the State in 2023-24.

- 5.5. The works on restoration of the roads and bridges damaged during the floods of June 2022 is progressing well. We will complete these works costing ₹ 188 crore in the next financial year.
- 5.6. The government is developing an 'Integrated Transport Network Development Plan' and 'Road Asset Management System' in collaboration with the World Bank. Following these integrated approaches, we will streamline the efforts at building new roads and maintaining the existing network. I am allocating ₹ 2,226 crore for the roads sector for 2023-24.

Air connectivity

- 5.7. Improved air connectivity is one of the big triggers for economic growth of Meghalaya. The Umroi airport was operationalized in 2018 and it currently has direct flights to 9 cities including Kolkata and Delhi. We are now working with the Airport Authority of India and other agencies to expand the existing runway to allow for the landing of larger aircrafts. This will enable direct connectivity to the cities like Mumbai, Bengaluru, Hyderabad and Chennai, with huge positive impact on tourism.
- 5.8. The Baljek airport will be made operational soon with direct flight connectivity between Shillong and Tura. Heliports will also be built at Shillong and Tura to further enhance air connectivity.
- 5.9. I am allocating an amount of ₹ 15.5 crore for improving air connectivity in the State.

Water supply

- 5.10. Meghalaya has been among the top performers in the Jal Jeevan Mission. The number of households with tap connections has increased from 4,550 in 2019 to almost 3 lakhs today. Given the excellent performance of the State in the implementation of the

Mission, the Union Government has assured an amount of ₹ 3,700 crore for 2023-24. We have set an ambitious target to provide tap connections to all the 6.3 lakh households in 2023-24.

- 5.11. In addition to the Jal Jeevan Mission, we have completed water supply schemes worth ₹ 220 crore over the last five years. These include the water supply projects in Upper Shillong, Greater Sohra, Greater Baghmara, Tura and Greater Raliang, West Jaintia Hills. For the year 2023-24, we will complete long pending water supply schemes of Greater Ampati, Nongstoin urban and Greater Rymbai, East Jaintia Hills costing about ₹ 400 crore.
- 5.12. The implementation of the Williamnagar Water Supply Scheme costing ₹ 121 crore has been initiated. I am allocating ₹ 182 crore for the water supply sector from State resources for 2023-24. Combining the ₹ 3,700 crore that we will be receiving from the Union Government for the Jal Jeevan Mission, the total targeted expenditure for water supply schemes for 2023-24 stands at ₹ 3,882 crore.

Power

- 5.13. The power sector is critical to boosting economic growth and improved quality of living. The government initiated major reforms to resolve the accumulated challenges and issues in the sector. The first unit of the long-pending Ganol hydropower project has been operationalized recently.
- 5.14. The distressed financial condition of the State power corporation, MeECL, and its three subsidiaries is due to the unaddressed challenges of the past decades. I am confident that MeECL can show a turnaround in the next 3-5 years, supported by the clear vision and policy from the government and the commitment of the employees. In the current financial year, an equity infusion of ₹ 550 crore and a grant of ₹ 100 crore have been provided to MeECL. For 2023-24, I am budgeting an amount of ₹ 400 crore.

- 5.15. The State has a total installed capacity of 356 MW generating about 1,200 million units annually. We will augment our generation capacity and improve the power mix in favor of renewable energy. This is in line with our long-term objective of sustainable growth and carbon neutrality. This capacity augmentation will be done in a public private partnership mode.

Information Technology and Digital infrastructure

- 5.16. One of the core visions of my government is to provide internet connectivity to all the villages and improve the bandwidth across the State. About 1,000 uncovered villages are being targeted to be covered under the '4G USOF Project' and the '4G Saturation Project.' 5G services have also been initiated at selected sites in Shillong. These services will be expanded to cover about 100 sites across the State. We are working jointly with the Government of Assam to create the optical fiber network for drawing 100 GBpE bandwidth from Bangladesh.
- 5.17. The first phase of the Shillong Tech Park was operationalized last year and it consistently remains overbooked. It has helped in the creation of over 1,500 jobs. The construction of the second phase of the Shillong Tech Park with an investment of ₹ 114 crore has begun. Once completed, this project will generate 3,000 jobs directly and another 10,000 jobs indirectly. The government will initiate the construction of a Tech Park in Tura to create employment opportunities in the Garo Hills region. We will also provide additional incentives to the private sector for setting up IT and ITeS enterprises.
- 5.18. I am allocating an amount of ₹ 191 crore towards the various initiatives in the IT sector.

Infrastructure for Arts and Culture

- 5.19. The ‘Shillong International Centre for Performing Arts and Culture’, built at a cost of ₹ 151 crore has been operationalized. It will enable Meghalaya to host large national and international events. To realize the full potential of this important infrastructure, we will initiate building of luxury accommodation in the New Shillong Township in PPP mode.
- 5.20. The construction of the Tura Convention Centre has begun, and I expect the project to be completed in two years. Establishing performance and convention spaces is essential for promoting arts and culture. Accordingly, we will build and renovate district auditoria in all the districts. Smaller scale and community level arts and cultural centers will also be set up in select locations. Many of these projects will be initiated in 2023-24 and I am allocating an amount of ₹ 20 crore for this purpose.

Infrastructure for Sports

- 5.21. The investment in Sports infrastructure has been unprecedented in the last five years. We will continue to make similar investments in the next five years with a goal of developing Meghalaya as a national sports hub. Ongoing large projects costing ₹ 500 crore including the New Indoor Stadium and renovation of J.N. Stadium at Polo ground Shillong, P.A. Sangma Sports Complex and Track & field Stadium at Tura, Wahiajer football stadium, West Jaintia Hills, Ampati Stadium, South West Garo Hills and Adokgre Stadium, North Garo Hills will be completed in the next two years. In 2023-24, we will initiate the construction of an aquatic complex equipped with an Olympic sized swimming pool, and competition level tennis complexes in Shillong at an approximate cost of ₹ 50 crore. With all these infrastructures, Meghalaya will be proudly able to host national and international events from 2025.

- 5.22. Over the next five years, we will ensure the availability of indoor stadia, track & field grounds and football turfs, both natural and artificial, in all district and block headquarters. This will entail investment of close to ₹ 1,000 crore. We will initiate the process of construction of several of these infrastructure in 2023-24.

Infrastructure for Governance

- 5.23. The construction of the New Assembly building in New Shillong will be completed this year. I am allocating ₹ 35 crore towards the completion of this very prestigious project.
- 5.24. The construction work on the 'Integrated Administrative Complexes' at Pynursla, East Khasi Hills is ongoing and will begin soon for Tura and Jowai. Proposals for construction of similar complexes in other districts will be taken up in 2023-24.
- 5.25. The works on the upgradation and construction of new block infrastructure for the 46 blocks are progressing well. Proposals for construction of infrastructure in the newly created 9 blocks will be sanctioned in the next financial year.
- 5.26. The government is committed to completing the State Guest House at Shillong in 2023-24. Circuit House annexes will be sanctioned for Tura and Sohra.
- 5.27. We are also focusing on the upgradation of police infrastructure including police stations, housing and outposts including the seven newly created border outposts. I am also allocating ₹ 37 crore towards the modernization of police infrastructure in the State.

Infrastructure for Tourism

- 5.28. The tourism sector is the core growth engine for the State. The Tourism Policy 2023 has been recently approved. Public investments

of close to ₹ 2,000 Cr have been committed in the Tourism Sector for the next five-year period. The two five-star hotels - Vivanta Meghalaya and Courtyard by Marriot became functional during the current financial year. These large hotels are contributing significantly to the State's economy by creating jobs and attracting high-value tourists. We have also initiated the process for the construction of more luxury accommodation units at Thadlaskein, West Jaintia Hills, Jakrem, South West Khasi Hills, Sohra, East Khasi Hills, Nokrek, West Garo Hills, Mawlyndep and Nongmahir, Ri Bhoi, Nongkhnum, West Khasi Hills, Chibragre and Kemragre, West Garo Hills and Bansamgre, East Garo Hills with a total cost of ₹ 320 crore. All these projects will be completed in the next two years.

- 5.29. Meghalaya's 'Homestay Scheme' in convergence with the PMEGP program is proving to be a success. Under the program, a 70% subsidy amounting to ₹ 7 lakh is being given towards the construction of homestays. To date, 235 homestays have been sanctioned under the scheme. The construction of 1,000 homestays is targeted for 2023-24 and 5,000 homestays is targeted for 2023-28. This intervention will create 10,000 rooms and generate 25,000 jobs.
- 5.30. Comprehensive development of new tourism circuits including accommodation units, approach roads to sites, wayside amenities and other ancillary infrastructure are being finalized. Ten new circuits will be initiated in the next financial year with a proposed investment of ₹ 200 crore.
- 5.31. The iconic Shillong peak ropeway project will be built at a cost of ₹ 141 crore. The relevant clearances are being obtained and the construction work is expected to commence soon.
- 5.32. We had launched the 'Luxury Tourism Vehicle Scheme' to create employment opportunities and enhance the overall experience for the tourists. Under the scheme, a 50% subsidy of about ₹ 10 lakh is being given to the selected societies and entrepreneurs. Already 50 vehicles

have been sanctioned and another 150 vehicles will be sanctioned during the next financial year. I am allocating an amount of ₹ 20 crore towards this scheme.

Urban Infrastructure

- 5.33. The population of the Shillong urban agglomeration has grown substantially over the last two decades leading to several urban development challenges. To resolve these issues and to realize the full potential of Shillong as a growth engine for the entire Northeast, we will build 'New Shillong' as a twin city to Shillong.
- 5.34. The New Shillong City will be built as a futuristic and sustainable city. It will be a hub for knowledge, creative, cultural and sports industries. The entire State Administration including the Secretariat and the Directorates will be moved to New Shillong. All urban amenities like water supply, roads, power, and mobility will be planned systematically. The process of preparation of master plans and DPRs has been initiated. We will set up express connectivity between Shillong and New Shillong to enable hassle free mobility.
- 5.35. We plan to invest about ₹ 5,000 crore on this ambitious project over the next five years.
- 5.36. We will also undertake comprehensive exercises to address the issues of congestion, waste management and beautification of Tura, Jowai and other urban centers.
- 5.37. A blue-print to comprehensively address the issues of traffic congestion in Shillong is ready and is being implemented. As an immediate measure, 30 buses have been procured at a cost of ₹ 10 crore under the 'Shared School Bus System'. Additional interventions like improving of junctions, augmentation of parking, strengthening of public transport system and introduction of electric buses will be initiated in 2023-24. A world class Skywalk from Police Bazaar to Barik

point will be built with an investment of ₹ 25 crore to facilitate pedestrian movement.

Border infrastructure

- 5.38. Meghalaya shares a 443 km long international border with Bangladesh and increasing cross-border trade will impact growth and prosperity. The government has been pursuing this agenda with the Union Government over the last few years. The inclusion of the 100 km long new multimodal transportation link, from Hili in West Bengal to Mahendraganj in Meghalaya via Bangladesh in the Joint Statement of the Prime Ministers of India and Bangladesh is a positive development for Meghalaya.
- 5.39. We have 10 Land Custom Stations, 5 Border Haats and one Integrated Check Post at Dawki – Tamabil, which is under construction. Proposals for creation of 16 new border haats, upgradation of the four Land Custom Stations into full-fledged Integrated Check Posts and establishment of one Land Custom Station at Umkiang, East Jaintia Hills have been submitted to the Government of India.

6. Governance

- 6.1. Over the last five years, the governance systems in the State have been made more efficient, transparent, responsive and people centric.

Achieving Sustainable Development Goals

- 6.2. We have been working overtime on improving our performance on the various Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations. Due to these efforts, the State's ranking in the SDG indicator framework has been improving steadily. We have started presenting an SDG budget along with the budget estimates since last year to highlight the investments being made toward achieving SDGs. The overall

allocation towards achievement of SDGs for 2023-24 is ₹ 13,145 crore, which corresponds to about 59% of the State budget.

Digital Governance

- 6.3. In the current year, the processing of all scheme proposals and release of funds has been made paperless through the deployment of e-proposal system and the Budget Estimation Allocation Monitoring System. These digital government initiatives have saved 528 person years of processing time in just one year and won international accolades. For 2023-24, these systems will be taken till the district and DDO level. Coupled with implementation of the e-billing system at the treasuries, the complete process of project sanctioning and fund release will become paperless. I am earmarking an amount of ₹ 11 crore towards this initiative.

Citizen-centric governance

- 6.4. The government is implementing the Right to Public Service Act, with 91 citizen services notified under its purview. In the next financial year, we will increase the number of services and reduce the delivery times. A single citizen-facing portal of the government will be put in place to increase the ease of accessing government services digitally.
- 6.5. We also realize that many citizens, particularly in the rural areas, may not be able to avail digital services. Therefore, physical centers and service delivery points are critical. A cadre of 10,000 digitally enabled village community facilitators has been created to provide services at the doorstep of every citizen. 'Chief Minister's Service Delivery Centers' will be set up in about 750 locations to act as one-stop-shops for providing all citizen services.
- 6.6. We have deployed about 800 business correspondents for improving the delivery of banking services to the remotest villages. Our target is to ensure that the benefits of various cash transfer schemes can be

handed over at the doorstep to the citizens. The network of business correspondents and Village Community Facilitators will enable complete doorstep delivery of all financial and government services saving money and time for lakhs of people. This transformative service delivery project will be implemented at a cost of ₹ 500 crore over the next five years.

- 6.7. Another collaborative governance initiative is the locality beautification competition through community engagement in Shillong, Tura and Jowai. An amount of ₹ 7.6 crore was spent towards this initiative. We will continue to engage with local communities to further expand this program to other towns of the State. I am allocating an amount of ₹ 10 crore towards this for 2023-24.
- 6.8. The three district councils are key stakeholders in the overall development journey of the State. We will continue to work with the councils to improve governance and service delivery. In 2023-24, ₹ 141 crore of finance commission's grants will be transferred to the councils.

7. Youth, Employment and Entrepreneurship

- 7.1. Sir, 74% of Meghalaya is under the age of 35 years. The State's future critically depends on our current investments on the youth. A mechanism to coordinate the efforts of the various departments working on youth development is being put in place. Cross departmental interventions like youth helpline, a youth portal, systematic and all-encompassing counseling system and mentoring networks will be initiated in the next financial year.

Skilling the youth

- 7.2. All the ongoing skilling programs of the different departments including the Union Government's PMKVY program will be

coordinated under the Skills Meghalaya program. The forward linkage component of the skilling programs will be strengthened to create employment opportunities. The areas of focus will be traditional sectors of agri and allied activities, tourism and service sectors and new and emerging sectors like AI, robotics, drone-technology and design. The target for employment-oriented skill development for 2023-24 is 20,000 and for 2023-28 is 1.2 lakhs. Dedicated skills parks will be constructed at Shillong and Tura with investments of ₹ 50 crore each.

- 7.3. The Soft Skills Program - ASPIRE Meghalaya - will continue to be implemented targeting 20,000 youth for 2023-24. I am allocating an amount of ₹ 20 crore for this program.

Youth engagement

- 7.4. Two of the ongoing programs- the Chief Minister's Youth Development Scheme and YESS Meghalaya will be expanded to intensify youth engagement. We will provide funding support to registered youth organizations to take up activities related to sports, arts, career counselling, climate action, cleanliness drives and others. I am earmarking ₹ 25 crore for these two projects. 'Chief Ministers Youth Centers' will be constructed in 50 locations alongside the sports infrastructure as spaces for youth to convene and organize activities.

Ecosystem for entrepreneurship

- 7.5. Entrepreneurship will remain an important engine for employment generation. In July 2022, Meghalaya was awarded the Best Performer title in the States' Startup Ranking 2021 by the Government of India, owing to the success of the PRIME program. So far, over 4,000 entrepreneurs have benefited from the program. In the next financial year, PRIME Startup Hubs will be made operational in all district headquarters as part of building district level startup ecosystems.

- 7.6. To support our entrepreneurs further, I am increasing the upper limit of the Startup grant from ₹ 5 lakh to ₹ 7.5 lakh per entrepreneur. The size of the zero-interest scale up loans will be increased from ₹ 25 lakh to ₹ 50 lakh.

Strengthening the Sports ecosystem

- 7.7. Sports continues to be the most effective way to engage young people. In the recently conducted Meghalaya youth survey, 30 percent of the respondents wanted to build a career in sports. In the last three years, we have made giant strides in building the sports ecosystem. Significant steps include support to State associations and the Meghalaya State Olympic Association, revival of the Meghalaya Games, successful conduct of Northeast Olympics, initiating cash awards scheme for athletes and coaches, scholarship scheme for athletes and the STAR program for talent identification.
- 7.8. The Meghalaya Games will be made an annual event. This year's edition of the games will be held at Tura. The STAR program will be expanded to test 10,000 children in 2023-24. Candidates shortlisted in this program will be provided scholarships and put through systematic training modules. Sports academies with residential facilities for athletes will be set up at Shillong and Tura in 2023-24 and other districts in the following years. Coaches - local, national, and international - will be engaged to strengthen the overall ecosystem.
- 7.9. The government will ensure that athletes and sports persons get higher rewards for their performance. The cash award scheme will be reviewed to enhance the quantum of award under various categories. We are already supporting the Meghalaya Soccer League and mission football. Similar support will be provided to create and nurture other sports leagues with the twin objectives of promoting competitive excellence and making sports careers more remunerative.
- 7.10. In addition to sports, the spirit of competitive excellence should be

systematically extended to other domains. The youth talent challenge in 2022 under the ASPIRE program was a huge success. Similar challenges and competitions, both at the individual and youth organizations level, will be conducted in domains ranging from innovation to entrepreneurship and creativity to social impact. The successful individuals and groups will be nurtured through mentoring and exposure trips both nationally and internationally. We target to send at least 5,000 youth on exposure visits locally, nationally, and internationally in 2023-24.

Creative industries

- 7.11. Arts, Crafts and Music continue to be powerful ways to engage the youth. The ‘Meghalaya Grassroots Music Program’ has seen 500 artists provided with platforms to perform. The success of the Meghalayan Age store in Delhi and launch of the online store has provided opportunities for another 500 crafts persons. These two programs will be scaled up significantly in 2023-24, with an investment of ₹ 10 crore. The Meghalayan Age Store in Shillong will be inaugurated by the end of 2023.
- 7.12. The first ‘Meghalaya International Film Festival’ held this month was success. We will come up with a detailed film policy to encourage shooting of films in Meghalaya and take steps to strengthen the local film industry. A scheme for providing subsidies for construction of cinemas, music and film studios will be crafted. The government is also building an OTT platform ‘Hello Meghalaya’ to provide income to local artists and quality content for all the citizens by hosting local content. For 2023-24, I am budgeting an amount of ₹ 15 crore to support these initiatives.
- 7.13. The government will continue to support traditional festivals and celebrations including the Shad Nongkrem, Behdienkhlam and Wangala. Tourism festivals and events like the Shillong literature festival, the Cherry Blossom festival and the Me.gong festival will also

be supported. These events promote local employment, increase tourist inflow and build Meghalaya as cultural, art and music powerhouse.

- 7.14. The Youth Budget is being presented for the second time along with the budget estimates. I have increased the Youth Budget from the estimated amount of ₹ 1,789 crore in 2022-23 to ₹ 2,215 crore in 2023-24, an increase of 24%.

8. QUALITY EDUCATION

- 8.1. My government is committed to improving the education scenario by investing on physical infrastructure as well as human resources.
- 8.2. We have undertaken works to build and upgrade the infrastructure at all the government schools in the State. New infrastructure is being constructed at 208 schools at a cost of ₹ 109 crore. Major upgradation of infrastructure is being taken up at 111 schools at a cost of ₹ 97 crore. Minor repairs are being taken up at about 1,750 schools with an estimated cost of ₹ 62 crore.
- 8.3. The construction of the 'College of Science and Commerce' at Mawphlang, East Khasi Hills and at Mahendraganj, South West Garo Hills will be completed next year. Every effort is being made to start the academic sessions in these colleges at the earliest.
- 8.4. Three provincialized government colleges in Baghmara, Sohra and Williamnagar, with a total cost of ₹ 36 crore will be completed in 2023-24. Further, four new polytechnics in Ri Bhoi, West Khasi Hills, East Garo Hills and South Garo Hills will also be made functional.
- 8.5. The government will make sustained efforts to improve the quality of learning at the primary, secondary and the higher-secondary levels through investing in teacher training, deployment of technology and

systematic testing of students.

- 8.6. Pre and post matric scholarships amounting to ₹ 175 crore have been distributed in the current financial year. We will streamline the process of scholarship disbursement for 2023-24. I am allocating ₹ 180 crore to support the students of our State.
- 8.7. Given the primary importance of the Education sector, I am allocating an amount of ₹ 2,884 crore out of which ₹ 2,015 crore is earmarked for payment of salaries to teachers.

9. **WOMEN AND CHILDREN**

- 9.1. Improving women's health and wellbeing is a very high priority for the State. Noticeable progress has been made in this area over the last few years. It gives me immense satisfaction to inform this august House that the number of maternal deaths in the State has reduced by 53% over the last two years. To further reduce the MMR and IMR, we will continue to implement the MOTHER program, and the 'Chief Minister's Safe Motherhood Scheme'.

Economic empowerment of women

- 9.2. Apart from ensuring the health and safety of women, the government prioritizes their economic empowerment. We have set up about 43,000 Self-Help Groups comprising women from over 4.4 lakh households. In the last five years, we have provided about ₹ 326 crore to support these groups. To expand market access for their products, partnerships are being built with Amazon and other e-commerce platforms.
- 9.3. In the next financial year, more than 200 'Cluster Level Federations' of SHG women will be formalized as credit cooperative societies to provide banking services in the remote areas of the State. I am

allocating an amount of ₹ 248 crore for the SHG program for 2023-24.

Early Childhood Development

- 9.4. The government has initiated 'Early Childhood Development Mission' to deal with the challenges of underweight children, stunting and wasting. Interventions like providing eggs to children aged 3-6 years for two times a week and other services for cognitive development are being implemented. I am allocating ₹ 50 crore in 2023-24 for providing ECD interventions in all Anganwadi centers.

10. SOCIAL SECURITY AND WELFARE

- 10.1. Under the CM-CARES program, my government has increased the pensionary benefits from ₹ 6,000 to ₹ 9,000 per year impacting about 66,000 senior citizens; 36,000 single mothers and 14,000 infirm citizens. As indicated earlier, the government will deploy business correspondents to deliver these benefits at the doorstep of citizens. I am allocating an amount of ₹ 104 crore for 2023-24.
- 10.2. The government commits to making Meghalaya a drug-free State. A mission-mode program, Drug Reduction Elimination and Action Mission (DREAM) will be launched to comprehensively tackle this important social challenge.

11. HEALTHY AND HAPPY POPULATION

- 11.1. My government remains committed to ensuring the overall health and wellbeing of every citizen. Towards this end, various programs and policies have been designed and are being implemented.

Augmenting health infrastructure

- 11.2. We are comprehensively upgrading the physical infrastructure of all the health facilities starting from the State headquarters till the sub-centers. The Mother and Child Hospital at Jowai and a 100-bedded hospital in Mawkyrwat have been established. The construction of 19 new health facilities is at different stages of completion.
- 11.3. The 100-bedded integrated health complex at Baljek, West Garo Hills will be completed by 2024. The 50-bedded 'Tura Maternity and Child Hospital' shall be expanded to 100 beds during 2023-24.
- 11.4. The 90-bedded cancer wing in the Shillong Civil Hospital was made functional this financial year. The radio oncology system will also be set up by the end of 2023 to further augment our capacity in the fight against cancer. We will also set up a cancer wing in Tura Civil Hospital.
- 11.5. The construction of 78 new sub-centers will be completed by the end of 2023 at a cost of about ₹ 43 crore. Additionally, we will set up 31 new urban health centers during the next financial year.
- 11.6. The government is upgrading 20 out of the existing 31 community health centers as first referral units during 2023-24. To further strengthen these centers, we are training groups of doctors and medical professionals.
- 11.7. We are committed to establishing medical colleges in the State. The physical progress of the Tura Medical College is about 40% and we are taking steps to fast track its construction. The proposal for setting up a medical college in Shillong in PPP mode is being actively considered and we expect to initiate this project in 2023-24.

Improving health systems

- 11.8. The government has set up a medical recruitment board to fill up

vacancies in the health sector. During 2022-23, 400 medical officers have been recruited. The board will be strengthened and all vacancies in the Department will be filled by the end of 2023.

- 11.9. The coverage of the Meghalaya Health Insurance Scheme has increased from 2 lakh households to about 4.7 lakh households over the last five years. We target to extend the coverage to all 8.4 lakh households over the next two years.
- 11.10. We have started using drones for the delivery of medicines in the remote regions of Garo Hills. This facility will be extended to other regions in the coming years. A new scheme for setting up of 'Chief Minister's Affordable Drug Centers' will be implemented to make generic medicines available at cheaper rates. For 2023-24, I am allocating an amount of ₹ 20 crore towards this initiative.
- 11.11. I am also proposing an annual outlay of ₹ 30,000 each for all the 6,275 village health councils in the State and allocating ₹ 18.8 crore towards this endeavor.
- 11.12. The overall investments in the health sector for 2023-24 stands at ₹ 1,805 crore, which is an increase of ₹ 109 crore over the revised estimates of 2022-23.

Measuring Happiness

- 11.13. The ultimate goal of all government interventions is citizen well-being and happiness. Measuring happiness and taking steps to increase it is a worthwhile endeavor. We will, therefore, develop a framework for measuring happiness in addition to evaluating performance based on indices like per capita income and sustainable development goals.

12. ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION AND CLIMATE ACTION

- 12.1. Meghalaya's ecology is fragile and the livelihoods of lakhs of people depend on nature. Accordingly, focusing on sustainability and building climate resilience are important components of the State's growth strategy.
- 12.2. We have operationalized the State Water Mission through which an integrated and coordinated approach to water management is being put in place. The State is currently implementing externally aided projects to the tune of ₹ 2,500 crore focusing on environmental sustainability, forest management and water harvesting. In 2023-24, water harvesting structures at 300 locations costing about ₹ 250 crore will be initiated.
- 12.3. Meghalaya is leading the way in implementing interventions for protecting forests. About 88 lakh saplings have been planted over the last five years to grow 10,000 hectares of forests. The State is also implementing the country's largest 'Payment for Ecosystem Services' project called Green Meghalaya. Under the program, communities are being incentivized to conserve forests. We are currently covering about 16,000 hectares of forests and have disbursed over ₹ 13 crore during the current financial year. About 50,000 hectares of forests will be protected under this program and ₹ 250 crore will be transferred to the communities over the next five years.
- 12.4. To emphasize the centrality of the climate agenda, I am also presenting a Climate Action Budget for the first time this year along with the budget estimates. The overall allocation towards climate action for 2023-24 is ₹ 3,412 crore, which corresponds to about 15 % of the State's budget.

13. BUDGET ESTIMATES: 2023-24

- 13.1. Sir, for 2023-24, I have estimated the total receipts at ₹ 21,781 crore, of which the revenue receipts are estimated at ₹ 19,414 crore and capital receipts at ₹ 2,366 crore. Excluding borrowings of ₹ 2,339 crore, the total receipts are estimated to be ₹ 19,442 crore.
- 13.2. On the expenditure side, I have estimated the total expenditure at ₹ 22,022 crore, of which the revenue expenditure is estimated at ₹ 17,186 crore and capital expenditure at ₹ 4,836 crore. Excluding repayment of loans of ₹ 988 crore, the estimated total expenditure is ₹ 21,034 crore.
- 13.3. Interest payments for 2023-24 are estimated at ₹ 1,169 crore and pension payments at ₹ 1,794 crore.
- 13.4. I am, therefore, presenting the budget for 2023-24 with a fiscal deficit of ₹ 1,592 crore, which is around 3.42 percent of the GSDP.

14. CONCLUSION

- 14.1. Speaker sir, I would like to once again express my gratitude to the people of our beautiful State for reposing their faith in this government. I am personally honoured and humbled by this great responsibility bestowed upon me. Our government will work diligently to achieve the vision outlined in this budget document.

Mr. Speaker Sir, with these words, I commend the Budget to this august House.

Khublei !
Mitela !!
Jai Hind !!!