

**ADDRESS BY THE HON'BLE PRESIDENT OF INDIA
SMT. DROUPADI MURMU
A PUBLIC PROGRAMME AT MAWPHLANG, MEGHALAYA**

Mawphlang: January 16, 2024

I am happy to meet tribal brothers and sisters of Meghalaya gathered here in large numbers. I was really looking forward to interact with you. When I landed in Meghalaya, I experienced that this state is indeed uniquely blessed by Mother Nature.

I am told that the Mawphlang Sacred Grove is home to the most celebrated of Meghalaya's 'law-kyntang' or ancient sacred groves. This forest aged more than 700 years, has attracted many visitors, tourists, and researchers from around the globe. They admire the wisdom of our fore-fathers who understood and used this traditional concept of conserving nature. We all should make serious efforts to preserve this kind of forest which is a treasure-house of biodiversity.

I am happy to know that Meghalaya has been making a determined effort to emerge as a model state and offering a balanced approach to modernity and tradition. With good FDI inflows, high exports and a dynamic demography, Meghalaya is emerging as a growth leader and offers an inspiring story. Local produce such as Lakadong turmeric and straw-berries are high in demand. I have been told that "e-Proposal System" of the government of Meghalaya has won the coveted UN Award - World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) Forum Prizes in 2022. I congratulate the government and residents of Meghalaya for this achievement.

The government has made significant conservation efforts to ensure that bio-diversity is maintained. I have been told that the Green Meghalaya initiative has been launched through which the communities are rewarded for preserving and protecting the natural cover.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I have inaugurated various connectivity related and developmental projects today. I am confident that these projects will improve connectivity and will enable Meghalaya to move ahead on the path of sustainable and inclusive development.

Since time immemorial, tribal people have been the vanguard of environmental conservation based on indigenous knowledge, culture, and religious beliefs. Tribal practices can be good case studies of how there can be a symbiotic relationship between human beings and nature.

Meghalayan people believe that 'U Basa' or goddess dwells among lush green forests. I have said earlier also that this concept of worshipping nature as a divine gift has played a significant role in conservation efforts. Tribal lifestyle contributes to the promotion of national goals of bio-diversity conservation and maintaining the ecological balance.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today, I interacted with the Self-Help Groups here in Meghalaya. Women have played a significant role in the success of Self-Help Groups and value chain addition. It is inspiring to see that women are not just passive beneficiaries but active agents of change.

I also want to highlight the role of women in conservation and climate action efforts. It is well-documented that women are at the heart of the conservation efforts. Women in tribal societies have been showing the way in protecting the environment and sharing their wisdom and skills to enhance adaptation and mitigation. By increasing the participation of women in climate initiatives and decision-making processes, more can be done for effective climate action and bio-diversity conservation.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We need to ensure that our heritage is not lost. Therefore, we also need to document local practices for effective conservation and management. Traditional Knowledge Digital Library (TKDL) is a good initiative of the Government of India to protect traditional knowledge in medicines.

I am sure that by adopting a comprehensive and holistic approach of sustainable development and learning from our ancient wisdom, we can together address various challenges and preserve this beautiful planet with all its natural bounties for the future generation.

Thank you,

Jai Hind!

Jai Bharat!