



Address by the Hon'ble President of India Shri Ram Nath Kovind on the occasion of inauguration of housing complexes for economically weaker sections under BSUP schemes Raj Bhavan, Aizawl, November 29, 2017

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1. This is my first visit to Mizoram after becoming President of India. I am truly glad that my first event here is so meaningful to the lives of some of our most deprived fellow citizens – and that I am inaugurating **Housing Complexes for Economically Weaker Sections** under **Basic Services for Urban Poor** Schemes. I commend the efforts of the State Government and Chief Minister Pu Lal Thanhawla.
2. Housing for all as well as planning for our urban population, which is growing by the day, is a challenge not just for Mizoram but for the entire country. It is the focus of flagship programmes of the government of India. The meeting of certain milestones in housing for the poor and in building urban infrastructure will help us achieve the goals of New India by 2022, when we complete 75 years as a independent nation. And New India is simply not possible without New Mizoram.
3. There is a vitality to Mizo society that is commendable. This state is a role model for the world in terms of peaceful resolution of political disputes. The Mizo Accord of 1986 has been honoured by all sides, and an insurgency situation ended with all stake-holders agreeing to work peacefully for the greater common good of the state and its people. This is a miracle of our times. It gives us an insight into Mizo society – a society of honourable men and women. And I should say very strong-minded women. Women who are held up as a cherished example in other parts of our country.
4. I congratulate all the people of Mizoram, including the Church and its affiliated organisations, the youth and women's groups, civil society groups and political parties, for this spirit of fraternity and cooperation. Our endeavour must now be to take it forward. And to enhance economic opportunities for the talented young men and women of Mizoram.
5. The Indian economy is today among the fastest growing in the world. From innovation in agriculture to the digital economy, from manufacturing to the expanding services sector – there are so many good news stories. Young people from Mizoram are very much part of the story. In the IT industry, the hospitality industry and other service sector industries, Mizo boys and girls are making their mark in different corners of the country.
6. And their work is drawing admiration for Mizoram. There is admiration for the education and literacy skills of young Mizos. A literacy rate of 91 per cent – as per the 2011 census – is truly remarkable. There is also admiration for the values, work ethic and professionalism of young men and women from Mizoram.

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7. The need is to create more opportunities within Mizoram itself. Like the rest of the Northeast, Mizoram is key to India's Act East Policy. This will link our Northeastern states to our neighbours in Southeast Asia as well as to other parts of India. That is why the government of India is focusing on infrastructure and connectivity projects in the region. Trade will grow and to everybody's benefit.
8. Mizoram has so much to offer. Harnessed appropriately, bamboo can be a wonder crop. With value addition, it can be used to create a variety of products and many, many jobs. Horticulture is another area with huge potential. Mizoram grows **pineapples** and exotic fruit such as **passion fruit**. These deserve a much wider market. And they deserve a thriving food processing industry locally, which can combine technology with the amazing traditional skills of the Mizo people. Fisheries is another sunrise sector. Mizo products can flood distant markets.
9. I am told the state government has undertaken two programmes that have led to appreciable outcomes – the **New Land Use Policy** and the **New Economic Development Policy**.
10. Under the **New Land Use Policy** the government is providing financial support to less-advantaged sections that seek to move away from shifting cultivation or **jhoom** cultivation and get into sustainable agriculture, horticulture, sericulture, animal husbandry or other livelihoods.
11. The **New Economic Development Policy** is a long-term growth strategy for Mizoram. It has been formulated after the shift in fiscal federalism following the government of India's implementation of the report of the 14th Finance Commission. This has transferred more tax revenues to the states. Along with the Act East Policy, it opens up opportunities for the state government and the people of Mizoram. In particular, I am encouraged by the efforts to promote entrepreneurship in Mizoram.

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12. We have a lot of hope in the young people of Mizoram. They will build Mizoram's future and India's future. And they are the risk takers, the entrepreneurs and job creators who will shape our destiny.

13. Young Mizos are our sporting heroes. From hockey to mountaineering, boxing to weight-lifting, Mizos excel nationally and internationally. Of course in football, our Mizo boys and girls are special. In 2011, Mizoram got its first all-weather artificial turf football ground. Within two years, in 2013, the state team had won the Santosh Trophy. In 2015, it won the gold medal in the football event of the National Games.
14. And just this year, in April 2017, Aizawl Football Club became the first Northeast club to win the I-League. These are great achievements. I am confident Mizoram's young people can replicate the energy of football in the economy and in entrepreneurship.
15. On that optimistic note, I will conclude. But before I do, I must wish everybody here a happy and prosperous Festive Season and a Merry Christmas. May you and your families always know joy!

God bless you all

Thank you

Jai Hind!

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