

Fellow Citizens and friends,

1. I extend my warm greetings to all of you on the occasion of the 68th anniversary of our Republic. It was on this day, in the year 1950, that the people of India adopted the Constitution that made India a sovereign, democratic, republic, guaranteeing to all its citizens liberty, equality and justice. For the last 68 years, we have stood strong as a nation. Our country has faced numerous challenges, both from within and outside the country, but we have stood the test of time as a sovereign republic on the strength of our democratic institutions. The founding fathers of our constitution brought together our diversity to create a sense of unity amongst all that was brought us so far. We are today a rising power, with fastest economic growth rate, regarded as a global leader in science, space, technology, innovation and start-ups, and our economic success is the envy of the world.

2. The strength of our democratic polity comes from the foresight and statesmanship of the founding fathers and architects of our nation. It was they who realized that our nation has great diversities in terms of languages, regions, religions and communities, and hence had incorporated special provisions for different communities and regions to ensure the unity and integrity of the country. This has laid the foundations of a free and modern society, with wide scope for all its citizens to live as proud and equal citizens of this great country. On this momentous occasion, let us also salute the freedom fighters and martyrs, who made the supreme sacrifice for the unity and integrity of our nation.

3. Nagaland has also been a partner in the development and progress of the nation since its creation with special constitutional provisions under Article 371(A), in December 1963. These Special Provisions safeguard the

unique cultural heritage as well as the rights of the people of Nagaland while also giving an opportunity for the people to grow and develop according to their own genius. Today, the overarching desire of the people of the State is for peace and development. We have a youthful population, eagerly looking for opportunities to grow and to prosper. We must take our due part in the rapidly growing economy of our nation, and realize the aspirations of a developed and vibrant Nagaland. We need to understand that it is now not only a right to dream, but also an opportunity to realize those dreams.

4. Nagaland today stands at the cusp of history. Shortly, we will be having the elections to the State Assembly. The intense desire of the people of Nagaland has been for a final settlement of the Naga Political Issue. 20 years of negotiations with NSCN (IM) and signing of the framework agreement in 2015 has given hope to the people of the Nagaland that Solution to the Naga Issue is not far. The joining of six NNPGs in Peace Talks further bolsters this hope and one prays to God that we together are able to resolve this issue and focus our resources on development to enable better quality of life for all. We are in such a situation due to sustained efforts of all stakeholders for long lasting Peace in the Region. Over the years, the State Government, the NNPGs, the Church, Civil Societies and the NGOs have been trying their best to facilitate the resolution of the Naga Political issue. Efforts at bringing about better understanding between the different NNPGs and drawing them closer to each other have been made. In addition, numerous resolutions were passed by the Nagaland Legislative Assembly and other forums to give the right impetus to the Peace Process from time to time. The credit for bringing about the various factions together on a common platform should deservedly go to the Tribal Hohos and its Apex Bodies, the Church, Civil society, NGOs and the NNPGs. Different factions and armed groups

have now come together seeking a solution in response to political determination to solve the problem by all. This therefore is considered to be the most opportune time for the Naga political groups to resolve the seven decades old Naga political issue once and for all.

5. As we head to elections which are an essential feature of a democratic polity, I would appeal to all the political parties and people at large to maintain peace, dignity and decorum during the election campaign so as to ensure smooth and peaceful conduct of elections. Those engaged in election duty should discharge their duties with diligence and dedication, without fear or favour, to ensure that every eligible voter exercises his or her right to Vote. Election Commission of India has made elaborate arrangements for smooth conduct of elections and I am sure that with active support and cooperation of all we will be able to conduct peaceful elections. I am also happy to note that Nagaland Churches, NGOs and Civil Society have come out with campaigns for 'Clean Election' in all seriousness. Let us all resolve to abjure all kinds of corruption and electoral malpractices and make the forthcoming elections, the cleanest elections.

6. Nagaland has indeed made good progress in our march towards development during the last 55 years of Statehood. Nagaland is a young State with almost 60% of the population below the age of 25. The youth of Nagaland are the pride of the country. There is a quest and an aspiration amongst the youth to excel and be the best. We all are inspired by the legendary Dr T. Ao, the doctor-sportsperson who was the first captain of our national football team after Independence and led Indian team in the London Olympics of 1948. On 28th January this year, we will be celebrating his birth centenary and it is indeed a proud moment for all of us. Jawaans and officers of Naga regiment have done the nation proud – be it at Kargil War or fighting naxals in difficult terrains, there are stories of the

bravery and valour of Naga warriors that are recounted often. There are many more talented and spirited Naga boys and girls – from music to fashion to crafts to social work – who are making the Nation proud with their accomplishments.

7. While it is heartening to see such achievements, one needs to also introspect and think as to what more can be done to ensure that our youth realize their true potential. Infrastructure development and Connectivity is critical for helping Nagaland catch up with mainland States in terms of economic development. Connectivity within the State as also with other States of the North East will help create opportunities for entrepreneurs and businesses. Nagaland is also the gateway to South East Asia and with the Act East policy of Government of India – a great future beckons for the benefit of all. The ongoing road projects in the State once completed can transform the State. With direct connectivity with South East Asia, there will be a huge market for our produce and products.

Road connectivity along with Rail connectivity for Kohima and improved air connectivity can transform the connectivity for the State.

8. For timely completion of development projects, an essential prerequisite is creation of a congenial atmosphere. There have been instances in the past where projects had been stalled because of problems created by landowners. We must understand that for any development to take place, land is required. Therefore, I appeal to all people, especially the landowners to cooperate and part with their land generously whenever required in public interest.

9. Implementation of GST by Nagaland along with rest of the country on July 1 2017 has been a landmark achievement that helps integrate the State with a uniform nation-wide market. This will not only help the

businesses to harmonize their taxes but has the potential of boosting tax revenues of the State as also encourage investments in the State.

10. The strength of the State lies in its organic farm produce, flowers and fruits. Nagaland is located in one of the 25 hot bio-diversity areas of the world. This must be protected at all costs and strategies for sustainable development of the resources must be devised. The rare medicinal plants and herbs can truly help create jobs and boost the economy.

11. Nagaland has the potential to be an attractive tourist destination offering a unique blend of heritage and culture to the travellers in search of nature, music and cultural tourism. Along with eco-tourism, it also has a great opportunity for adventure tourism. With peace and good infrastructure, there will be investors for tourism that will yield good returns with the unique bio-diversity and salubrious climate. Promoting home stays and rural tourism can offer an experience to tourists, which is unparalleled.

12. The Environment, Forest and Climate Change Department, with the support of various stakeholders, has successfully promoted the concept of community based wildlife protection by providing safe passage to the migrating Amur Falcons. This effort has received wide acclaim and recognition.

13. An important issue that needs our attention today is Climate Change. We are all aware of the heavy rains experienced this year which resulted in flooding in Dimapur as also loss of lives and damage to physical infrastructure. Till a few years back, it was unimaginable that we will ever have floods in Nagaland. Indiscriminate construction without proper drainage has resulted in a situation when heavy rains in a short duration can cause extensive damage. Rising population with need for more space

for housing and continuous deforestation has led to increase in carbon emissions and has made the State vulnerable to the dangers of Climate Change. Studies indicate that by 2050 various districts of the State will see increase in temperature by 1.6 to 1.8 degrees. Further rainfall may increase by 10-20% and this has the potential of causing floods as also to roads, bridges and buildings. What we need to do is to build consensus and adopt climate friendly development strategies as also make lifestyle changes that help mitigate the effects of climate change.

14. In order to enhance the resilience of farmers to climate change and to increase household agricultural income of farmers, Department of Agriculture is implementing a World Bank assisted project – Fostering Climate Resilient Upland Farming Systems in the North East (FOCUS) in partnership with International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). The project seeks to increase the environmental sustainability and profitability of the farming systems practiced by the highland farmers of Nagaland. Self sufficiency in food should be our goal.

15. Forest Department is also implementing Nagaland Forest Management Project (NFMP) with funding from Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) with an objective to improve forest ecosystem and support income generation by rehabilitation of Jhum area and provision of livelihood support, thereby contributing to sustainable forest and environmental conservation and livelihood improvement. The project is expected to result in benefits that will include forestry interventions and biodiversity conservation, Livelihood improvement and community development & Institutional strengthening leading to augmentation of farmer incomes and environmental conservation.

16. I have listed a few challenges and opportunities for the State of Nagaland. With an objective to provide a better quality of life for ourselves and future generations, we need to come together to address the challenges facing us and make the most of the opportunities available for us. On a day such as this, when we celebrate the anniversary of coming into force of our Constitution that laid the foundations of a democratic republic, let us rededicate ourselves to the principles of democracy, and let us strive to seek solutions to our problems through peaceful means. I hope that in a few weeks from now, we would have elected a Government that will ensure that the aspirations of citizens are met for a better tomorrow.

17. On this occasion of Republic Day, I would like to congratulate the people of Nagaland for participating enthusiastically in various Welfare Projects. I will urge the youth to be the nodal agents of change to reach the targeted group. I also earnestly appeal to our Universities and educational institutions to make skill education an integral part of curriculum, so as to develop our youth into entrepreneurs. Our youth should be job givers and not job seekers.

18. In conclusion, I wish you all a happy and prosperous New Year 2018, and hope that we all take new initiatives for a better tomorrow.

Kuknalim

Bharat Mata Ki Jai

JAI HIND