GOVERNMENT OF MANIPUR

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IN THE MEETING OF CHIEF MINISTERS OF NE STATES ON “LOOK EAST POLICY”

OCTOBER 31, 2007

MANIPUR

HYDERABAD HOUSE, NEW DELHI
At the outset, I convey my sincere thanks to the Union Minister of External Affairs for taking personal interest and initiative in organizing this meeting with all Chief Ministers of NE States. The Look East Policy has begun to open the investment opportunities for the North Eastern States. Hope that today’s meeting will provide a further fillip in carrying forward the Look East Policy which is intended to improve the economic condition of the North East States.

2. Historically, the economy of the North-East Region was very closely inter-linked with South Asian countries like Myanmar and Bangladesh. The partition of the country in 1947 has changed these historical links. The opening of the border trade pact in Moreh has begun to restore a bilateral trade between Manipur and Myanmar. Strategically situated in the far flung corner of this vast sub-continent, Manipur is a natural corridor to Myanmar and to the rest of South East Asia.

3. Manipur State has a good agro climatic condition with a rich biodiversity. This environment has made Manipur an extremely fertile place with rich rice cultivation and a variety of horticulture crops. Its forests also yield many orchids & medicinal plants besides other forest products. Its bountiful natural beauty, with the largest natural fresh water of Loktak lake in the region surrounding by blue green hills make it an enviable tourist destination. The State is also endowed with an inherent sports talent and a historically rich cultural heritage.

4. Located as it is close to Myanmar with a uniquely exotic airport it further serves as an excellent potential air link centre between North
East India and South East Asia. A flight between Imphal and Chiangmai in Thailand would take only one hour.

5. I would like to highlight some of the measures which need to be taken as part of the Look East Policy.

i) Imphal Airport which is being provided with night landing facilities should be upgraded into an international airport with cold storage facilities.

ii) National Highways-39, 53, 150, across the State should be upgraded to 4-lane roads for easy flow of heavy vehicular traffic. State Highways and Border Roads should be strengthened and improve to meet trade and commercial requirements. Govt. of India should provide adequate funds within a period of five years for upgradation and improvement of thee critical roads.

iii) The proposed Trans Asian Highway connecting Moreh in Manipur to Moesot in Thailand via Bagan in Myanmar should be expedited.

iv) In order to have enhance trade & export with the ASEAN countries, the border trading point at Moreh needs good road connectivity. National Highway – 39 therefore needs to be upgraded. Support for other trade related infrastructure from Assistance to States for Infrastructure Development Enterprises and related matter (ASIDE) under the Ministry of Commerce is also needed.

v) The railway line from Jiribam to Tupul is coming up. We need to plan ahead to connect Tupul to Moreh making this the backbone of the future Asian Railway. I fully support the proposed rail link from Jiribam in Manipur to Hanoi in Vietnam via Moreh.

vi) The telecom network in the State need to be vastly improved. It is frequently difficult to connect to stations outside the State. The telecom connection between Imphal and Moreh also needs urgent improvement. Further, the proposed optical fibre link of 6 km between Moreh and Tamu in Myanmar may also be taken up soon.
vii) The present number of tradable items at the border trade post in Moreh is 22. This needs to be expanded. The State Government has proposed that the list of tradable items be increased to 44.

viii) Credit facilities need to be more easily accessible. The Govt. of India is requested to formulate a system towards this end.

ix) The Protected Area Permit from Manipur should be lifted. There is no Inner Line Restriction in Manipur presently. Hence having the Protected Area Permit is not reasonable. We would like Imphal to be a nodal point for connection to South East Asia. The present Protected Area Permit therefore only serves to impede the development of tourism. Even Jammu & Kashmir has a PAP regime in only certain areas of the state and not throughout the state.

6. It is my firm belief that the joint effort made by the Ministry of MEA, Ministry of DoNER and other Central Agencies will remove the impediments in the operationalisation of Look East Policy which will pay rich dividend to the North East Region while on its journey of transformation of its society, its economy and its very people.

THANK YOU