

56TH VAN MAHOTSAVA  
25TH JUNE, 2005

NOTES FOR GOVERNOR'S SPEECH

My Arunachalee Brothers, Sisters and Comrades, my dear members of the Donyi Polo Vidhya Bhawan- Mr. Chief Minister, Mr. Forest & Environment Minister,

1. Ours is a State that sets an example for the rest of the country. We have the largest amount of forest cover over our entire territory –almost 82%. Arunachal has many blessings to count. An overwhelming proportion of our land and mountains and hills are green, covered by huge rain-fed forests. The Lord Indra has ever been bountiful, and has provided us more than adequate, more than abundant rains. Five major rivers provide us their benediction of waters, which flow through different parts and districts of our land. We have timber and fast growing trees of the temperate zone, also woods of Alpine nature and character in our higher mountain ranges. In addition, we are blessed with the most unusual bio-diversity, that makes us one of the world's dozen hot-spots of bio-diversity. We have growing, on our soil, rare flowers, fruits, brush and shrubbery, and extraordinarily valuable and rare medicinal plants, roots, barks, gums and resins, and many other kinds of bounties which reflect the nature's benevolence and grace. The early morning rays of the Sun and the evening grace of the Moon's light in every season, and in every part of our entire countryside, each day favour our land by kissing and embracing it first, before any other part or region of India.

2. We have so much green cover, and of such value and significance, that one thing we need to do just for its symbolic merit and value, is planting of trees. Today, we have celebrated the Van Mahotsav as a gesture, for its symbolic value. Strictly speaking, for substantive reasons we needed not to do it here; but it sets an example for others, and as we are ambitious not only for ourselves, but for all other parts of our vast country, we have happily done this. It must make us plan for the future; I do not recommend that any trees other than Teak and Oak are planted by us on similar occasions. We are next door to Burma or Myanmar. They have an abundance of Teak while ours are all gone.

3. And yet what I have just said may perhaps not represent full factual picture. We too need far greater productivity of our fruits, flowers, vegetables and value-laden medicinal plants, and more timber and less brush and shrubbery. The Lord has given us an enormous wealth of trees, plants, mountains, forests, rivers and waters but not enough population, for we remain a sparsely populated State. We have scarce indigenous labour to be used for our industrial effort; and industry alone can make our productivity capable of being export oriented, which in turn can bring us wealth. But, we are also blessed in our indigenous population, the original inhabitants of this very special region which represents both beauty and hardship. Our people has an enormous lot of expertise and specialisation in respect of good and evil spirits and worship of trees, plants, flowers, leaves. A moment ago I mentioned that the Sun and the Moon kiss our land. And that really is the core of our peoples' religious belief - the Donyi Polo faith. And it is appropriate that we are in the Donyi Polo School today to celebrate this special occasion identified with trees and forests.

4. Planting of trees is a symbolic gesture to celebrate our reverence for all things that grow in the forest. As our great scholar-author-politician and freedom fighter K.M. Munshi used to say, trees mean water, water helps grow wheat and bread, and it is bread that gives and sustains life. Without trees and forests Lord Indra's clouds will not bless us. Without that water there can be no rivers and no rain-fed forests. We must all understand and recognise that the sustenance of human life on this planet cannot be arranged without trees in their habitat. The eternal way of the forest with all its leaves sustaining trees and providing cover for magnificent animals of our jungles, and beautiful

birds that brighten the jungle, also our lives and produce most works of beauty and art, poetry, and prayers.

5. These magnificent animals make us recognise too that in many ways man remains far more dangerous than the so called wild animals who prey. We too in our society prey on and force the weak to protect themselves. The eternal way of the forest teaches us that neither man nor beast is shy when his or its quest is for food. We are a strange mixture of good and evil; of civilisation and barbarism, and of the divine and the demonic. All of us must recognise that when we do something out of greed, to fill our own pockets, it is somebody else's resources that we are looting, stealing, and it is the weakest that we are exploiting. Our forests are essential for us but we have allowed them to be destroyed. I have just been boasting about our forest cover but let me remind you that even in these our Arunachal forests we have allowed Teak, Oak, Red Wood and other valuable timbers to be looted. All the valued timbers have disappeared. Forest department has to be more protective and to cultivate a different work ethos. Let us not talk merely of the forests, let us also think of morals and morality, through which alone we can either protect or destroy all things that include objects like jungles, forests, birds and wild life. Gandhi's Truth and Non violence. Today's induction of resources – human beings, skill, technology refuses to come to a people or a region if it is seen as violence – prone or dishonest. The fate of the North East as discussed both in the NEC and at the Governors' Conference, when President Abdul Kalam had to indicate the need to use IT for greater transparency. Mizos, Nagas, and the cynicism displayed through extortions by the AAPSU and ANSU.

6. Ever since I have come here, I have felt some regret, some sadness. I arrived here in this Pradesh too late to trek through the mountains and touch their heights. Age affects one's capacity to put in physical labour. I am attracted to the wild but the body does not cooperate as it once used to. I have to utilise my energy through other kinds of human endeavour. But I do hope to support and help this Pradesh with which I now wholly identify my life and work, in ways other than physical. May I quote the 18th century British poet Christopher Smart who wrote of how plants and trees and flowers along with prayers can combine to make our lives beautiful and meaningful and profitable.

“Trees, plants, and flowers of virtuous root;  
Gem yielding blossom, yielding fruit .....  
And with sadness of the gale enrich the thankful Sun  
The World He made,  
The Glorious light the Soothing shade Dale, champaign, grow and hill  
Where Secrecy remains in bliss  
And Wisdom hides her grace.”

All of us humans of today seek what our ancestors who authored the Vedas, taught us to seek.....

“Bless me Oh Lord with lofty hills and mountains which give birth to rivers and forests with trees that bear fruit.  
May I possess sacred twigs, the sacred grass to perform sacrificial rites .....  
May peace fill the plants and the forests.  
May God's ruling over the rivers be peaceful.  
May Lord Brahma be peaceful.  
May there be peace in the world.  
May peace manifest itself in every form.  
These lines themselves must sing of and signify peace.”