

BILATERAL SUMMIT BETWEEN THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA AND THE GOVERNMENT OF MEGHALAYA HELD

Shilong, November 16, 2019: As part of the 4th Edition of the India International Cherry Blossom Festival, a Bilateral Summit between the Republic of Korea and the Government of Meghalaya was held today at the State Convention Centre, Shillong.



The summit was organized by the Government of Meghalaya and the Embassy of the Republic of Korea in collaboration with the Korean Cultural Centre, Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) and Institute of Bio-resources & Sustainable Development (IBSD), Government of India. The main focus of the summit was to exchange ideas on Socio Economic Partnerships and in strengthening ties between the Republic of Korea and the state of Meghalaya in key areas such as Waste management, Power & Energy Generation, Restoration of Environment particularly in areas affected by coal mining, Cultural relations, Tourism etc. Ambassador of the Republic of Korea to India Mr. Shin Bong-Kil, led the delegates representing

the Republic of Korea whereas the Government of Meghalaya was represented by Shri James P. K. Sangma, Minister in charge, Home, Power etc. and Shri. Lahkmen Rymbui, Minister in charge, Forest & Environment, Education etc. along with senior government officials from the departments of Forest, Mining and Geology, Urban affairs and others.

Delivering the keynote address, Ambassador of the Republic of Korea to India Mr. Shin Bong-Kil, expressed his happiness at being invited by the Government of Meghalaya to attend the 4th India International *Cherry Blossom Festival* 2019 and he expressed his deep appreciation of the hospitality and treatment he has received from the people of the state. He informed that he has come to Shillong along with a cultural delegation consisting of a Taekwondo team, a Traditional Korean Drum Troupe and a famous K-Pop singer. He further stated that another important aspect of his visit to Shillong was to attend this Bilateral Summit which was being held on the sidelines of the festival. He said that he was accompanied by representatives from a Korean company which specializes in the fields of reclamation of abandoned mines and restoration of forest, environment and water bodies affected by coal mining and the India Head of Korea Trade Promotion-Investment Agency (KOTRA) to explore the possibilities of economic cooperation and bilateral trade and investments between the two.

The Ambassador stated that half a century ago, the Republic of Korea was an underdeveloped country with very little or no technology. However, at present, it has become famous for its fast growth and power in the field of technology, ship building and steel and various other technological advancements. He further stated that he was given to understand that Meghalaya was very keen to cooperate with the Republic of Korea in areas such as reclamation of abandoned mines, restoration of water bodies etc., in which Korea has the expertise and experience to carry out the same. He shared stories of how Korea, much like Meghalaya, had faced the problem of abandoned mines, water pollution etc. and how his country acquired the technology for closure, reclamation, restoration, rehabilitation of mining affected areas and polluted rivers & water bodies. He was also extremely happy to hear that next week, the Chief Minister of Meghalaya will be leading a team of delegates from the state to visit the Republic of Korea and he says that this will further strengthen the ties between the two governments particularly in undertaking various collaborative projects.

Speaking at the summit, Shri. James K. P. Sangma shared his experiences of his recent visit to South Korea where he explored the kind of innovations and technology in which Korea has gone far ahead and established a name at the global stage. He highlighted that Meghalaya is a state rich in natural beauty with a large and diverse variety of flora and fauna and hence it is imperative to ensure that economic development in Meghalaya goes along with the preservation of its natural and living heritage and that is the cornerstone of the planning process of the Government for the state. Further, he stated that Climate change is a reality and sadly India is one of the countries most vulnerable to it. It has one of the highest densities of economic activity in the world and a very large population of economically weaker section who still rely largely on natural resources for their livelihood and a high dependence on rainfall. “With this in mind I made a visit to the Republic of South Korea to study what are the innovations and the ways forward Korea has undertaken in terms of combating climate change and energy storage sector” he quoted. Tapping the potential power generation of the state is another area where the two governments could collaborate. He believes that the summit has given them the opportunity, not just to showcase the rich tradition, culture, natural beauty and heritage of the two but it has also brought about an opportunity to partner with likeminded political, social and business leaders.

Shri. Lahkmen Rymbui, meanwhile stressed that besides building partnerships in various key sectors being discussed at the summit, the meeting could also explore possibilities of the two governments collaborating in the field of education which is also an important aspect for the overall development of the region.

Various presentations and discussions were conducted during the summit on various topics such as Waste management by a Korean company - Chamhana GW Co. Ltd., Restoration of Environment affected by coal mining in Meghalaya by representatives from the Department of Mining and Geology and presentations by the Department of Forest and Environment.