

# Minister rap on N-E states

OUR CORRESPONDENT

**Shillong, May 29:** The states of the Northeast have under-utilised sanctions accorded by Union ministry of social justice and empowerment during the last Five Year Plan if figures are anything to go by.

During the Eleventh Plan period covering the years 2007-12, out of a total sanction of Rs 672 crore, the states have utilised only Rs 369 crore or 55 per cent of the sanctioned amount. This was stated by Union minister for social justice and empowerment Mukul Wasnik, who also warned that such a thing "should not be repeated". He was addressing reporters here after a daylong meeting with social welfare ministers of the region.

According to Wasnik, the percentage of funds utilised by the northeastern states during the last five years are 78.96 per cent (2007-2008), 58.44 per cent (2008-2009), 71.91 per cent (2009-2010), 42.08 per cent (2010-2011) and 55.02 per cent (2011-2012).

Some of the reasons behind the poor utilisation include failure to provide utilisation certificates on time and late sending of proposals.

Notwithstanding the under-utilisation, Wasnik announced that during the current Twelfth Plan period (2012-17), the sanction from his ministry would not be less than Rs 1,500 crore "to benefit the most disadvantaged sections of the community".

"The states need to follow a time schedule in order to ensure that the funds are properly utilised. Around August, officers from the Centre will come to the region to hold at least two sittings with officials from the states to work out a solution to deficiencies, if any," the Union minister said.

Earlier in the day, while delivering the inaugural address Wasnik said: "The state governments were not able to utilise these funds which were released for them. This is a clear reflection that there is lack of seriousness on the part of the governments in utilising the funds released by the ministry." The Union minister



**(Left) Union minister for social justice and empowerment Mukul Wasnik in Shillong on Tuesday. Picture by UB Photos**

was also unhappy with the way the state governments have been handling issues relating to persons with disabilities.

"There are some states which have achieved 93 per cent coverage in the distribution of certificates to persons with disability. However, there are also states where the coverage is only six per cent. But the overall figure in the Northeast is 30 per cent whereas the national average is 40 per cent," Wasnik said.

He also said under the scheme to provide aid and appliances to persons with disabilities, half of the districts in the region are uncovered.

"We have requested the states to send us recommendations in relation to the implementing agencies, which would carry out the distribution of the appliances to persons with disabilities. I hope they would do it as soon as possible so that sanctions can be provided at the earliest," the Union minister said. On funds sanctioned under this scheme and utilisation by the state governments, he said that in 2007-2008, the states utilised only around Rs 1.75 crore out of a total Rs 8 crore sanctioned. In 2008-2009, the fund utilised was Rs 6.02 crore out of the 10.6 crore sanctioned, while out of the Rs 10 crore sanctioned in 2009-2010, around Rs 5.02 crore was utilised.