

'I AM HERE BECAUSE OF THE PEOPLE'S WILLINGNESS TO SEE ME AS A LEADER'

Young Sangma inspires one and all during Pune visit

Rajesh Rao

The youngest minister in the Indian Parliament, heading the rural development ministry of state, Agatha Sangma, interacted with students of the Foundation for Liberal and Management Education (FLAME) on October 30 at the institute campus in the city.

In an hour-long interaction, she looked comfortable responding to varied questions from the students and speaking on the country's rural development, education system and plight of the less fortunate in society.

rolemodel

Dressed in her traditional costume, Agatha — who comes from a non-Hindi background — spoke fluently in the language and said, "This is because I have studied in Delhi and did my law from Indian Law Society's (ILS) Law College in Pune. Besides, I watch many Hindi films."

A candidate of the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP), 28-year-old Agatha is the daughter of former speaker of Lok Sabha and chief minister of Meghalaya, PA Sangma. Win-



STRAIGHT TALK: Agatha Sangma interacts with the students during her visit to the FLAME institute campus.

ning from the Tura constituency of Meghalaya state and speaking about the development of her constituency, she said, "I have yet to understand the needs of the people and place that I come from. I will take time to get accustomed to rural developments at the national level. For the time-being,

I am looking after the drinking water and sanitation portfolio under the ministry of rural development."

Agatha is a lawyer, an amateur photographer and an environmentalist who has a masters in environment management from Nottingham University, UK. "Life has given me a

chance to do all three things together. As a politician, I have a lot to learn," she said. The best education institutes are those that let students think as individuals, she added.

Being part of the world of fiery Indian politics at such a young age, she revealed that since joining the office in New Delhi, she has not been challenged or intimidated by anyone till now on any decisive matters related to her ministerial portfolio. "Every day has been a learning experience for me. Till now, I have not done magnificently or failed in my political endeavour. My father has definitely contributed to my success, but it's not because of dynastic politics that I have been elected. It is because of the people's willingness to see me as a leader," said Agatha.

Talking about Meghalaya, Agatha said they have not been able to imply Panchayat Raj institute in many parts of the state. "The higher education facilities in Meghalaya are one of the major areas of concern and one of my top priorities," she said.

"Like it is for Sharad Pawarji, NCP is our identity as a party. I will work for rural development from my heart," added Agatha.