

Speech delivered by Hon'ble Chief Minister, Sikkim, Shri Pawan Chamling at the National Development Council Meeting

Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi

December 27, 2012.

Hon'ble Prime Minister, respected Dr. Manmohan Singh ji, Hon'ble Deputy Chairman, Planning Commission, respected Dr. Monteksingh Ahluwalia ji, Hon'ble Union Ministers, fellow Chief Ministers, esteemed Members of Central and State Governments, distinguished participants, ladies and gentlemen

On behalf of the people of Sikkim and the State Government, let me convey my warm greetings to the Hon'ble Prime Minister and to the distinguished gathering present today. It is indeed a privilege and an opportunity to articulate our concern for a border state like Sikkim and also offer honest appraisal of our efforts at state and nation building task. Each year, we highly value interaction and the outcome of National Development Council meeting. This time, it is all the more important as we finalize perspective plans and programs to make our Country more vibrant and economically more resilient.

The Government of Sikkim wholly endorses the initiative of the Planning Commission, Government of India towards attaining our goals of faster, sustainable and more inclusive growth during the 12th Five Year Plan period.

In fact, our vision for the 12th Five Year Plan for the State of Sikkim is in consonance with the broad guidelines of the Government of India. Although Sikkim entered into the planning process of the Country only towards mid 1970s, we have steadily achieved integration in terms of our contribution towards development under identified sectors at the national level. Since 1994, we have consistently promoted many unique developmental models aimed at achieving faster economic growth based on pro-poor and people-centric governance, environmental sustainability, local self governance under the decentralized regime at the grass root level.

The State Government has set a long term vision to achieve comprehensive development during the 12th Five Year Plan on two cardinal premises. The first is to sustain and further consolidate on our growth momentum attained so far. And secondly, is to introduce more development avenues in line with central government's policies based primarily on State's natural resources without compromising on ecology and environment.

During the last eighteen years, we have introduced a range of development strategies, which have brought about visible transformation in the lives of the people. The State of Sikkim has achieved almost three fold increase in all our socio-economic indicators which is made possible by our effort and with the support of the central government.

Sikkim has earned a distinct identity to have created a landmark 50% reservation of seats for women under the Panchayati Raj System. This year we have successfully conducted the Panchayat elections where we have 50% of women occupying panchayat seats at the gram panchayat, zilla panchayat level and in the post of Adhyakshya and Upa-adhayakshya under the reservation policy.

Since the year 1995-96 the State Government has been allocating 70% of its plan outlay to the rural development sector. This vital sector has played a crucial role to transform the lives of the rural people through some very dedicated programs launched at the state level which has considerably brought down poverty level among rural population.

Under the Chief Minister's Rural Housing Mission, all katcha houses are being converted to pucca houses. This scheme was taken up during the 11th Plan period. The State Government has built till now 2000 new houses which have been allotted to the poorest of the poor. The Government has spent Rs. 80.00 crores thus far for the purpose. During the 12th Five Year Plan it is our endeavour to build additional 8300 new houses which will be allotted to the targeted beneficiaries. The projected expenditure for the same is around Rs. 332.00 crores. This is a unique scheme and our dream that each household should have durable roof over their heads. The scheme is being implemented by duly dovetailing all the existing national housing programmes like Indira Awas Yojana and the fund under PM's earthquake reconstruction and rehabilitation package being provided for reconstruction of damaged rural houses. This will ensure building of earthquake resistant houses which will be free from recurring expenditure and safe as well.

After the devastating earthquake of September 2011, the Hon'ble Prime Minister was kind enough to visit Sikkim to take stock of earthquake damages and announce one-time relief package of Rs. 1000 crores.

In order to provide immediate relief and rehabilitation, the Government of India was kind to release Rs. 200.00 crores as advance SPA for two earmarked projects in the year 2011-12. Out of the PM's package of Rs. 1000 crores we have so far received Rs. 280.00 crores. In order to fully mitigate the hardship imposed by the earthquake on us, I would use this forum to urge the Government of India to release the remaining funds of Rs.720.00 crores to the Government of Sikkim in the next financial year 2013-14 so that flow of resource to the State is unhampered and timely to reconstruct and rehabilitate damaged infrastructure at the earliest. Without timely release of resources, host of unwanted problems crop up. Specific instructions have been given to all the technical Departments that all construction must be made earthquake resistant.

The State Government has made substantial progress in Health Sector which receives topmost priority each year. The critical indicators of health, including Infant Mortality Rate (IMR), MMR, disease prevalence, morbidity as well as mortality rates have shown consistent decline over the last 15 years. These achievements are the cumulative result of improved coverage and efficiency of public health delivery system.

All health related programmes are being carried out without any hindrance and I am happy to state that life expectancy ratio in Sikkim has increased by over 3-5 years on average compared to 1994.

One major initiative launched in Sikkim is the Chief Minister's Comprehensive Annual and Total Check-Up for Healthy Sikkim (CATCH) which is designed for undertaking routine check-up to provide for preventive and remedial measures. Under this programme, we hope to gather a comprehensive data covering the health profile of

each and every citizen in the State which is to be monitored and updated annually so that the required delivery mechanism for timely intervention in providing health care and treatment can be organized more efficiently. This exercise will involve upgrading the technical knowledge of our doctors and the paramedics including improvement in the physical facilities for diagnostic services covering the entire network of the medical centres in the State. We have initiated action in this regard with due planning and have charted a realistic road map to achieve the target i.e. to cover the entire population of the State by the end of 2013. So far, the programme has almost covered 50% of the population of the State.

It is our sincere endeavour to remain focused in the health sector by bringing fresh initiatives from time to time and by upgrading the existing facilities available in the State. Innovative measures in both preventive and curative measures which encompass diagnostic facilities for timely detection of ailments covering all age groups including provision for treatment and rehabilitative health care have been undertaken.

The work for construction of 575-bedded Multi Specialty Hospital located at Sichey Busty has already commenced. The cost of construction, furnishing and medical equipments is estimated to be Rs. 735 crores. The hospital is likely to be completed by end of 2014. The Government of India had sent a team to make on-the-spot assessment and the team returned back, satisfied with the progress and the quality of work. The Government is keen that the hospital also serve as a Medical College once the required infrastructure is in place. Our goal is to provide easy access to best medical facilities and treatment to the people at an affordable cost. Towards this major initiative, I request the Central Government to extend all support in the forms of more grants under SPA/ACA in the coming Annual Plan. Our health indicators are positive and impressive which is direct result of the programmes initiated by the Government to improve the health people.

Education and Human Resource Development forms the backbone of development for the progress of State. It is the basic component to measure quality of human development. Our focus is to ensure larger access to educational facilities to all the children in the State above the age of 5 years. Over the decades, education sector in the State has witnessed massive expansion catering to the needs of the children. The decentralized planning process and the involvement of the Panchayati Raj Institutions to support management and administration of Schools have added a new dimension to the process of reforms undertaken to strengthen our system.

With an impressive improvement in the literacy rate of 82.2% we are now moving ahead with the larger mission of making Sikkim 100% literate State. 20% of the plan allocation is devolved to the education sector which is paying dividends. We have provided a host of educational incentives both at the elementary and in higher education with provision of quality education being a major concern of the State Government. We have one Central University (Sikkim University) and the Sikkim Manipal University under the PPP mode.

The Chief Minister's Meritorious Scholarship programme is sponsoring free education to promising children at Class V level to premier public schools within and outside the State. Already 350 students have benefited under this programme and the number

will be progressively upgraded to touch an impressive 1000 mark annually. This is a unique and innovative programme which directly benefits the children of rural areas.

Beginning the academic session of 2013, the State Government has also introduced cash incentives for our children in schools. This envisages cash award of Rs. 1 lakhs, Rs. 75,000 and Rs. 50,000 to local Sikkimese bagging rank No. 1, rank No. 2 and rank No. 3 respectively in all the three streams of Science, Commerce and Arts in the CBSE at Class XII level and similarly three cash awards for rank No. 1, rank No. 2 and rank No. 3 in CBSE class X level.

The other unique programme initiated in the current financial year is State Sponsorship for Civil Services coaching. We have selected 146 young educated Sikkimese for undergoing extensive coaching in top institutes of Delhi, Hyderabad and Tamil Nadu. This initiative, in times to come, will see many candidates from Sikkim making their mark in the All India Services/Central Civil Services.

Closely linked to education is the skill development programme which we launched in the year 2003 to re-align manpower requirement with market demand. This has remained a successful and effective programme to make our educated youths skilled and employable, giving them the capacity to harness diverse opportunities both within and outside Sikkim.

The establishment of a full fledged State Institute of Capacity Building in Sikkim has facilitated training, transfer of knowledge and building stronger capacities to a large number of the unemployed youth. This is in addition to the existing Directorate of Capacity Building which functions from its Office in Gangtok.

With the setting up of this Institute, the State has registered major dent into growing unemployment amongst the youth of Sikkim. Apart from technical knowhow and professional training, it will help build self-confidence among them duly imbibing human values, life skills, and livelihood capabilities. The Capacity Building and Skill Development initiative of the State Government has witnessed commendable success with placement figures exceeding well over 70% in the hospitality sector alone.

A fresh dimension has been introduced in the establishment of 41 livelihood schools across the State. The Livelihood Schools has come handy to train locals in trade and profession ranging from carpentry to basic engineering to meet manpower demand in small scale industrial units and hydro-power projects. These schools motivate and guide the youth enabling them to take their step forward and take up career at self-employment and set up micro enterprises as an entrepreneur and channelise their knowledge for useful and productive purpose. Skill development of the youth is a top priority of the Government of Sikkim. The State Institute of Capacity Building in South Sikkim at the moment is also playing the role of a skill development institute.

Sikkim is a part of one of the bio-diversity hot spots in the country. The Government of Sikkim has given top priority for protection of the flora and fauna wildlife forest and other natural resources in the State. It is also our endeavour to protect our glaciers, lakes, streams and rivers and water bodies including the medicinal plants.

In our effort to preserve the eco-system we have switched on to natural organic farming.

Organic Agriculture:

This is an economically viable and sustainable occupation. Owing to the diverse climatic conditions in Sikkim, large varieties of agricultural products could be cultivated throughout the years. The State is famous for large cardamom, ginger, mandarin oranges, flowers, cherry pepper and medicinal herbs. We have made efforts to encourage the youth to take up this noble programme, and capitalize on making organic farming a sustainable source of income and livelihood.

Out of the cultivable area of about 58,168 hectares in the State, 8168 hectares is already certified. To make Sikkim fully organic remaining 50,000 hectares is being taken for organic conversion in a phased manner under Sikkim Organic Mission 2015 and the process shall be completed by end of 2015. As on today 39,000 hectares of land is already under conversion and the remaining 11,000 hectares shall be taken up in the Financial Year 2013-14 and the entire State shall be organically certified by the year 2015.

In our noble effort, we would require full support from the Central Government. Since 2006-07, the State Government has completely stopped lifting the quota of chemical fertilizers extended by the Government of India and shut all public and private sale point for chemical fertilizers. However, agriculture still requires organic inputs in the form of bio-fertilizers and manure. Sikkim's withdrawal from the use of chemical fertilizers implies that it no longer avails associated subsidies. To provide alternative to farmers, rural compost units and vermi-compost units have been constructed. More investment is necessary on these inputs to achieve the State's Organic Mission. Sikkim is not able to adequately meet these demands unless there is a special help from the Central Government in the form of alternative inputs and resources.

We are the first State to initiate Livelihood Schools on organic farming in order to generate employment to local educated unemployed youth, and involve them in the process of organic farming. A total of 830 youths have been trained and engaged in Organic Farming activities.

The subject of Organic Farming has been incorporated in the School curriculum at Primary level basically to inculcate the knowledge of Organic Farming to the student community so that the children translate the message of Organic Farming to their parents and neighbours in the rural areas.

Eco-Tourism

We are promoting eco-tourism in the State and also bringing the concept of eco-friendliness as a curriculum to the classrooms. Our programs and policies will always take the environmental impact into consideration at the time of formulation of the projects and designs. It is our endeavour to pursue the green goal in the 12th Five Year Plan also while duly protecting our rich bio-diversity, forest and wildlife. There exist a ban on felling of trees, grazing and the use of non bio degradable materials in the State. Massive afforestation programs like creation of Smriti Ban and State Green Mission will be continued. This will be our contribution in the environmental conservation of the eastern Himalayas.

The State Green Mission Programme was launched by the Government of Sikkim in the year 2006-07 and continued during the 11th Plan period. Under this programme,

avenue plantation along the roads and in vacant land wherever found have been brought under green cover. The scheme will be continued in the 12th Five Year Plan to cover areas by plantation not covered in the previous years.

Along with the above programme we have a unique initiative known as “10 Minutes to Earth”. Every year on 15th July we carry out mass plantation through active public participation. This programme has been continuing since 2009-10. In this manner, efforts are made to keep the State clean, neat and green for posterity.

In the year 2011, we embarked on a unique journey covering the entire length and breadth of the State. This 42-day tour of the State was undertaken by the Government in order to meet the people at the grass root and address their problems directly. During this period various needs of the villages were addressed and many new requirements sanctioned on the spot. The schemes and projects sanctioned during this tour programme will be addressed in three phases. This exercise of touring the length and breadth of the State with the entire Government machinery is to identify grassroot concerns and put decision making on the fast track.

Besides it was also an exercise to draft 12th Five Year Plan proposals on the basis of wider consultation with grass root people. This trip also took stock of the status of schemes sanctioned in the rural sector. The decisions taken during the tour has been documented and laid on the table of august house in the Sikkim Legislative Assembly. It is an indication of the importance given by the Government of Sikkim to bring about inclusive growth and development.

As we have already entered the first year of the 12th Five Year Plan our vision for the 12th Five Year Plan are in the following: -

Connectivity:

This is one of the biggest development challenges for Sikkim. In the absence of air and rail network, Sikkim is solely dependant on the National Highway 31A and its State Highways to transport people and freights. With limited size of the local market the success of attracting investment from private players depend crucially on a good transportation network. Faster movement of people and good and services is essential to provide inputs to economic activity. We need to strengthen the transportation network in order to interlink growth centres, promote tourism and support economic and social needs of the people. The Government of India must assist in widening and improvement of the existing National Highway and for construction of a two-lane alternate highway connecting Gangtok from Sevoke in West Bengal. A two lane road from the upcoming Greenfield airport at Pakyong to Gangtok is also required including intermediate lane connectivity to all the marketing centres, strengthening of the major district roads etc. We will make all out effort to complete the spill over road construction projects from the last plan period during the 12th Five Year Plan.

Inclusive Development – Accelerating Growth in the Primary Sector:

The primary sector has to be given top priority in the development process. Around 75% of our population live in the villages therefore development is only possible with improvement in agriculture and allied services. We aim to raise productivity in agriculture and the allied sectors to improve livelihood for the large majority

dependant on the sector. During the 12th Plan farm productivity is to be enhanced through organic farming and promote production of organic seeds in the seed village programme. In this plan period we will continue to work on the organic mission through area expansion under organic certification, sensitizing the rural people to the aspects of the programme and making provision of compost pits to make the farms self-reliant in production of organic manure.

In the horticulture sector, we will take steps to increase the area under cultivation of fruits and flowers such as cymbidium orchids, roses, gerbera, liliun etc. Measures will be taken for control of pests in the production of oranges and large cardamom for which the State is well known. Low cost green houses will be constructed in the farmers fields for cultivation of vegetables and flowers along with irrigation benefits. Community water tanks, rain water harvesting and other methods of storage of water will be encouraged.

In February, 2013 we are holding the Second International Flower Festival at Saramsa Garden in East Sikkim, in order to showcase the abundance of the floral wealth of the State. It is our dream to see Sikkim as a garden State in the near future. We have been greatly encouraged by the outcome of first International Flower Show held in March 2008 at the same venue which was a huge success. The flower show was inaugurated by Shri Montek Singh Ahluwaliaji the Honb'le Deputy Chairman, Planning Commission, Government of India. I extend a warm welcome to the Hon'ble Prime Minister and the dignitaries present today to witness the diversity that we host during the Second Flower Show in Sikkim in February, 2013.

Villagers depend on animal husbandry activities where adequate focus has been laid by the Government. Increase in production and marketing of the produce will find place during this Plan Period. The varieties of livestock will be improved and Government support will be extended for large scale commercial production of livestock, poultry and fisheries products.

Hydro-Power:

The production and sale of power is a major revenue for the State. It will help raise economic growth and attract private investment in the power sector which will provide employment and energy security to the State. The Central Water Commission has estimated 8000 MW hydro-power potential in Sikkim. The expected installed capacity by end of 12th Five Year Plan is 3,774.50 MW. In the 12th Plan, efforts will be made towards building and strengthening the transmission system for evacuation of power. The 12th Plan will also see implementation and completion of R-APDRP works in Gangtok and Tadong and also the electrification of village homes under the RGGVY.

Urban Development:

Unregulated growth of buildings and development has a negative impact which ultimately degrades the sustainability of township. Rapid urbanization is therefore a major concern. Haphazard growth and the rise in population creates severe pressure on the existing amenities available. During the 11th Plan many infrastructural development works under urban renewal mission were taken up along with some improvement programmes. Housing for the urban poor and reforms have been carried out. Our urban development plans are guided by the city development,

development guide plans which have been prepared with expertise drawn from M/S Surbana International, Singapore. We have a comprehensive mobility plan drawn up for Gangtok and under the JNNURM we have taken up works in co-sectors such as water supply and sewerage. During the 12th Five Year Plan, the Government will complete all the spill over projects of the 11th Plan and also take up urban development activities in a phased manner. The development index of any city/town is gauged from the level of quality of provision to basic urban amenities. In the 12th Plan, we will look into the micro details of improving the basic amenities like drinking water, sewerage, solid waste disposal, street lighting, drainage and creation of green spaces. We hope to improve upon the quality of coverage of these basic services. It is also our endeavour to develop and beautify all the bazaars in the rural areas and also provide all amenities like we see along the MG Marg, Gangtok and Central Park Namchi. This will encourage people to stay back in their towns and pursue their livelihoods. It is a measure which will discourage increasing rural-urban migration.

Tourism:

No doubt the service industry is one of the principal employment generator in the country and more so in Sikkim. Tourism, hospitality and construction are important sources of employment therefore, the Government of Sikkim has acknowledged this fact and tourism is one of the fastest growing industries in the State. Nature has bestowed Sikkim with abundant beauty, lush green forests, valleys and five climatic zones with exquisite range of flora and fauna. The entire State is eco-friendly and inhabited by friendly and hospitable people. In addition, the State has a rich cultural heritage, stable Government and a crime and insurgent free atmosphere. Peace, tranquillity and security are the hallmark of the State. These conducive factors thus make the State an ideal and must-visit destination to the tourist.

Efforts of the Government is to develop Sikkim into a leading domestic and international destination and to make tourism the main livelihood of the people of Sikkim. Tourism will continue to be promoted with greater thrust in the 12th Five Year Plan. It is our aim to attract around 50 lakhs tourist annually in the State by the end of 12th Plan. This target is challenging but achievable with well executed tourism strategy, better planning, aggressive publicity and creation of the requisite tourist infrastructure. The domestic tourist arrivals in the year 2010 was 700,011 and the international arrivals was 20,757. Promotion of eco-tourism in greater measure with greater thrust on promotion of village and rural tourism will make tourism as the new profession of the 21st century Sikkimese. We are relentlessly working towards these objectives.

We have several new tourist infrastructure in the pipeline like construction of sky walk at Bhaleydung, development of ropeway to the Statue of the Guru Padmasambhava, the Sleeping Buddha Statue at Singik North Sikkim etc. These centres will further value add to the already existing tourist attractions in the State. The pilgrimage and cultural centre with the Statue of Lord Buddha is now ready for inauguration at Ravangla, South Sikkim. It is our endeavour to promote religious circuit in a big way. We are adopting a policy of responsible tourism without compromising the environment and ecology which is the core issue that drives tourism industry in the State.

I am happy to note that the 12th Five Year Plan aims to increase the pace of inclusive development through creation of more jobs and more enterprise. Besides the above, the Government of Sikkim aims to achieve faster growth which is inclusive and sustainable. The following areas will be addressed effectively in the 12th Plan: -

- Vigorous implementation of all the national flagship programmes including the schemes under PM's package for re-construction and rehabilitation post September, 2011 earthquake.
- Vigorous implementation and realization of State's 19 Mission programmes by end of the 12th Plan period.
- Completion of all ongoing projects.

Before I conclude, I would like to flag the following issues before this august forum.

- Need for flexibility of norms under centrally sponsored schemes/central sector schemes. It may be mentioned that some schemes are funded on 50:50, 75:25 basis etc. Due to lack of sound resource base, we find it difficult to meet the State's Share rendering many schemes ineffective
- The NEC and NLCPR funding should be more liberal to special category States with timely release of the requisite resources.
- The projects and schemes under SPA/ACA of the State's Government may be considered and sanctioned early along with timely release of resources so that the projects are not delayed on the ground.
- We have continuously requested for an alternative highway into the State from West Bengal. The Government of India may take this on top priority.

The 12th Five Year Plan has visualized a faster, sustainable and more inclusive growth in its approach. The Central Government has proposed reduction of poverty and a balanced regional development which is based on a faster and inclusive growth during this period. The Government of Sikkim is in agreement with the Plan document on the identified monitorable socio economic targets for enhancement of human well-being during the 12th Plan period. The Government of Sikkim wholly supports the initiative of the Central Government with the proposed development strategies adopted for growth of agriculture, rural development, energy, transport, health, education & skill development, science & technology, tourism, hospitality, building of economic infrastructure, and good governance.

While agreeing in general with the overall approach of a faster, sustainable and more inclusive growth during the 12th Five Year Plan, I wish to flag the urgent need to provide more infrastructures and reliable physical connectivity to ensure socio-economic development of Sikkim in particular and NE region as a whole during the 12th Five Year Plan period. This is in order to ensure a more balanced regional development.

Peaceful law and order environment, political stability and good governance are principle factors needed to foster development and prosperity. Towards these goals the Government of Sikkim has steadfastly worked ever since with good results. I

assure this august house that we are committed to efficient governance, a high growth regime and self-reliance.

I thank the Hon'ble Prime Minister for convening this National Development Council meeting to ensure larger interaction among all the stakeholders. Through rounds of consultative meetings held over the years across board including the State Governments, this exercised has culminated in the drafting and approval of the 12th Five Year Plan document for the Country. I take this opportunity to thank and congratulate the central government, the planning commission and all the central ministry for having prepared the 12th Five Year Plan Document which, I am sure, will take the entire country to the next level of progress and prosperity.

Thank you

Jai Hind