

Hon'ble Speaker, Deputy Speaker and Hon'ble Members of the Sikkim Legislative Assembly, I convey, my warm greetings and good wishes to you and to the people of Sikkim. May New Year usher happiness and prosperity to the people of the State. It is my privilege to address the Budget Session 2017-18.

At the outset, on behalf of the people of the State and this August body, let us condole the sad demise of Shri P. Shiv Shankar. He served as the Governor of Sikkim from September 1994 to November 1995. He passed away on 27th February, 2017 at his home town in Hyderabad. While we appreciate his contribution, may the Almighty give strength and fortitude to his family to bear this irreparable loss.

In the Union Budget 2017-18, the Government of India has offered more funds for welfare schemes and minor tax sops for individual and small firms. The Union Finance Minister also stated that the demonetisation will have substantial long term benefits and spur growth and with the current pace of remonetisation, the impact will not spill over to the next year.

Apart from the sops and substantial increase in allocation on affordable housing, job guarantee scheme, agriculture sector and the rural economy in general will benefit. The budget has targeted farmers, rural population, youth, the poor, infrastructure financial sector, digital economy, delivery of public service, prudent fiscal management and a tax administration that honours the honest.

The total allocation for the rural, agriculture and allied sector has been hiked by 24% and infrastructure status has been accorded to affordable housing so that it can avail of the associated benefits such as low cost project loans. On the whole, the budget will remain on the path of fiscal prudence while taking all possible measures to boost growth.

During the fiscal 2017-18 my Government is committed to focus on roads and housing projects. We aim to overhaul the roads across the State. A major chunk of funds will be utilized on widening, black topping and maintenance of roads. Double lanning of State Highway connecting South

and West Districts would also begin this year. We will ensure quality works on the roads.

Besides roads, my Government is also committed to making Sikkim a Kutch House free State by building 3000 more houses during the year. My Government has declared 2017 as the year of development. Our thrust would be to complete all incomplete and ongoing schemes and projects before taking up fresh projects for implementation. It is now time to look back at the achievements recorded so far, while doing so let us make efforts to consolidate on the gains achieved in the past.

This fiscal, there will be no planned and non-planned allocation, which has been done away with. Based on the recommendations of the sub-group of Chief Ministers and consultation with various Ministries and other stakeholders, Government of India has decided to rationalize the Centrally Sponsored Schemes (CSSs).

Some of the sectors as under, are a part of the National Development Agenda:

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- Poverty Elimination – Livelihoods, Jobs and Skill Development.
- Drinking Water and Swachh Bharat Mission.
- Rural Connectivity, Electricity, Access Roads and Communication.
- Agriculture including Animal Husbandry, Fisheries, Integrated Watershed Management and Irrigation.
- Education including Mid Day Meal.
- Health, Nutrition, Women and Children.
- Housing for all Rural and Urban etc.

The existing 66 Centrally Sponsored Schemes have been rationalized into 28 umbrella schemes. Out of the 28 umbrella schemes 6 schemes have been categorised as core of core schemes, 20 schemes as core schemes and remaining 2 as optional schemes. If required, the related schemes can be merged and implemented as umbrella schemes with flexibility to States to

administer the admissible components in line with State's specific requirements.

This year, my Government has earmarked a major chunk of funds as the State Share for the Centrally Sponsored, North Eastern Council and Non-Lapsable Central Pool of Resources, schemes. Similarly, provision has been set aside for land compensation so that many projects and schemes can get off the ground.

The thrust of my Government is for development of infrastructure and we aim to complete as soon as possible the Multispecialty hospital at Sichey and the Tashiling Secretariat. Besides priority has also been laid to improve the road connectivity all over the State. The other priority area is the Chief Minister's Rural Housing Mission wherein we aim to build 3000 number of one storied house for the rural poor. My Government has tied up with HUDCO for funding this massive programme.

Rural Development

My Government accords special importance to the quality of life of the rural people, hence, developmental strategies such as creation of quality rural infrastructure, provision of basic minimum services i.e. water supply and sanitation, rural roads and foot bridges and other amenities are designed keeping people's welfare in mind. Over the last two decades, my Government has demonstrated exemplary leadership, good governance and innovative policies leading to an effective implementation of schemes and projects. Regular schemes related to sanitation and housing have been taken up on a mission mode.

Sikkim became the first and only Nirmal Rajya in the country by achieving 100% sanitation coverage in 2008 and was the 1st State to achieve Open Defecation Free status at the beginning of 2016. Much emphasis has been laid on the general cleanliness of the state as a whole.

My Government is dedicated to the welfare of the poor and besides providing facilities such as house up-gradation grants, LPG connections, and providing GCI Sheets, to the economically weaker sections, financial

assistance is also provided to those living below the poverty line under Chief Minister Rural Housing Mission (CMRHM) in order to rid those who reside in Kutcha houses.

My Government will take up construction of remaining houses under Chief Ministers Rural Housing Mission Phase I & II and achieve the status of Kutcha house free and “house for all” by 2018-19. Besides, the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Gramin) scheme has also been launched in the State, this will benefit the rural population identified through socio economic census.

It is a known fact that we depend on rainfed springs (dharas) and streams (kholsa/jhora) for rural water security. Combined impact of catchment degradation, climate change, developmental and seismic activity has resulted in drying up of these springs. Therefore, the Roof Water Harvesting Scheme in drought prone areas of South and West Districts will be implemented to supplement the water demand.

Rural connectivity received an enhanced focus from the Government of India with funding pattern of 90:10 Centre and State under Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana. The state has shown rapid progress in construction of rural roads 1380.685 km has been completed as on 31st January, 2017. The construction of 38 nos. of bridges sanctioned under PMGSY is under progress.

Mitigation of hardship and problem of inaccessibility of the rural people has been addressed to a great extent by providing connectivity by way of a foot track or foot bridge where ever required. Rural foot bridges have been constructed over streams and rivers in the rural areas where the road network is yet to reach. Depending on the span to be covered, different types of bridges are provided such as steel foot bridges, reinforced concrete foot bridges and suspension foot bridges. These have played an important part in improving the rural connectivity and the economy.

Under MGNREGA, it is targeted to achieve employment to maximum households and provide them an average wage employment of 70 days per year. A part of this investment will be used to converge with the housing

Scheme of Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Gramin), for horticulture plantations, water harvesting tanks jointly with the Horticulture & Agriculture sector. Construction of Cowsheds and Pig Sty will be taken up under Animal Husbandry & Veterinary Services.

One of the remarkable achievements of my Government is the degree of decentralization of power in rural areas. Power has been transferred to villages through Panchayats, to make the people a partner in finalizing schemes and implementing them at the grassroots level. The State has been conducting need based Capacity Building trainings for elected representatives and field level officials. One major decision is to enhance the empowerment of women at the grassroots by giving 50% reservation to women in Gram and Zilla Panchayat.

The consistent efforts of my Government have yielded significant results and have brought unprecedented opportunities for the people of the State. One of the indicators of the progress made are the various awards given to the State for transferring power to the people. Sikkim has routinely been acknowledged amongst the best in the country for its outstanding performance in strengthening and developing the Panchayati Raj Institutions. Our State bagged national awards in various categories including devolution of power, functions and funds to Panchayati Raj Institutions. The funds under 14th Finance Commission and State Finance Commission are directly transferred to the Gram Panchayats for provision of basic services that directly benefit the people in the villages.

We have established 31 Block Administrative Centre (BAC) and 08 Additional District Collector (Development) Officers to institutionally strengthen the Governance of Panchayat and public delivery system. Most of the rural projects are implemented by Panchayats ensuring active participation of the rural masses in the development process.

Infrastructure (Roads)

It is widely believed that all growth through sustainable infrastructure, regional integration and good governance will help address and bridge the

social imbalance within the different strata of people residing within Sikkim. Enhancing connectivity in transport is expected to contribute to enhancing the economic activities leading to the alleviation of socio-economic standards, while also contributing to bridge the socio-economic gap leading to better understanding, peace and security to the people.

Sikkim is solely dependent on the road lifeline in absence of air, rail and water connectivity. Therefore, prime importance is given to road connectivity spread throughout the State. The roads connect important towns, villages and tourist destinations. The roads have ever since played a key role in the lives of the people of the State besides giving access to markets & urban areas. Roads have facilitated easy transportation of Organic produce and other rural produce from the remote villages to the markets and other parts of the State.

Better roads would attract significant flow of tourists and at the same time increase the investment levels leading to higher level of economic activity. Sikkim being located in a high seismic Zone-V with fragile mountains, it is vulnerable to slips and landslides resulting in frequent blockages and breaches in road connectivity throughout the State in the monsoons. These natural factors hamper the all round development of the State. Never the less my Government has worked tirelessly to ensure connectivity throughout the year.

The existing old roads in the State were designed to withstand low traffic volume. Over the period of time, the State has witnessed all round development. Many Hydro-power projects, pharmaceuticals, educational institutions etc. have been set up in the State. Further, Sikkim being a tourism hot-spot, the inflow of domestic and international tourist is high. All these factors contribute to heavy movement of vehicles along these roads. Owing to this, the wear and tear of the roads is considerably high thereby resulting in inconvenience to the travellers, increase in travel time and higher maintenance cost of the vehicles. Hence, there is a need to improve the gradient and road geometrics urgently.

Owing to the huge cost and time involved to strengthen and upgrade all the road network in the State, my Government shall carry out the work in a phased manner. The total length of the road network under the Roads & Bridges is 1600 KMS excluding the roads maintained by the Border Roads Organisation (BRO), National Highways Infrastructure Development Corporation Limited (NHIDCL) and other agencies.

In the meanwhile, my Government has received numerous complaints regarding the pathetic condition of the existing roads. Hence, with a view to provide remedial measures along such roads, it is proposed to provide immediate restoration works in the form of patch repair works along such affected roads which connect the district head quarters/ sub divisions and important tourist destinations.

Human Resource Development

Developing qualitative resources for the future has been one of the pivotal areas of focus of my Government. Therefore, Human Resource Development has been accorded the highest priority with almost 20% of the State's budget allocated towards the development of the young minds studying in schools and colleges across Sikkim. This dedicated effort by my Government towards holistic development of students and greater impetus on quality education has been the reason for the State flourishing in the field of education today.

The seriousness in enhancing the lives of students can be felt when we realise the developments in the field, be it the increase in the numbers of schools across the State, or the introduction of Chief Minister's Merit Scholarship Scheme or qualitative teachers training programmes throughout the year by my Government. The priority given to education and the support provided to students has been exemplary.

Focussing on quality education and the impetus the sector has seen in the last two decades, from 1994 to 2016 can be arguably referred to as the golden era for the education sector in the State.

The vision of my Government to impart quality education to the future generation has been amply showcased in the growth of schools across the State, not only at primary levels but also at the secondary and senior secondary levels. The dearth of junior high schools, secondary and senior secondary schools were addressed by my Government through upgradation of schools from primary to junior high schools and upwards and developing infrastructure wherever necessary. The initiative of my Government to bring schools nearer to home provided much needed fillip for parents to enrol their wards in schools across the State.

Since 1994, there has been a significant increase in the number of Junior High Schools, Secondary Schools and Senior Secondary Schools. There were three colleges in the State in 1994 and today the number has gone up to 10 colleges. While private universities are up and successfully imparting education to local students in Sikkim. Similarly, the number of teachers has also increased.

The number of State languages being taught in the schools of Sikkim has gone up from 4 in 1994 to 11 at present. Similarly, due to the persistent efforts of my Government, Ministry of Human Resource Development and University Grants Commission (UGC) approved the proposal of introduction of master courses in Bhutia, Lepcha and Limboo languages in Sikkim University from 2016 academic session.

The policy adopted by the Government in the education sector has seen an overall growth. In comparison to other States, especially from the North Eastern Region, Sikkim is ahead in various fields. There has been a tremendous improvement in access to schools, with different category of schools in every kilometer. The teacher pupil ratio of 1:10 in primary and 1:21 in secondary levels (2013-14) is perhaps the best in the Country.

- The literacy rate has improved to 82.20%.
- There has been tremendous rise in the number of schools and
- Number of colleges has also increased considerably.

Annual growth rate of higher education institutions in Sikkim is 15.27% against the national average of 7%. The enrolment of students has also shown a significant rise.

It is worthwhile to note that the boy:girl student ratio has improved over the years. There has been improvement from 56 girls to 100 boys during 2006-07 to 108 girls per 100 boys during 2013-14.

Skill Development

In the year 2007, my Government took a historic decision to initiate India's first Skill Development and Capacity Enhancement Directorate. The vision was clear to provide opportunities for skill development training, facilitation for harnessing industrial jobs, internships which would culminate into a full time jobs for many and providing direction and confidence through skill enhancement to the youngsters of Sikkim so that they could become masters of their own destiny.

In the next decade, the Directorate trained thousands of youngsters, providing skill certification and also guiding them through the process of placements. Through the years the Directorate has facilitated numerous placements for the youth of Sikkim, both inside the State as well as outside. With the Directorate under the newly created Department of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship from the financial year 2016-17, there is greater anticipation on the strides that it would take to skill the human resource of Sikkim and assist them in choosing the right career, locally, nationally as well as internationally.

Sports and Youth

Sports has been a major unifying factor in the world since times immemorial. Getting together and cheering for one's team, celebrating the win or consoling the loss are perhaps some of the most beneficial experiences in a person's life.

The objective was to cater to the needs and aspirations of the growing youth population of the State. Over the past 20 years, sports and youth development related activities have been given massive importance. Ultra

modern stadiums, cash incentives to inspire and motivate youngsters and various schemes to find and nurture talents that the State possesses and the creation of a separate board – The Sikkim Youth Development Board are testimonial to the efforts of the State Government towards ensuring proper development of the youngsters of today and tomorrow.

Health Care and Human Services

Ensuring qualitative health care services has been one of the topmost priority missions of my Government in the last two decades. Fostering a healthy society through quality health care, services for all citizens reaching up to the remotest village of Sikkim has been the vision of my Government.

Instances like infant mortality rate and crude death rate has come down. The immunization campaign has increased and so on.

The vision of my Government is to make Sikkim the healthiest State with people having a longer life span. In order to achieve this goal we have focused on development of the infrastructure providing equipments, man power and medicines in the four Districts as well as in Gangtok. It is heartening to note that most of the District hospitals have been upgraded in terms of infrastructure, equipments and with substantial number of specialists.

The upcoming multi speciality hospital at Sichey is going to be a milestone for the State. We hope to shift the STNM Hospital to the 1000 bedded Multi Speciality Hospital by the end of this year, or early next year. This hospital will cater to providing better health facilities to the poorest of poor in the State with better equipments and specialized treatment and with better working conditions for the doctors, nurses, para-medics etc.

Tourism

“Sikkim where nature smiles” the slogan of Sikkim Tourism aptly justifies the impressive mountains, the breath taking vistas and valleys and a rich and diverse biodiversity that the State is bestowed with. From a time when Sikkim was an unrecognised entity in the global tourism map to becoming India’s favourite tourism destination for national as well as foreign

tourists, Sikkim has come a long way in terms of the tourism potential. Today, the tourism potential has enhanced and it is a major economic driver which has, brought social and economic transformation to the people of the State.

Until 1990, there was very little tourism activity in the State. However, with the conscious and effective measures taken by my Government and with the relaxation of the Inner Line Permit led to a rise in the flow of tourists to the State.

Today, my Government promotes tourism with special focus on eco-tourism related activities to provide optimum environmental care, guided by the principles of conservation and sustainability. The dedication of the State in promoting tourism is showcased in the Government receiving appreciation and recognitions, nationally as well as globally. The highpoint of Sikkim was when the State was recognised by the internationally famed “Lonely Planet” Magazine as the Top 10 destinations globally to visit in 2014.

Very recently the New York Times has ranked Sikkim 17th place among 52 places to visit in 2017. This is indeed encouraging and augurs well for the people and the State. The Government has promoted eco-tourism, adventure tourism, culture and pilgrimage tourism and more recently much focus has been laid in promotion of village tourism, home stays etc. The opening up of the new pilgrimage route through Nathula to Kailash Mansarovar has added a new dimension to the vibrant tourism industry in the State.

Social Justice and Empowerment

Social justice has been the foundation stone for the developmental process in my Government. We have always given priority to the needs of the poor and the downtrodden. My Government has tirelessly worked for the welfare, social justice and empowerment of the disadvantaged and marginalised sections of the society.

We are in a mission mode to ensure that overall development and protection of women and children, old aged, differently abled, scheduled

caste, scheduled tribe, other backward classes, minority communities and the vulnerable sections of society are taken care of appropriately.

The real achievement of the Government lies in the fact that Sikkim today ranks amongst the best in the country with regard to protection of all sections of its society. This has been possible because of the path breaking interventions undertaken by my Government. We have been striving to free the people from all kinds of violence and atrocities, both internal and external. No one is discriminated on the basis of caste, creed, sex, religion etc. We have adopted the concept of inclusive growth without discrimination.

Energy & Power

Power is a driving force for the building up of a nation's economy. To maintain the current level of growth, our nation needs huge investment in terms of capacity addition. In Sikkim there has been a phenomenal growth in the power sector since the year 1994. Almost every remote nook and corner of the rugged mountainous terrain now has electricity.

Very recently, we have become a major producer State in the power sector. The 1,200 MW Teesta Stage III hydro electric project was commissioned in February 2017. This project has been developed and commissioned in Chungthang, North Sikkim. With the commissioning of this project the State's total hydro power production will touch the 2,300 MW mark. This is yet another milestone in the development of the State.

Today, the State is trading a significant portion of power which has opened up a new front in revenue generation. With the coming up of different hydro-electric projects being developed through Independent Power Producers and in Joint Venture modes, the State will be able to fully meet the local demand and to export the surplus power to other States. This will be a major source for revenue generation. The revenue generated from sale of free power alone will be a major sustainable resource base that can be used for economic and social development of the State. Moreover, there are several advantages like employment generation and local area development.

Significant efforts have been made to achieve stability, quality and reliability of power supply in the State.

Forest and Environment

Sikkim is blessed to have been bestowed with nature's bounties in terms of flora and fauna and is one of the two biodiversity hotspots of the country. With flora and fauna contained within 82% of the geographical area of the State and eight wildlife protected areas. Sikkim certainly provides leadership in conservation of natural resources to the country. The recent feather in the cap has been the declaration of the Khangchendzonga National Park as a UNESCO World Heritage site which further reiterates the vision of my Government to secure and promote Sikkim as one of the richest biodiversity hotspots in the world.

All the achievements that the State has seen in the area of conservation of biodiversity has been possible due to the guidance and exemplary initiatives of my Government including, Ten Minutes to Earth, State Green Mission and Paryavaran Mahotsav which have created benchmarks not only in the State but also across the country.

Steps to promote ecological balance, including the ban on grazing of cattle and green felling in reserved forest areas, prohibition on manufacture, use and sale of firecrackers, prohibition on use of plastic carry bags and burning of agricultural waste are the new directives of my Government which is being adhered to.

Today, due to the environmental policies of my Government, enormous biodiversity has been sustained in the State. The pro environment policies have drawn attention to numerous researchers from across the country and abroad and numerous awards and accolades have been feted to the Government in its exemplary projects and interventions.

Agriculture and Horticulture

Agriculture is the main stay of the majority of rural population of Sikkim. Since times immemorial, this has been the chief economic activity of the people. Historically, the best agriculture system for Sikkim has been sustainable agriculture. This is economically viable for the individual farmer and environmentally friendly. Today, Sikkim is an organic State. As such, farmers are encouraged to adopt new and modern technologies of organic farming system to sustain production and certification process in identified area. Special emphasis has been laid in fulfilling the gap between the farmer's requirement and availability of improved seeds, plant nutrients, bio-fertilisers and bio-control agents which are necessary for sustaining the organic farming system in the State.

The policies and programmes on organic farming, in tune with the natural endowments of the State have helped to make Sikkim a Model Organic State. The march towards organic farming has been possible due to substantial Government intervention. Greater emphasis on soil testing and soil health management definitely helps in improving the organic crop production in the State. This is directly proportional to the improvement in the socio-economic condition of the farmer, as better yield leads to better prices in the global market.

The vision of my Government with regards to agriculture has been very progressive and people oriented. These are to put Sikkim on the accelerated path of sustainable agriculture development by strengthening the production of organic crops and its enterprises in a systematic approach with market potential. Our aim is to make the State self reliant and poverty free as well as ensuring food security through increased productivity combined with profitability.

My Government has recognised the importance of horticulture in augmenting rural income for sustenance of villages. Horticulture in the State comprises of cultivation of fruits, vegetables, spice crops and flowers along with other emerging diversifications like bamboo plantation, bee keeping and cultivation of mushroom and medicinal plant. The horticulture development plans in the States are based on inherent strengths, emerging challenges,

modern technological advancements, planting material base and market extension. Therefore, efforts are being made to achieve horticulture development through technology driven interventions comprising of green house application, water harvesting and micro irrigation systems, farm mechanization, etc. with forward linkage through infrastructural and institutional support on post harvest operations, value addition and marketing.

The progress achieved under horticulture sector through various interventions over the years has been noteworthy. The total area under various horticultural crops has increased manifold.

Socio Economic Demands

1. My Government has been vigorously pursuing with the Government of India, the demand for provision of seats in the Sikkim Legislative Assembly for the Limboo-Tamang communities which has been pending for more than 14 years. With much sincerity and seriousness of my Government, this legitimate demand of the Limboo-Tamang communities has reached the advanced stage of consideration by the Government of India. I am confident that much before the next Legislative Assembly elections in the State, this demand would have materialised for the two communities enabling them to exercise their political right.

2. Let me put on record that, my Government has been able to convince the Government of India for permitting His Holiness Ogyen Trinley Dorje, the 17th Karmapa, to come to Sikkim as the Hon'ble Prime Minister himself has assured that Karmapa would be permitted to visit Sikkim in the near future. Therefore, in all fairness, it is better for us to await the outcome of the assurance of the Hon'ble Prime Minister patiently.

3. There are eleven left out communities who are yet to be recognised as Scheduled Tribes. Here again, my Government has been making all out efforts to convince the Government of India for considering their categorisation as Scheduled Tribes so that all the communities of Sikkimese

origin do find fulfilment of their hopes and aspirations within the constitutional framework of the country.

4. Lastly, the members of the business community residing in the State continuously also have their genuine demands for consideration of grant of exemption from Income Tax, as they have been living and carrying out their business and trade prior to the merger of the State with the Union of India. In this front too, I am happy to note that my Government has made its point put across to the Government of India for exemption of income tax to the members of the old business communities.

In conclusion, let me go on record and state that the fruit of progress that we reap today has been the efforts of a lot of hard work, dedication and determination to do our best and make progress towards holistic development and growth. I am positive that the successes of the past would reignite us to take the State to greater heights. Therefore, today let us rededicate ourselves to work harder again and to achieve the vision as envisaged by my Government.

***** JAI HIND *****