

Gangtok, April 29: (IPR) Shri Pawan Chamling is now the longest serving Chief Minister in the Country. The 5th term Chief Minister has surpassed the record of Former West Bengal Chief Minister Late Shri Jyoti Basu from today, the 29th of April, 2018.

Shri Pawan Chamling rose to power after he was unanimously elected as Chief Minister of the 22nd State of India on 12th December, 1994, when the party under his leadership won the State General elections. Since then, there has been no looking back. He is currently in his 5th term as the Chief Minister of Sikkim and is continuously rendering his service to the people of Sikkim.

Under the leadership of Shri Pawan Chamling, the Sikkim Democratic Front, a regional party, was born on 4th March, 1993, which earned the admiration and support of the people of Sikkim, and on 12th December, 1994, formed its own Government and Shri Chamling was sworn in as the Chief Minister of Sikkim. The party under his leadership won the elections for five consecutive terms and Shri Pawan Chamling completed a record 23 years, four months and 17 days in office as the Chief Minister of the 22nd State of the Indian Union. The record term as Chief Minister of the State testifies the commitment, sincerity, good governance and pro-people policies and humility with which he has been serving the people of Sikkim over the years. Today, the name Pawan Chamling has become synonymous with inclusive and sustainable development, path-breaking environmental initiatives, world leadership in Organic agriculture and the architect of one of the most progressive states of the country.

Hundreds of people queued up at the official residence of the Chief Minister at Mintogang from early morning to congratulate the leader for achieving the unique feat. Among the people who met him were Speaker, Cabinet Ministers, MPs, MLAs, Mayor, Panchayat Adyakshas and Upadhyakshas, Chief Secretary, senior officers of the State Government, party functionaries, and people from all walks of life. The Chief Minister greeted everybody individually and accepted their best wishes.

Speaking to the media, Chief Minister Shri Pawan Chamling recorded his gratitude to his parents for having nurtured him and for making him capable to consistently serve the people of Sikkim. He shared that he learnt the basic tenets of humility and service from his parents. "By the time I was a youth, I had started believing that I have to live my life for the service of others," he added. He thus started participating in social work before entering active politics, he informed. "From the very beginning, my political ideology was based on inclusive development, equality, freedom, and right for all," he stated.

He went on to share the journey of his political career from being a Panchayat President to this day, when he has become the longest serving Chief Minister of a State in the Indian Union. He shared that he and the party he leads have never once deviated from the promises and commitment made to the people in the very beginning. "Our politics is not driven by personal ambition but by the agenda of the people. It is our commitment and endeavour to ensure that the people of Sikkim of all socio-economic strata are empowered and self reliant," stated Shri Chamling.

"After serving the people of Sikkim for over 23 years, I am still energetic, positive and motivated to give my best. I don't do politics for myself, I have no personal ambition, rather I am totally surrendered to serving the people. That is where I get my strength and motivation from," stated the Chief Minister.

"I thank the people of Sikkim because of whom I am here today, I thank the Central Government for their continued support and coordination, I thank the members of the media for putting our programs and policies across to the people, I thank my family for having supported me all through my journey, and above all I thank my parents who are my closest God. I hold my parents in the highest esteem and whenever I make a promise or commitment to the people, I feel I am making the promise to my parents, and thus never fail to keep them."

"I feel I should use the Chief Minister's post as a medium for development. Although a lot has been achieved over the years and I am quite a contended person, there is still so much I want to give to the people of Sikkim," he stated. He drew a comparison of Sikkim in the last forty years and how it has been transformed into one of the most progressive states in the country. He reiterated that among several contributions of Sikkim to the nation and the world, peace and security stand out as the biggest contribution. The whole world is dealing with issues of violence and insecurity, and here we have a State surrounded by three international borders and is yet the most peaceful State in the country. This is an incredible feat achieved by our State and other States like Jammu & Kashmir and even the North Eastern States should emulate from Sikkim", he stated. He added that the country and its people should appreciate and acknowledge this contribution from Sikkim. He went on to add that the people of Sikkim merged into the Indian Union in 1975, and along with geographical integration, the people have emotionally integrated with the mainstream, and have always exhibited great patriotism towards the nation. There could not be a bigger contribution to nation building than this, he exclaimed.

Speaking about his future in active politics, Shri Chamling stated that he came to politics with a cause of the people, and added that he is completely at the

disposal of the people. It is for the people to decide if I should continue serving them or I should step down, he added.

Responding to a question about challenges and threats in his political career, Shri Chamling quipped that he sees no political party as a threat and that he is fearless. He added that with years of experience in the service of the people of Sikkim, he does not see any situation as a challenge anymore. I am driven by my one-point program that is to make the people of Sikkim happy and self reliant, he added.

Delving on the issue of seat reservation for the Sikkim Legislative Assembly, the Chief Minister explained that the present formula proposed by the State Government of increasing the Seats to forty (40) is in the best interest of the people of Sikkim and is democratically correct. He iterated that the proposal has received in-principal approval by the Central Government and could receive the President's Ordinance or passed by the Parliament in near future.

Chief Minister Shri Chamling further stated that the people of Sikkim should understand that politics is a responsible work and there should be adequate debate, discussion and opinion making to understand the truth. People are supreme and should exercise their discrimination and use their consciousness to decide what is right or wrong. They should not be disillusioned and misguided.

Terming his politics as humanity based, he reiterated his vision of developing the intellectual level of the people, and make Sikkim a balanced society. He added that the Sikkim of today is free from all the issues that are plaguing the rest of the world namely extreme poverty, no shelter/homes, death of policemen while on duty, communal violence, and children deprived of education. Sikkim is today a civilized, inclusive and forward-looking State, he added. My foremost priority now is human development along with qualitative infrastructure development. Speaking about Gorkha identity, he stated that the people should realize their true potential and be able to compete in this knowledge driven world. They should free themselves from feeling of inferiority and should exercise their democratic rights. We are still stuck in the limited identity as courageous warriors in the battlefield. We have to change that perception and equip ourselves to compete at par with the rest of the world, he stated.

