

Gangtok, Feb 6: (IPR) Chief Minister Shri Pawan Chamling chaired the meeting of the Managing Committees / Duchis of various religious institutions here at Chintan Bhawan Gangtok today.

Organised by the Ecclesiastical Affairs Department, Government of Sikkim, the meeting was specially convened to distribute the token Grant in aid to all religious Institutions by the hands of Chief Minister Shri Pawan Chamling.

Token amount of Grant In Aid were distributed by the Chief Minister to the Managing Committees of 9 religious institutions. The remaining Amounts would be disbursed after the meeting and a total amount of Rs. 14 Crores would be disbursed today, it was informed.

Chief Minister in his address stated that the objective of the meeting is to make the people realize how the Government has been transparently distributing Grant in Aid to support all religions in Sikkim through their managing committees.

"Religion should be kept above politics, it should be given a human touch and made practical in our daily lives, he stated. All religions teach us good and noble things, but it is we humans who distort the teachings.

Physical health, emotional health, mental health and spiritual health are the four things we need to have a balanced life. Among the four, religion influences emotion, mental and spiritual health of an individual is very important,"he said.

The Chief Minister also said that religion should be used as a medicine to cure social distractions and distortions.

"We should not let religion divide our society. Religion is a sensitive thing and should be used for our well being, rather it should be used as an adhesive.

In the long tenure of our governance, we have always given all religions the due respect and acknowledgement. Most of the religious places and infrastructures around them have been created by our Government.

In our Buddhist University, we are imparting teaching on Tibetan medicine (Aamji) to the Sikkimese Bhutias and Lepchas. We are imparting modern education in our monastic schools that they have overall knowledge and can face the competitive world.

We will soon be regularizing our monastic teachers and Sanskrit teachers. Sikkim is the only State which has an Ecclesiastical Department and separate fund to safeguard all religions. Our Government is managing these funds from our Non-plan budget, which comes mainly from our own revenue. We cannot use a single pie from the plan fund of the Central Government. There should be no confusion about this," he stressed.

He also informed that there are over 1000 Hindu places of worship in Sikkim.

"On 8th of this month, we are laying the foundation Stone of statue of Lord Parshuram at Barang, Lower Tumin. This will be the tallest and biggest statue of Lord Parshuram in the country. I invite everyone to this historic function" he said.

He also informed that the Government has created numerous churches in the State with state of the art architecture. Likewise, the Government has developed several places of worship of Yuma religion (Limboo).

"We should ensure that good and noble messages come out of our religious institutions. We should spread the message of peace and respect for each other's religion and should maintain the secularity of our State," he said.

In his address, the Chief Minister announced that from now onwards, religious institutions and places of worship which are not registered will not be given Grant in Aid by the Government. He urged the Managing Committees to register them at the earliest.

He urged the officers of the Ecclesiastical Department to ensure that Grant in Aid to all the Managing Committees present in this meeting is disbursed today.

The programme was also addressed by Chairman, Ecclesiastical Department Acharya Tshering Lama, and Advisor of the Department Shri Pem Tshering Lama.

Earlier the welcome address was delivered by Secretary Ecclesiastical Affairs Department Mrs Samten Dolma.

