

Gangtok, March 17: (IPR) The third day of the Sixth Session of the Ninth Assembly of Sikkim Legislative Assembly saw the passing of five Bills on the floor of the House. The Sikkim University (Amendment) Bill, Bill No. 1 of 2017, the Institute of Chartered Financial Analysis of India University Sikkim (Amendment) Bill, Bill No. 4 of 2017, the Shri Ramasamy Memorial University Sikkim (Amendment) Bill, Bill No. 5 of 2017, the Sikkim Manipal University of Health, Medical and Technological Sciences (Amendment) Bill, Bill No. 6 of 2017 and the Vinayaka Missions Sikkim University (Amendment) Bill, Bill No. 7 of 2017 were the five Bills passed by the House. Mr R.B. Subba, Hon'ble Minister-in-Charge for Human Resource Development Department, Government of Sikkim had moved the Bills for consideration.

In his reply to the points raised by the Members on the General Discussion on Budget, Hon'ble Chief Minister Mr. Pawan Chamling, who is also the Minister-in-Charge of Finance, Revenue and Expenditure Department called for responsible use of the budget for the upliftment of the people of Sikkim. He termed this year's budget as one dedicated towards sustainable development. He stated that the Government has already fulfilled all the Sustainable Development Goals in the last two decades of governance.

Responding to a point raised by MLA Mr R.N. Chamling which suggested that engineers and field staffs from concerned departments be held equally accountable for any shortcoming in a public work, the Chief Minister took up the suggestion and assured immediate action from the concerned departments. On another point raised by MLA Mr R.N. Chamling, the Chief Minister replied that the budget has laid priority on inclusive development. On being questioned again by MLA Mr R.N. Chamling on the cases of non-payment of salaries to Muster Role workers, the Chief Minister replied that the gap could be due to lack of proper mechanism of records, or due to the recent shift to digital transactions. He also called for necessary actions by all departments to check such gaps and make public work easier and more accountable.

In another question raised by MLA Mr R.N. Chamling enquiring why the entire budget passed in the State Assembly does not reach the State, the Chief Minister replied that it is the prerogative of the Central Government to allocate budget to the States. He added that the Central Government can use its discretion to divert some portion of the budget kept aside for States to meet some contingencies for national interest.

On the point raised by MLA Mr R.N. Chamling about the State Government loans from the Central Government and other agencies, the Chief Minister replied that loans taken by the State Government is almost negligible. He added that the State Government has a policy to take loans only for revenue generating schemes, welfare schemes, and development schemes for public interest.

In response to points raised by MLA Mr Shyam Pradhan, the Chief Minister stated that the Government has kept aside money to start sustenance allowance for the welfare of aged parents neglected by their family. He also mentioned about the Chief Minister's Start-Up Scheme which has been announced from this year.

On the Health Sector, the Chief Minister stated that the Government is taking every step to ensure that the people of Sikkim are healthy and happy and have a long life span. He also announced a new scheme called Proud Mother Scheme where a mother would get Rs.

7000/- on the birth of her first child and Rs. 10,000/- on birth of her second baby. This scheme is being launched to address the growing concern of negative population growth rate due to declining fertility rate, he stated. The Chief Minister also informed that budget provision has been made for procurement of machine for conducting gall bladder operation in the Government Hospital.

Speaking on the education sector, the Chief Minister informed that the Government is upgrading the existing campus at Government College Tadong and added that State University will come up in the near future.

He also announced establishment of a Girls College at Khamdong East Sikkim within this year. Likewise, an Engineering College, National Law College, Mangan Girls Senior Secondary School and Pharmacy College are in the pipeline, he announced.

He reiterated the State Government's resolve to bring about a drastic improvement in the quality of primary education to match that of a public school. Primary teachers are being trained, he informed.

Speaking on Rural Development, he stated that Sikkim is the only State where basic minimum needs of the people have been met. Likewise, he informed that 3000 houses would be built in the next two years and Sikkim will become a Kutcha House Free State by 2018.

The Chief Minister also threw some light on the idea behind the Organic Mission and recalled the challenges faced by the State Government throughout the journey. He called for collective responsibility from all section, especially the youth, to benefit from Organic Agriculture. Terming Organic Agriculture as future capital, Mr. Chamling announced that the State Government will not allow investment in agriculture sector from outside the state, and that it would be reserved 100% for the youth of Sikkim.

The Chief Minister also announced that a major tourism destination will come up in West Sikkim in the near future.

Earlier, the Third Supplementary Demands for Grants for the year 2016-17 placed in the House by the Chief Minister, also the Minister-in-Charge for Finance Revenue and Expenditure Department, was passed by the House. Likewise, the Sikkim Appropriation Bill, Bill No. 2 of 2017 for the Third Supplementary Demands for Grants of the year 2016-17 introduced by the Chief Minister was passed by the House.

The Separate Demands for Grants of Government Departments were also presented for consideration. The Demands for Grants for HRD, Sports & Youth Affairs and Law, Legal , Legislative and Parliamentary Affairs Departments, Forest Environment & Wildlife Management, Mines Minerals & Geology and Science & Technology Departments, Urban Development & Housing, Food Civil Supplies & Consumer Affairs Department, Health Care, Human Services and Family Welfare, Information & Public Relations and Printing & Stationary Departments, Tourism & Civil Aviation and Commerce & Industries Departments, and Roads & Bridges and Cultural Affairs & Heritage Departments were passed after discussion. The Demands for Grants were placed in the House by the Minister -in- Charge for each department.

Earlier during the question hour, Mr Somnath Poudyal, Minister-in-Charge for Agriculture, Horticulture & Animal Husbandry Department responded to the questions put forth by MLA Mr R.N. Chamling.

Likewise, Mr A.K. Ghatani, the Minister-in-Charge for Health & Family Welfare, IPR & Printing & Stationary Department, responded to questions put forth by MLA Mr R.N. Chamling.