

Gangtok, Sept 18: (IPR) State Disaster Risk Reduction Day themed ,’Volunteerism in Disaster Management,’ which was organized by the Sikkim State Disaster Management Authority, Land Revenue and Disaster Management Department was held today at Chintan Bhawan.

The Chief Minister Shri Pawan Chamling who was the Chief Guest for the occasion applauded the initiatives of Sikkim State Disaster Management Authority (SSDMA) for taking active part in various activities for mitigation of disasters. He highlighted about how the brand of Sikkim has increased throughout the state and commended the various programmes like trainings of stakeholders, capacity building, awareness and sensitization programmes etc which has helped the state towards a disaster resilient and prepared society.

Shri Chamling announced that all prominent helpers/NGOs/SHGs involved in disaster management will be felicitated during Republic Day. He also announced that by 2020, Sikkim to be made a model state in disaster management. The Chief Minister also talked about self-development and said that during earlier times Sikkimese people were more close and helpful towards one another. The bond was substantial and community participation during such times were foremost, he called upon all to enhance resilience and take up sense of ownership. Shri Chamling also stressed on taking preventive measures and doing elementary checking so that the end goal is more concrete and fruitful. He directed the Chief Secretary, Shri A.K.Shrivastava to oversee that all new infrastructures be made earthquake resistant.

The Chief Minister said that global warming is the main cause of natural destruction in the world and ban on pesticides and use of bio-degradable products hamper the environment to a great extent. Coexistence of people and nature is the main goal and he highlighted about the various environmental policies which the state government has implemented in the state. The brand “Organic Sikkim” has garnered appreciation and validation throughout the world and he encouraged people use it in further promoting the image of the state. He announced introduction of Disaster Management as a subject at the Primary level from next academic session. He also stressed on importance of education in disaster management and said that awareness programmes should start from GPU level itself.

At the end he urged all the stakeholders, students and people in general to make best use of information, awareness programmes which will help build resilience towards impact of disasters emerging from natural calamities.

Chief Secretary, Shri A.K.Shrivastava talked about the state's journey from past to the present as a disaster resilient state. He suggested that since we stay in an earthquake prone area, we must equip ourselves to face any challenges and difficulty since when it comes to natural calamities. He said that Sustainable development initiatives are a must and preparedness, risk reduction, post rehabilitation and preparedness efforts are as crucial during times of distress.

Vice Chairman (SSDMA), Shri V.K.Sharma in his address said that Sikkim is always associated with development. He stated about the importance of studies related to disaster management and talked about how the state was acknowledged in Kyoto University for its progressiveness in disaster management arena.

The welcome address was given by State Relief Commissioner-cum-Secretary, LR&DMD where he highlighted the meaning behind Disaster Risk Reduction Day. He said that volunteers play a crucial role in disaster management and without their help SSDMA would be crippled. Thus to felicitate such noble causes, Award of Certificate of Appreciation to 5 Organizations and various individuals who were involved in the GLOF mitigation measures at South Lonak Lake was presented. Certificate of Appreciation was also presented to NGOs who helped in various mock drills etc.

Address was also given by Special Secretary, Land Revenue & Disaster Management Department, Shri R.Chewang on volunteer organizations of Sikkim involved in Disaster Management.

Earlier experiences of various facets were shared by selected volunteers:

1. Shri Palzor Lachungpa - Co-ordinator, Sikkim Helping Hands
2. Ms Sabina Darnal – Pandam, Volunteer, Aapda Mitra
3. Smt Meera Rai – Panchayat Member, Poklok- Denchung GPU, South Sikkim
4. Shri M.K.Gurung – President, Youth Development Society, Dalapchand GPU

Visual presentation on history of disasters and response mechanisms in the state was also presented during the function. Release of the SSDMA Newsletter was also done by the Chief Guest during the function and earlier the theme song of the programme was elucidated by students of West Point Sr Secondary School.

