

Gangtok, Sept 19: (IPR) State level Panchayat Sammelan for Panchayats and Urban Local Bodies was held at Manan Kendra today. The function had Chief Minister Mr Pawan Chamling as the Chief Guest and had the presence of Ministers, MLAs, Panchayat fraternity, Urban Local Body representatives, and State administration led by the Chief Secretary.

During the programme, Panchayat President of Maniram Phalidara GPU South Sikkim made a presentation on the good practices in his GPU while Panchayat President of Khamdong GPU, East District, presented on the activities of the entire district. Both these Panchayat Presidents have received national recognition in recent times for their exemplary work.

Also, Zilla Panchayat Adyaksha and Upadhyaksha of West District Zilla Panchayat presented the Zilla Panchayat Achievement Report for 2012-17 to the Chief Minister.

Addressing the gathering, Chief Minister Mr Chamling stressed that panchayats were the vanguard of the people at the grass root level and called for heightened sense of responsibility and ownership to ensure that programs and schemes meant for the public is implemented earnestly. He reminded the panchayats of their equal role as development partners and facilitators. He called for the need to change people's mindset and make them self-reliant, strong and resolute and hard working. A sense of 'dignity of labour' has to be engrained in the people and a strong effort has to be made to motivate villagers to start respecting agriculture as a profession.

The Chief Minister further stated that the Government wishes to ensure qualitative development of traditional farming as well as adopt modern farming techniques. Our challenge is to sustain, improvise and strengthen organic farming through collective participation, he stated. He stressed on the need to increase production and value-add the products to meet the demands of the national and international market. Sikkim has earned a reputation globally as the organic capital and similar adages, which calls for increased output of our produce, he stressed. He urged the panchayats to mobilize farmers towards commercial farming, mixed farming, dairy, piggery and poultry farming for increased production and productivity.

He urged the panchayat fraternity to lend their support to the State Government through timely reporting of status of manpower requirement in government establishments in rural areas, and instances of unused infrastructure needing replacement. He lamented on the condition of Government infrastructures like Guest Houses, public toilets and added that the Government might take a decision to handover these infrastructures to the panchayats for proper maintenance, if appropriate action is not taken. He directed the panchayats to participate at every stage of the implementation process. He made a loud call for ensuring quality in every single work that is being implemented in the gram panchayat units.

The Chief Minister also made a strong call for reviving 'Smriti Vans' in every GPU, and the need to make the villages attractive and tourist-friendly. He further stressed on the need to compulsory keep aside 1% fund from each scheme for green initiatives. He also spoke on ensuring hundred percent coverage of education and health for the grass root population. He further stressed on the need for economic discipline and to adopt sustainable methods to conserve our existing resources.

The Chief Minister also announced a raise in the salary and perks of panchayats and also the extension of the Panchayat Shree recognition to the Urban Local Bodies after the ensuing panchayat elections.

He urged the panchayats to be innovative in implementation of schemes and to create employment avenues for the youth through existing resources.

He announced setting up of organic outlets in all four district headquarters and Singtam and Rangpo and gave strict directives to the Agriculture Department to complete the same in a month's time. He further directed the department to immediately procure good number of Ac vans to transport vegetables and other items from the villages to these organic outlets. He directed the panchayats to facilitate this process, thus checking the entry of middlemen.

In another directive, the Chief Minister stated that new construction of houses in villages will be permitted only after due verification and clearance by the concerned panchayat. Individuals not possessing Certificate of Identification (COI) will not be allowed to construct their houses in rural areas, nor will they be granted trade licences to run shops. There should be a check on subletting of businesses to Non-COI holders, he added. He further added that contractors who hire labourers for the project period should ensure that the workers and labourers who live in temporary sheds during the period, should immediately vacate the place and relocate. In no circumstances will such temporary workers be given shelter permanently, he stated.

Chief Minister directed for graduating from the existing system of creating CC footpaths to a new concept of trekking footpaths to cater mostly to tourists.

On the rural housing schemes, he announced that now onwards beneficiaries will be selected on the basis of need-based approach rather than constituency wise.

He further made a call for following a cleanliness protocol in the GPU and to stop entry plastic and non-degradable materials.

He further suggested the need to engage the youth in skill trainings such as driving, plumbing, water fitters, carpentry, meter reader etc.

The following announcements were also made by the Hon'ble Chief Minister:

1. Nagar Panchayat Shree Award for ULBs with Rs 1 lakh and citation to be introduced.
2. Honorarium of Panchayats to be enhanced after Panchayat elections.
3. All Government infrastructures falling within different Panchayat GPUs to be placed under the control of respective Panchayats so that their up-keep and repairs are carried out properly.
4. No agricultural lands should allowed to be left fallow. Certificate to this effect to be made mandatory for availing any Government grant/benefit.

Speaking on the 'One World Grand Prix Award' he received recently in Germany. Mr Chamling stated he has dedicated the award to every section of the people of Sikkim who have collectively worked hard to make the organic mission a reality. He added that Sikkim is being

looked upon as a leader in Organic Farming practices and it would be befitting to state that the 'Organic Revolution' started from Sikkim in the year 2003, much like the advent of Industrial Revolution in England. He stated that Sikkim's Organic revolution is a success because it is led by the Government. Other countries and states are still struggling because they are led by agriculturalists and scientists and do not enjoy complete patronage from the Government. "Sikkim is the first Organic State in the whole world, there is no other place like Sikkim", he concluded.

Earlier, Secretary RM&DD Mr D.R. Nepal in his welcome address gave a brief report on the activities of the Panchayat Directorate and also spoke on the objective behind organizing the Panchayat Sammelan.

The programme concluded with vote of thanks proposed by Special Secretary cum Director Panchayat, RM&DD, Shri M.N. Dhakal.



VENUE: MANAN KENDRA, GANGTOK

DATE: 19TH SEPTEMBER 2017

ORGANIZED BY:-

*Directorate of Panchayati Raj in collaboration with the State Institute
Development & Panchayati Raj, RM&DD, Government of Sikkim*



