

(IPR) A State level Workshop on Sustainable Development Goals and Panchayats in Sikkim, organized by State Institute of Rural Development & Panchayati Raj, RM&DD, was held today at Chintan Bhawan. The programme was graced by Speaker Sikkim Legislative Assembly Mr K.N. Rai as the Chief Guest.

The workshop which had the participation of president and members of the eighteen beacon (leading) panchayats of the State, deliberated on their roles and responsibility in integrating the Gram Panchayat Development Plan (GPDP) with the Sustainable Development Goals.

Speaker SLA Mr K.N. Rai in his address complimented the eighteen Gram Panchayat Units for being selected as beacon panchayats, and also congratulated the Panchayat Units which received the National Award recently in Lucknow. He added that the recognition has brought with it more responsibility and the need to give continuity to the good practices. He further urged the beacon panchayats to provide guidance and leadership to neighboring GPU's so that each and every Panchayat Unit in the State is empowered.

Speaking on the deliberations on Sustainable Development Goals, Mr Rai stated that Sikkim has the potential to provide leadership to the world in the implementation of the SDGs. He said that the vision of sustainable development was planted in Sikkim way back in 1994 under the guidance of Chief Minister Mr Pawan Chamling. The green policies of the Government at various stages and their practice have given Sikkim and its Chief Minister a unique identity in the world, he stated. He further added that the recognition bestowed upon Chief Minister Mr Pawan Chamling by The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI) in the form of Sustainable Development Leadership Award in October 2016 was an acknowledgement of his visionary leadership and path breaking initiatives.

Speaking on GPDP, Speaker Mr Rai stated that requirement of each gram panchayat should be considered while planning schemes for the GPU. He urged the line department officers and field functionaries to lend support to the panchayats in implementing schemes under GPDP.

The Speaker stressed that Panchayati Raj will succeed only if the public is adequately sensitized about the schemes and policies of the Government. For this, he called for sensitizing students of secondary and senior secondary schools through debates and essay writing competitions, which will encourage an environment of learning and sharing.

Earlier, Secretary RM&DD, Mr D.R. Nepal highlighted on the roles and responsibilities of beacon panchayats in integrating the essence of Sustainable Development Goals with the Gram Panchayat Development Plan (GPDP). He informed that the RM&DD is already implementing the first phase of SDG in four priority areas namely Organic Mission, Sanitation, Climate Change, and Mental Health.

Terming the GPDP as a robust set of people centric plan designed to create opportunities to improve the lives of rural people, he stated that the deliberations should help establish clear linkage between the GPDP and the SDG for long term benefits to all stakeholders and universal coverage.

He urged the eighteen beacon panchayats to take up the mantle of knowledge hub for peer learning and to serve as leaders to inspire other Panchayat Units. The Secretary also highlighted the role of State Institute of Rural Development & Panchayati Raj in building the capacities of the panchayats and supporting functionaries. He drew a comparison between each of the seventeen SDGs and their stages of implementation in the State through the Panchayati Raj Institution. “With the current pace, we are confident to achieve the seventeen SDGs well before the stipulated target of 2030,” he concluded.

Mr Topda Bhutia, President, Maniram Phalidara GPU, South Sikkim, and Mr Tulshi Bahadur Chauhan, President, Sankhu Radhu Khandu GPU, West Sikkim made presentations on the good practices in their respective GPUs.

Likewise, Anshul Bhamta of NGO Development Alternatives and Shubhda Hirawat from the Office of the MP Lok Sabha (Sikkim) presented on Mainstreaming SDGs at Gram Panchayat. They also spoke on the proposed legislation 'The Sikkim Well-Being of Generations Bill 2017' which is in the consultation stage.

The presentations were followed by in-house discussion.