



SIKKIM HERALD

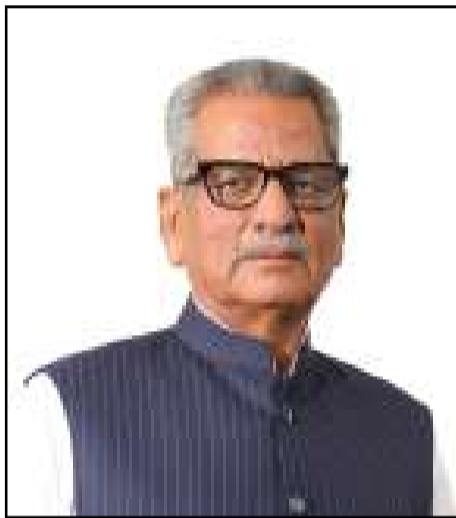
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State Day Message of Governor and Chief Minister

'It is evident that Sikkim has truly carved a distinct identity for itself in the journey of modern India through its achievements in human development, environmental stewardship, social harmony and sustainable progress. Our State today stands as a shining example of how development can advance in harmony with nature, culture and the aspirations of the people'

- Governor



Om Prakash Mathur
Governor of Sikkim

My dear citizens,

On the joyous and historic occasion of the 51st State Day of Sikkim, I extend my warm greetings and best wishes to all the people of our beautiful Himalayan State.

Since May 16, 1975, when Sikkim became the 22nd state of India, the State has witnessed a transformative era of democratic governance, economic progress and social development. Sikkim's integration with India reflected the democratic aspirations and will of its people, laying the foundation for a future shaped by constitutional values, representative governance and inclusive development.

Over the decades, the active participation of citizens and the strength of democratic institutions have played a vital role in building a peaceful, progressive and forward-looking society.

My dear citizens,

Sikkim today stands proudly as India's first fully organic State, formally recognised on January 18, 2016. Our transition to organic agriculture has become a global example of how environmental sustainability, farmer welfare and economic opportunity can successfully coexist.

Organic farming practices, free from chemical fertilisers and pesticides, have not only protected soil fertility and biodiversity but have also strengthened climate resilience and safeguarded critical Himalayan watersheds.

Sikkim's environmental leadership extends far beyond agriculture. With one of the highest forest cover percentages in the country and a vast network of protected areas, Sikkim continues to play a vital role in preserving biodiversity, regulating climate, conserving water resources and contributing to India's climate commitments.

Our State has emerged as a shining example of how fragile mountain ecosystems

can be protected while ensuring economic growth and human development.

The Prime Minister's Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam initiative has received enthusiastic support in Sikkim, reflecting the deep environmental consciousness of our people.

In the same spirit, the Mero Rukh Mero Santati initiative has become a unique people-centric movement for environmental conservation. Under this initiative, 108 trees are planted to celebrate the birth of every child. Rooted in our cultural and spiritual traditions, this initiative symbolises the sacred bond between humanity and nature while promoting long-term ecological sustainability.

Complementing this initiative is the Shishu Samridhi Yojana, which links environmental responsibility with long-term financial security for newborn children. Together, these initiatives demonstrate how ecological awareness and social welfare can move forward hand in hand.

Sikkim has also pioneered environmental protection measures long before such practices became national priorities. Our efforts to regulate single-use plastics, strengthen waste management systems, conserve wetlands and promote spring-shed rejuvenation continue to set national benchmarks, while, initiatives such as Mero Bato Mero Bot continue to deepen public participation in afforestation and sustainable practices.

Our conservation efforts have protected iconic Himalayan species such as the red panda and snow leopard, while eco-tourism initiatives and community-managed homestays have generated sustainable livelihoods in rural areas.

Sikkim's participation at COP28 also brought global recognition to our community-led climate initiatives and highlighted the State as a successful sub-national model of sustainable development.

My dear citizens,

The devastating flash floods of 2023 served as a painful reminder of the growing vulnerabilities associated with climate change and fragile mountain ecosystems. Yet, in the face of adversity, the courage, resilience and solidarity displayed by the people of Sikkim have been truly inspirational.

At that difficult moment, I resolved that Lok Bhavan would actively contribute towards the process of reconstruction and rehabilitation.

In this spirit, Chungthang village was adopted to support its reintegration and recovery. As part of these efforts, a

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'Today, we stand proud of how far we have come together as a people and even more ready to shape the future with courage, ambition and renewed resolve. Let us build upon the strong foundations laid over the past five decades and continue striving towards an even greater Sikkim, one that is prosperous, sustainable, inclusive and full of opportunity for every generation'

- Chief Minister

My fellow citizens,

On the joyous and historic occasion of the 51st State Day of Sikkim, I extend my warmest greetings and best wishes to every Sikkimese at home and across the world. Today is a moment of immense pride, gratitude and celebration for all of us.

Blessed by the majestic Himalayas, rich cultural traditions and the warmth and resilience of our people, Sikkim has emerged as a shining example of peace, harmony, environmental stewardship and inclusive progress.

Recently, the visit of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi during the grand closing celebrations of Sikkim's Golden Jubilee year filled our hearts with immense pride and joy. The celebrations stood as a powerful reminder of the remarkable journey we have undertaken together as one united Sikkimese family since Sikkim's historic integration with the Union of India.

The Prime Minister's visit was not merely a ceremonial occasion but a recognition of the extraordinary journey our State has undertaken over the past five decades. The Minister described Sikkim as the *'Heaven of the East'* and praised Sikkim as a model of sustainable development, environmental conservation, organic farming, cleanliness and peaceful coexistence, while calling the people of Sikkim the *'true protectors and brand ambassadors of nature'*.

The visit also marked an important milestone in our developmental journey, with the inauguration and foundation laying of projects worth over ₹4,000 crore across various sectors. I am confident that these initiatives will further strengthen the foundations of a stronger, more resilient and future-ready Sikkim.

Among the most memorable moments of the visit was witnessing our Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi warmly interact with our young footballers and briefly join them in a game, a gesture that deeply resonated with the youth and people of Sikkim alike. It reflected energy, teamwork, discipline, fitness, aspiration and the limitless potential of our youth. In many ways, it symbolised the spirit of a young and confident Sikkim; rooted in its values, yet ready to compete and excel on larger national and global platforms.

This very spirit captures the direction in which Sikkim must now move as we enter the 51st year of our Statehood.

The first phase of Sikkim's developmental journey was centred on



Prem Singh Tamang
Chief Minister of Sikkim

ensuring access to roads, healthcare, education, livelihoods, social protection and essential infrastructure. The responsibility before us now is to move from expansion to excellence; from access to quality and from creation to long-term maintenance, sustainability and innovation. Above all, our collective endeavour must be to create greater opportunities for our youth, enabling them to contribute meaningfully to the vision of Viksit Bharat@2047.

It is with this vision that the State Government is investing in the youth of Sikkim through a two-pronged approach first, by expanding access to quality education, skill development, entrepreneurship, innovation and global opportunities and second, through the transformation of Sikkim's sporting landscape into a platform for talent, discipline and excellence.

From football grounds to classrooms, from sports academies to start up ecosystems and from vocational institutions to international employment pathways, we are preparing the youth of Sikkim not only to participate in the future but to lead it.

This vision is perhaps most visible in the growing transformation of Sikkim's sporting landscape. Over the years, Sikkim has nurtured exceptional sporting talent and built a vibrant sports culture, particularly among the youth. Disciplines such as football, boxing, archery and combat sports have brought national and international recognition to our State. Legendary figures like Bhaichung Bhutia have inspired generations of young footballers, while accomplished archers like Tarundeep Rai have strengthened India's presence in global archery through consistent performances

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Multipurpose Gymnasium Hall was constructed with the objective of promoting youth welfare, community engagement and disaster resilience.

Today, this facility is equipped with modern sports and fitness infrastructure and also serves as a community centre and emergency shelter.

Additionally, I am pleased to note that extensive scientific assessments of glacial lakes and climate risks are being undertaken in collaboration with national agencies and expert institutions.

In a landmark initiative, Sikkim has prepared India's first demonstrative Glacial Lake Outburst Flood Mitigation Plan for Shako Chho. This initiative establishes a national benchmark in climate resilience, disaster preparedness and adaptive mountain governance.

My dear citizens,

Sikkim occupies a position of immense strategic importance for national security. Sharing international borders with China, Nepal and Bhutan, our State serves as a vital frontier of the nation. Inspired by the heroic legacy and unwavering commitment of the Armed Forces in safeguarding these borders, we remain committed to ensuring that our border regions are seen not merely as lines of defence, but as living symbols of national pride, resilience and progress.

In this direction, Lok Bhavan Sikkim, in collaboration with the Indian Army and various departments of the State Government, has undertaken several initiatives with support received under Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) partnerships from different institutions and organisations.

Modern Atithi Prangan facilities have been developed in high-altitude border areas, including cafeterias, organised tourist pathways, rest houses and parking infrastructure to improve visitor experience and local connectivity.

Further, as a tribute to the valour and sacrifice of our brave soldiers, CSR funds have been utilised towards the development of the Sikkim Prerna Sthal, which today stands as a powerful memorial symbolising patriotism, service and national pride.

To further strengthen the border areas, we are also implementing the Vibrant Villages Programme on mission mode. Under the first phase, 46 villages along the Indo-China border have been identified, while Phase II will extend coverage to 12 villages bordering Bhutan and Nepal. The programme seeks to improve infrastructure and living conditions in remote border settlements, generate employment and livelihood opportunities, curb migration from frontier areas and strengthen national security by ensuring that border villages remain vibrant and economically active. These settlements are no longer viewed as the nation's 'last villages', but are now proudly

recognised as India's 'first villages', the gateways of national pride, opportunity and strategic importance.

Border tourism is also emerging as a powerful driver of economic growth, cultural exchange and national integration. The opening of Chola Pass and Dokala Pass under the Bharat Ranbhoomi Darshan initiative is expanding Sikkim's tourism landscape while instilling among citizens, especially the youth, a deeper sense of patriotism and awareness of the sacrifices made by our armed forces. Similarly, initiatives such as the Echoes of Valour project at Gnathang Valley celebrate Sikkim's rich military heritage and honour the enduring legacy of the soldiers who have safeguarded our nation in these challenging terrains.

My dear citizens,

Sikkim is a land of immense possibilities, blessed with talented and enterprising people. Embracing the Prime Minister's call for Vocal for Local, we are making continuous efforts to ensure that our local products, crafts and enterprises gain wider recognition and stronger market access.

I firmly believe that a future-ready Sikkim must be powered not only by strong infrastructure and skilled human resources, but also by a vibrant culture of entrepreneurship, innovation and enterprise. Recognising this, emphasis has been on entrepreneurship and MSME development at the centre of Sikkim's economic growth strategy. Progressive initiatives such as the Sikkim MSME Policy and the Start-Up Policy are creating a supportive ecosystem through institutional assistance, market linkages, skill development and ease of doing business.

The impact of these efforts is visible in the rapid growth of MSMEs, the expansion of Start-Up culture and the increasing participation of young entrepreneurs across sectors such as tourism, hospitality services, agriculture, transport and small industries. Through targeted initiatives including the Skilled Youth Start-Up Scheme and the Mukhyamantri Yuva Udyamsheelta Vikas Yojana, our youth are being empowered to become job creators and first-generation entrepreneurs, while special emphasis is being placed on supporting women, rural youth and economically weaker sections.

In this direction, financial assistance was recently extended from Lok Bhavan in collaboration with the District Collectors and entrepreneurs to support an entrepreneur launching a handloom-based startup project. This initiative enabled the procurement of 10 modern looms to strengthen the handloom sector, promote traditional craftsmanship and generate sustainable rural employment opportunities.

Sikkim is also steadily emerging as a centre for innovation and Start-Up development. Recognition under the national Start-Up Ecosystem Ranking, along with the establishment of incubation and innovation support systems, reflects the growing

entrepreneurial spirit of our State, particularly among the youth.

At the same time, we continue to strengthen ease of doing business through administrative and regulatory reforms while also enhancing Sikkim's role as a gateway for regional connectivity and trade. Initiatives such as the proposed Multi-modal trade corridor at Chewa Bhanjyang and the reopening of the historic Nathu La trade route are expected to boost economic activity, regional cooperation and cross-border commerce.

I firmly believe that these initiatives will not only empower our youth and strengthen local enterprises, but also open new avenues of self-reliance for women and rural communities, thereby reinforcing our collective vision of an Aatmanirbhar Sikkim contributing meaningfully towards a Viksit Bharat.

My dear citizens,

Since 2019, we have pursued the vision of 'Health for All' with a strong focus on accessible, affordable and quality healthcare for every citizen. Guided by this commitment, Sikkim has made significant progress in strengthening healthcare infrastructure, expanding specialised services and improving public health outcomes across the State.

Major investments in healthcare infrastructure have enhanced access to advanced medical care. The strengthening of District hospitals and the expansion of super-specialty services at Sir Thutob Namgyal Memorial Hospital have substantially reduced the need for patients to travel outside the State for treatment. Significant progress has been made in specialised fields including Oncology, Cardiology, Neurosurgery, Urology, Orthopaedics and maternal healthcare, reflecting the growing capabilities of Sikkim's healthcare system.

Healthcare access at the grassroots level has also been strengthened through Urban Health and Wellness Centres, upgraded emergency care facilities and continued improvements in Primary Health Centres and District Hospitals across the State. These efforts have ensured that essential healthcare services are increasingly available closer to communities, including in remote and difficult-to-reach regions.

The State Government's flagship financial assistance schemes continue to provide vital support to citizens requiring advanced medical treatment. Since 2019, under the Mukhya Mantri Swasthya Suvidha Yojana, financial assistance has been extended to patients for treatment outside the State. Similarly, under the Chief Minister's Medical Assistance Scheme, treatment for critical illnesses including liver, bone marrow and lung transplantation, assistance is being provided. The Chief Minister's Vatsalya Scheme has also supported many women for IVF treatment since 2022, helping many families realise the aspiration of parenthood.

Sikkim continues to perform

exceptionally well in key public health indicators, including vaccination coverage, maternal healthcare and child health outcomes. Sustained improvements in institutional deliveries, antenatal care, infant health and neonatal services reflect the strength and responsiveness of the State's public health system.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Sikkim's response received national appreciation for early containment measures, high vaccination coverage, effective community engagement and a case fatality rate significantly below the national average. Sikkim also ensured financial protection for frontline healthcare workers under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Package.

The implementation of the National Tobacco Control Programme has yielded encouraging outcomes, particularly among the youth. Several educational institutions across the State have been declared tobacco-free, demonstrating the effectiveness of sustained awareness, education and enforcement efforts. We are also actively pursuing the vision of a TB-free Sikkim under the Pradhan Mantri TB Mukta Bharat Abhiyan, with several Gram Panchayat Units already declared TB-free under the TB Mukta Gram Panchayat campaign.

The Ayushman Bharat School Health and Wellness Programme and the Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana are also being implemented in letter and spirit.

We also remain committed to strengthening mental healthcare and suicide prevention across Sikkim. Through focused awareness programmes, counselling services, crisis intervention mechanisms and community-based support systems, efforts are being made to promote emotional well-being and ensure timely access to mental healthcare services. The establishment of 24x7 crisis helplines and the implementation of Tele-MANAS services have further improved access to mental health support across the State.

My dear citizens,

Sikkim is steadily emerging as India's Holistic Wellness Hub. Under the visionary leadership of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, Sikkim has embraced an integrated wellness model combining Ayurveda, Yoga, Naturopathy, Homoeopathy and Sowa Rigpa with modern healthcare systems.

Special initiatives such as Swasth Nari Sashakt Parivar Abhiyaan, mega health camps in remote areas, yoga programmes for prison inmates and mental health awareness campaigns have further expanded access to holistic healthcare. The State is also rapidly strengthening AYUSH infrastructure through the establishment of a 50-bedded Integrated AYUSH Hospital at Kyongsa, a 10-bedded integrated facility at Gangtok and the 30-bedded Drejong Namgyal Sowa Rigpa Hospital at Deorali.

The Namgyal Institute of Tibetology, through its Sowa Rigpa Educational Institute, stands

as a testament to Sikkim's commitment towards preserving and promoting indigenous Himalayan knowledge systems. The upcoming 100-bedded Ayurveda Hospital and Medical College at Lingmoo, Yangang will further strengthen healthcare delivery, AYUSH education, wellness tourism and employment generation in the State.

Our resolve is to build a healthcare system that is modern, inclusive, compassionate and rooted in the holistic well-being of every citizen. With continued investments in healthcare infrastructure, human resources, technology and preventive care, Sikkim is steadily moving towards becoming one of the healthiest and most resilient States in the country.

My dear citizens,

Education remains one of the highest priorities as we advance towards the vision of quality education for all. We firmly believe that education is the foundation of a Viksit Sikkim and the key to social progress, equity and human development.

Sikkim has taken pioneering steps in strengthening foundational learning through early childhood education, school readiness programmes and innovative teaching methods focused on literacy and numeracy. The continued focus on experiential learning, teacher training and academic assessment is helping improve learning outcomes across Government schools.

At the same time, efforts are being made to ensure that no child is left behind. Mission MAYA has been launched to identify, counsel and reintegrate out-of-school children through coordinated interventions, reflecting the Government's commitment to inclusive education.

We are also transforming schools into centres of excellence that combine academics, sports, vocational education, leadership development and modern learning infrastructure. The Chief Minister's Model School initiative represents a significant step towards creating future-ready institutions that nurture talent, innovation and holistic development. Exposure visits, mentorship programmes and targeted academic interventions are further helping students broaden their aspirations and achieve academic excellence.

Recognising that education must nurture both the mind and the spirit, wellness and value-based learning have been integrated into the curriculum through yoga, mindfulness and mental health programmes to strengthen emotional resilience and life skills among students.

Sikkim has also achieved full coverage of vocational education in Government schools, ensuring that students are equipped with practical skills relevant to emerging opportunities and future employment. STEM education and scientific learning are being strengthened through specialised laboratories, institutional partnerships and teacher capacity-building initiatives.

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Our commitment to dignity and equity in education continues through initiatives supporting girl students, improving retention and creating a more inclusive learning environment. Programmes such as Mission Lakshya and the Chief Minister's Education Assistance Scheme are enabling students to pursue competitive examinations and higher education opportunities both within India and abroad.

Sikkim is also making significant progress towards lifelong learning and universal literacy through adult education initiatives, while higher education is being strengthened through new universities, vocational institutions, medical education opportunities and globally oriented scholarship programmes. At the same time, regulatory reforms are ensuring greater quality, accountability and transparency in higher education.

Through these initiatives, we are transforming education into a powerful instrument of equity, opportunity, innovation and human development, ensuring that every learner in Sikkim is empowered to contribute meaningfully towards the vision of a Viksit Sikkim.

My dear citizens,

Agriculture in Sikkim is deeply rooted in our culture and remains central to our identity and way of life. We are committed to building a productive, climate-resilient farming sector while preserving the State's fragile ecology. This vision has been realised through Sikkim's transformation into India's first fully organic State, with complete certification across all cultivable land.

To strengthen the organic value chain, Sikkim IFFCO Organics Limited has supported the processing, value addition and storage of key crops such as ginger, turmeric and large cardamom, along with cold storage infrastructure to reduce post-harvest losses. With the State Government now taking full ownership, institutional support has been further strengthened to align with long-term organic growth objectives. The focus is now on ensuring that farmers fully benefit from organic agriculture by improving market linkages, certification systems, branding and export promotion, especially for high-value crops such as cardamom, ginger, turmeric and buckwheat.

Farmer-centric interventions continue under the Mukhya Mantri Krishi Aatmanirbhar Yojana, aimed at enhancing productivity, expanding cultivation and increasing incomes. Sikkim is also advancing towards a digitally enabled agricultural ecosystem. Under the Government of India's AgriStack initiative, Digital Crop Survey pilots have been completed across all Districts, farmer registries are being developed and village-level mapping has commenced. The

development of the ARMS portal is further strengthening service delivery, data integration and evidence-based policy planning in agriculture. These efforts are enabling farmers to participate more effectively in modern agricultural value chains.

Through these integrated and forward-looking initiatives, Sikkim continues to set a national benchmark in harmonising organic agriculture with scientific innovation and farmer-centric development.

My dear citizens,

Tourism continues to remain one of the most important pillars of Sikkim's economy, contributing significantly to employment generation, rural livelihoods, cultural preservation and sustainable economic growth.

We remain committed to positioning Sikkim as a premier all-season tourism destination through a balanced approach focused on infrastructure development, destination diversification, eco-tourism, spiritual tourism, adventure tourism, heritage conservation and community participation.

In recent years, Sikkim has witnessed significant progress in tourism infrastructure. The operationalisation of passenger ropeways at key destinations has enhanced accessibility and visitor experience, while iconic projects such as the Skywalk at Bhaleydhunga and the Glass Bridge at Singshore are expected to further strengthen Sikkim's appeal as a high-value tourism destination. Infrastructure development at Nathu La is also being undertaken to improve tourist convenience and destination management.

Projects highlighting Sikkim's rich historical, spiritual and cultural heritage are also being developed under various national tourism initiatives, strengthening cultural, wellness and spiritual tourism across the State.

Recognising the transformative role of rural tourism, we have launched the Mega Homestay Scheme to promote community-based tourism and generate sustainable livelihoods in rural areas. This initiative is empowering local communities, encouraging entrepreneurship and preserving traditional architecture, cuisine, customs and indigenous cultural heritage.

Alongside infrastructure and destination development, we continue to prioritise skill development and capacity building in the tourism sector to create a trained and professional workforce while generating meaningful employment opportunities for local youth.

My dear citizens,

The progress of Sikkim is deeply rooted in the strength and resilience of its villages and rural communities. We remain committed to ensuring inclusive rural development through sustained investments in connectivity, housing, drinking water, livelihoods, sanitation and grassroots governance.

Under the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana and the Vibrant Village Programme, rural connectivity is being expanded

and strengthened to improve access to remote and border areas. At the same time, the Sikkim Garib Aawas Yojana is ensuring safe and dignified housing for economically weaker sections across the State.

Access to safe drinking water continues to be prioritised through the Jal Jeevan Mission, bringing reliable tap water connectivity to rural households and strengthening water security in villages.

The State Rural Livelihood Mission has emerged as a key driver of rural prosperity by empowering Self-Help Groups, promoting women-led enterprises and creating sustainable livelihood opportunities. The growing success of the Lakhpati Didi initiative reflects the increasing economic empowerment of rural women across Sikkim.

Sikkim continues to lead the nation in sanitation and environmental sustainability through the Swachh Bharat Mission Grameen. The State's achievement as India's first ODF Plus Model State stands as a testament to our collective commitment towards cleanliness, scientific waste management and environmental protection.

We are also strengthening Panchayati Raj Institutions through enhanced capacity building, improved infrastructure, digital empowerment and participatory planning. Panchayats across the State are playing a vital role in transparent and accountable grassroots governance aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals.

These initiatives together reflect our shared vision of building vibrant, self-reliant and sustainable rural communities, ensuring that the benefits of development reach every village and every citizen of Sikkim.

My dear citizens,

We recognise the invaluable role of women in shaping the social, cultural and economic foundation of Sikkim. Guided by the vision of inclusive and equitable development, sustained efforts are being made to ensure the empowerment, dignity, safety and well-being of women across the State through stronger social security, expanded livelihood opportunities and greater participation in governance.

The Aama Sashaktikaran Yojana has strengthened economic security for thousands of mothers by providing annual financial assistance which supports household stability, children's education and self-reliance.

33 percent reservation in Government jobs, 50 percent reservation for women in local urban and rural bodies and reserved opportunities in contractual employment have further expanded employment avenues and financial security for women.

The Aama Sahayog Yojana has promoted clean energy access and improved household welfare by providing four free LPG cylinder refills annually to eligible mothers. This initiative has reduced dependence on traditional cooking fuels, improved household health, reduced indoor pollution and eased the burden of domestic

work, particularly for rural women.

Through these progressive policies and welfare initiatives, we remain committed to building a more inclusive and compassionate Sikkim where every woman is empowered with opportunity, dignity and security.

My dear citizens,

It is evident that Sikkim has truly carved a distinct identity for itself in the journey of modern India through its achievements in human development, environmental stewardship, social harmony and sustainable progress. Our State

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Today, we...

and notable achievements. Arjuna Awardee and Olympian boxer Jas Lal Pradhan, along with Dronacharya Awardee Sandhya Gurung, continue to inspire young sportspersons across the State and the country.

Towards this goal, we have steadily strengthened the State's sports and wellness ecosystem through national flagship initiatives such as the *Khelo India Scheme* and the *FIT India Movement*. These programmes have significantly enhanced grassroots sports development through the establishment of Khelo India Centre and greater access to structured training and scientific support systems. Such interventions are fostering a culture of fitness and encouraging wider participation across all age groups.

Complementing these efforts, Sikkim has witnessed encouraging progress in sports infrastructure development in recent years. Modern facilities, including upgraded stadiums such as Paljor Stadium, Bhaichung Stadium and Kyongsa Stadium with synthetic turf football grounds, along with multi-purpose indoor halls, are now operational and serving as important centres for training and competition.

One of the major achievements has been the revival of the *State Sports Academy* at Paljor Stadium, which has historically produced footballers who have gone on to represent India at the highest levels, including the national team as well as professional leagues such as the ISL and I-League.

Significant progress has also been made in expanding specialised sports infrastructure and training facilities. The ongoing establishment of the *Tarundeep Rai Archery Academy* in Namchi District marks an important step towards promoting archery through world-class facilities including training fields, gymnasium facilities and hostel accommodation. Similarly, the establishment of a *Sports Academy for Girls* in Soreng reflects our strong commitment towards encouraging greater participation of women and young girls in sports.

In boxing, the proposal to establish a state-of-the-art *boxing*

today stands as a shining example of how development can advance in harmony with nature, culture and the aspirations of the people.

As we celebrate this historic occasion, let us reaffirm our collective resolve to build a Sikkim that is greener, healthier, stronger and more prosperous.

Let us continue to uphold the values of peace, unity, compassion and resilience that define the spirit of our people.

JAI HIND!

JAI SIKKIM!

academy named after Jas Lal Pradhan highlights our focused efforts to nurture excellence in specific disciplines through specialised coaching and modern infrastructure. We are confident that our targeted interventions will create a strong pipeline of talented athletes capable of competing at the highest levels.

The State Government is also in the process of establishing the *Swarna Jayanti Sports and Cultural Complex*, envisioned as one of the most significant sporting infrastructure projects in the State. The complex will include a modern football stadium, indoor stadium, track and field facilities and a high-performance centre equipped with sports medicine, training and residential facilities. More importantly, it is envisioned as a space where the dreams, energy and potential of our youth can truly flourish and where Sikkim can emerge as a leading centre for high-altitude training and sporting excellence in the country.

My fellow citizens,

The vision for Sikkim's progress is rooted in the commitment to empower our people with knowledge and skills that secure their livelihoods while contributing to the overall prosperity of our State. At the heart of our vision lies our broader commitment to preparing the youth of Sikkim for the opportunities and challenges of the future through education, skills, innovation and meaningful employment.

We have significantly bolstered our institutional framework with four Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) in the State offering 28 NCVET-aligned trades, with two more ITIs under establishment in Soreng and Pakyong Districts to enhance regional access. This has resulted in a 30 percent growth in ITI enrolment in 2025-26, bringing the total number of trainees to 602, demonstrating growing acceptance of vocational education as a viable career pathway. The *Pradhan Mantri Skilling and Employability Transformation* through Upgraded ITIs (PM-SETU) scheme will transform our ITIs into world-class training centres, contributing to reliable and robust training infrastructure.

Our flagship initiatives have further strengthened the skilling ecosystem. The State Institute of Capacity Building (SICB) has been successfully implementing

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schemes like *Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana* (PMKVY) and *Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana* (DDU-GKY) which have trained over 13,500 candidates, with a remarkable 11,000 successfully placed. The establishment of the *Niyukti Kendra* in 2022 has revolutionised the transition from training to employment with over 3,000 candidates registered as of February, 2026.

The Sikkim INSPIRES Programme is set to scale up skilling efforts targeting 15,000 youth and women in priority sectors. The programme emphasises sectoral diversification by focusing on emerging domains such as green jobs, healthcare, IT/ITeS, childcare and creative industries. Meanwhile, the launch of the *Chief Minister -ELEVATE Scheme* in 2026 marks a strategic shift towards global workforce integration. By focusing on foreign language training and related international placements, the State Government aims to position Sikkim as a supplier of globally competitive talent. Complementing this, the Foreign Employment and Recruitment Facilitation Board will ensure structured and ethical overseas employment opportunities that enhance global employability aligning with future workforce requirements.

A recent milestone under our international mobility efforts is the successful overseas placement of 13 trained nurses in Germany through the Sikkim INSPIRES Programme. This demonstrates our capability to prepare globally competent professionals and position Sikkim as a reliable source of skilled healthcare workers for global markets.

In the long term, these initiatives aim to facilitate global workforce integration, maintain employment quality and income levels while ensuring sustainable and inclusive economic development and thus secure Sikkim's position as a skill hub in the North-East.

My fellow citizens,

A future-ready Sikkim must be powered not only by strong infrastructure and skilled human resources, but also by a vibrant culture of entrepreneurship, innovation and enterprise. Recognising this, the State Government has placed entrepreneurship and MSME development at the centre of Sikkim's economic growth strategy.

A series of progressive policy frameworks, including the *Sikkim MSME Policy 2022* and *Start-up Policy 2025*, provide a comprehensive support system combining fiscal incentives, institutional backing and ease of access to markets reflecting Sikkim's commitment to building a vibrant entrepreneurial ecosystem. The impact of these efforts is clearly visible in the growth of the MSME sector. Registered MSMEs have increased from around 250

units in 2019 to more than 35,000 units as of 2026. Under the *Raising and Accelerating MSME Performance* (RAMP) programme, over 175 training sessions have been conducted, benefiting more than 3,400 entrepreneurs, 80 awareness campaigns across all 6 Districts have reached over 6,800 participants and over 800 MSMEs have showcased their products in exhibitions at both national and state levels.

Entrepreneurship among the youth is also being actively encouraged through targeted schemes. Through the *Skilled Youth Start-up Scheme* launched in 2020, over 4,000 loans have enabled young entrepreneurs to become first-generation entrepreneurs in sectors such as homestays, restaurants, commercial vehicles, tourism ventures, farm and non-farm activities, services and small industries.

The *Mukhyamantri Yuva Udyamsheelta Vikas Yojana*, inspired by the vision of *One Family, One Entrepreneur* provides seed capital of up to ₹5 lakh to establish micro-enterprises in manufacturing and services with special emphasis to the rural youth, women, differently-abled persons and those from economically weaker sections.

Recently, Sikkim has been recognised as an *Aspiring Leader in the States' Start-up Ecosystem Ranking 2026* by DPIIT. With 30 DPIIT-recognised start-ups, registration of the Sikkim Innovation Hub Society and incubation services at Bardang and Chisopani under Sikkim INSPIRES, the growing culture of innovation, entrepreneurship and enterprise in the State with leading institutions and platforms, especially among the youth highlights Sikkim's growing role in India's Start Up and entrepreneurship ecosystem.

To further strengthen ease of doing business, the State Government has undertaken significant regulatory reforms. We have successfully implemented Phase 1 of our deregulation exercise across 23 priority areas with Phase 2 currently underway.

The State Government is also taking significant steps to strengthen Sikkim's role as a gateway for regional connectivity and international trade. The *establishment of a multi-modal trade corridor at Chewa Bhanjyang*, along the Sikkim-Nepal border, has been initiated to enhance bilateral trade and economic cooperation between India and Nepal. The historic Nathu La trade route is scheduled to reopen during this year's trading season reviving traditional cross-border trade and economic activity while reaffirming Sikkim's strategic importance as a vital link in regional commerce and connectivity.

My fellow citizens,

Even as Sikkim expands its economic horizons, strengthens entrepreneurship and deepens regional connectivity, we remain deeply conscious that our development must always remain

rooted in sustainability, ecological balance and the preservation of our unique Himalayan identity.

Sikkim today has emerged as a global model for sustainable development. Our recognition as India's first fully organic State and as a premier eco-tourism destination reflects decades of visionary policymaking, environmental consciousness and collective public participation. At the policy level, Sikkim has consistently remained ahead of the curve through pioneering measures such as early restrictions on single-use plastics, regulation of large plastic water bottles and continuous environmental monitoring, thereby setting national benchmarks in ecological governance.

Sikkim's environmental leadership has earned international recognition.

The Khangchendzonga National Park was designated as India's first and only 'mixed' UNESCO World Heritage Site, Khecheopalri Lake has been recognised as a Ramsar Site and the Goecha La-Dzongri trekking circuit received the Gold Award for Best Trekking Circuit in 2025. Our participation at COP28 further strengthened Sikkim's growing international profile in climate action and environmental diplomacy.

Yet, beyond policies, programmes and global recognition, the true strength of Sikkim's environmental movement lies in the values and consciousness of the people.

Across the State, farmers embracing organic cultivation, communities protecting forests and water sources, youth leading plantation drives and citizens actively participating in initiatives such as *Mero Rukh Mero Santati*, *Shishu Samriddhi Yojana*, *Mero Bato Mero Bot* and *My Child from Wild* have collectively nurtured a culture of environmental stewardship rooted in shared responsibility and inter-generational care.

This collective environmental consciousness is perhaps most visible in the State's agricultural transformation. Sikkim's commitment to sustainable agriculture has been equally transformative. Since becoming India's first fully organic State in 2016, more than 76,000 hectares of farmland have been brought under chemical-free cultivation. The State Government is now strengthening integrated value chains for strategic crops such as large cardamom, ginger, turmeric and buckwheat through investments in processing, certification, branding and market access, enabling farmers to secure greater value addition and stronger livelihoods.

The State Government has also prioritised horticulture expansion, protected cultivation and the adoption of modern agricultural technologies. During the past year alone, more than 62 lakh vegetable seedlings were distributed to nearly 28,000 farmers, while protected cultivation and precision farming

interventions have significantly boosted off-season production. Flagship initiatives such as the GI-tagged Dalle Khorsani programme and the 'Sikkim Fresh' brand have expanded market and export opportunities, further strengthening Sikkim's identity as a producer of premium organic products.

Alongside this, the revival of traditional agricultural strengths through the *Mero Alaichi, Mero Dhan* mission reflects the State Government's commitment to climate-resilient mountain agriculture.

Scientific interventions, farmer-led innovation and advanced disease-management strategies are restoring confidence in large cardamom cultivation and strengthening the livelihoods of thousands of farming families across the State.

Even as Sikkim advances on the path of sustainable development, we remain deeply conscious of the growing vulnerabilities posed by climate change in fragile Himalayan ecosystems. Extensive scientific assessments of glacial lakes and climate risks are being undertaken in collaboration with national agencies and expert institutions. In a landmark initiative, Sikkim has prepared India's first demonstrative Glacial Lake Outburst Flood Mitigation Plan for Shako Chho, setting a national benchmark in climate resilience, disaster preparedness and adaptive mountain governance.

Today, Sikkim stands not merely as a guardian of its fragile Himalayan ecology but as a national and global example of how environmental stewardship, climate resilience, sustainable livelihoods and inclusive development can advance together in harmony.

My fellow citizens,

Since the formation of the State Government in 2019, a conscious policy decision was taken to strengthen the healthcare sector through a model of '**Health for All**'. Guided by this commitment to providing affordable, accessible and high-quality healthcare to every citizen, Sikkim has since been performing exceptionally well across key health indicators.

The State Government has undertaken the strengthening of healthcare infrastructure through a series of coordinated initiatives aimed at expanding access, improving quality and reducing the need for patients to travel outside the State. The inauguration of the *500 bedded Namchi District Hospital* and the *100 bedded Mangan District Hospital* has enhanced the availability of advanced medical services in South and North Sikkim, respectively. At the *Sir Thutob Namgyal Memorial Hospital, Sochaygang*, the establishment of super specialty services have transformed it into a comprehensive tertiary care centre. These specialised services are further extended to district hospitals through regular outreach

visits by super specialists, ensuring wider coverage.

A major milestone has been the establishment of the State's first tertiary Cancer Care Centre under the Department of Radiation Oncology at STNM Hospital, enabling patients to access advanced cancer treatment within Sikkim. Efforts to address the growing burden of kidney disease have led to the operationalisation of dialysis centres in Namchi in October 2019 and Gyalshing in August 2020, along with new facilities in Mangan and Jorethang. In addition, peritoneal dialysis services introduced at the STNM Hospital since September 2021 are currently benefiting patients by reducing the need for frequent hospital visits.

Sikkim has marked significant progress in advanced medical care through a series of notable clinical milestones achieved at the STNM Hospital. A major breakthrough was the State's first Gynecologic Oncology procedure performed on October 9, 2023 for a case of carcinoma endometrium, reflecting a high level of surgical expertise within the State. The Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology has made notable strides through its Gynae Oncology Unit, which has completed over 100 major surgeries and introduced the first Hyperthermic Intraperitoneal Chemotherapy procedure in Sikkim for ovarian cancer. In addition, hysteroscopy has been introduced as part of infertility evaluation to enhance reproductive health services.

The Department of Cardiothoracic and Vascular Surgery has also demonstrated strong capabilities by successfully performing fogarty extraction and direct clot removal from a clotted vein in an arteriovenous fistula, along with completing 100 laser surgeries for varicose veins as of March 2024. In the field of neurosurgery, a dural arteriovenous fistula was treated using advanced endovascular embolisation techniques. Collaboration between the Departments of Urology and Cardiology has further strengthened multidisciplinary care, with the Urology Department undertaking complex procedures including the State's first management of a retrocaval ureter and conducting angioembolisation procedures for specialised treatment. Advanced cardiac care has been strengthened with the installation of Electrophysiology Study and Radiofrequency Ablation systems along with Intra-vascular Ultrasound at STNM Hospital, facilities that were previously unavailable in the entire Sikkim and North Bengal region.

Healthcare access at the grassroots level has also improved with the establishment of 02 Urban Public Health Centres and 13 Urban Health and Wellness Centres across the State, including several in and around Gangtok and

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others in Singtam, Mangan, Gyalshing, Soreng and Namchi. These centres ensure that basic healthcare services are available closer to communities, reducing dependence on district hospitals.

Further strengthening emergency care, Tashiding PHC, Rongli PHC and Jorethang CHC have been upgraded to First Referral Units, enabling them to manage emergency obstetric and newborn care.

Orthopaedic services have been expanded with the successful performance of semi hip replacement surgeries and the first total knee replacement at the hospital.

Furthermore, the State Government's flagship financial assistance schemes continue to provide a vital safety net, ensuring that citizens are not deprived of critical healthcare due to financial constraints. Under the *Mukhya Mantri Swasthya Suvidha Yojna*, a total of 6,838 patients has received financial assistance since 2019 for treatment outside the State, enabling access to advanced medical care.

The *Chief Minister's Medical Assistance Scheme* has also played a crucial role in supporting citizens facing critical illnesses. Since its inception, the scheme has provided assistance of up to ₹20 lakhs for lung transplantation and ₹10 lakhs for liver or bone marrow transplantation. A total of 5,577 patients has benefitted from this scheme for treatment outside the State, reflecting the State Government's commitment to addressing high-cost medical needs.

In addition, the *Chief Minister's Vatsalya Scheme* has extended support to aspiring parents by facilitating access to infertility treatment. Since 2022, financial assistance has been provided to 816 women, including both Government employees and public for IVF treatment, helping many families realise their aspirations of parenthood.

Sikkim continues to stand out as one of the top performing States in India in terms of vaccination coverage, consistently achieving high percentages and reflecting a strong and responsive public health system. Significant progress has also been recorded in maternal healthcare. Institutional deliveries increased from 99.3 percent in 2019 to 99.64 percent in 2025-26, while early antenatal registration during the first trimester improved from 76.7 percent to 84.01 percent. The proportion of pregnant women receiving at least four antenatal check-ups also rose substantially from 66.3 percent to 80.10 percent during the same period.

Child health and nutrition indicators have shown equally encouraging progress. Sikkim achieved an Infant Mortality Rate of 6 as per the 2023 Sample

Registration System, significantly lower than the national average. Early initiation of breastfeeding within one hour of birth increased remarkably from 67.2 percent in 2019-20 to 92.81 percent in 2025-26. Specialised neonatal care facilities, including Sick Neonatal Care Units and Newborn Stabilisation Units across the State, have also strengthened critical care support for newborns.

Under the *Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana*, 45,633 beneficiaries have availed treatment as of March 31, 2026, reflecting the expanding reach of affordable healthcare services in the State.

Alongside physical healthcare, the State Government has also prioritised mental health and suicide prevention through initiatives such as the Suicide Prevention Action Network Programme and Tele-MANAS. Between 2020 and December 2024, over 36,615 individuals were screened for mental health concerns, while 18,741 received counselling support. A dedicated 24x7 crisis helpline and round-the-clock tele-mental health services have further strengthened access to timely psychological care.

Moreover, Sikkim has moved beyond conventional medicine to embrace a holistic 360-degree wellness model integrating preventive, promotive and curative healthcare. By blending the ancient Himalayan healing tradition of Sowa Rigpa with Ayurveda, Yoga and Naturopathy and Homoeopathy, the State is addressing the growing burden of Non-Communicable Diseases while reducing out-of-pocket healthcare expenditure for citizens. This integrative approach has already benefitted over 67,000 people through specialised AYUSH interventions delivered across outpatient care, inpatient services and outreach programmes.

At the institutional level, Sikkim is rapidly expanding AYUSH infrastructure through a robust three-tier strategy. Key facilities include the *50-bedded Integrated AYUSH Hospital at Kyongsa in Gyalshing*, a *10-bedded integrated AYUSH facility in Gangtok* and the newly established *30-bedded specialised Sowa Rigpa Hospital at the Namgyal Institute of Tibetology, Deorali*. In addition, 15 AYUSH dispensaries are now operational across Primary Health Centres, Community Health Centres and District Hospitals, providing free consultations and medicines to citizens.

Looking ahead, Sikkim is poised to further consolidate its position as a regional leader in holistic healthcare with the development of a landmark *100-bedded Ayurveda Hospital and Medical College at Lingmoo, Yangang*.

Collectively, these initiatives are positioning Sikkim not only as a hub for wellness and medical tourism attracting visitors seeking holistic and traditional therapies but also as a model for integrated

healthcare that drives economic growth.

My fellow citizens,

Education remains one of the highest priorities of the State Government as we advance towards *SDG-4: Quality Education for All*. We firmly believe that education is the foundation of a Viksit Sikkim and the key to social progress, equity and human development.

Sikkim has taken pioneering steps in strengthening foundational learning by becoming the first State to implement a kindergarten system across all Government schools, alongside co-locating Anganwadi Centres wherever feasible. Through partnerships such as Jodo Gyan, early literacy and numeracy are being strengthened through play-based and experiential learning approaches. Since 2023, the Vidya Pravesh school readiness programme has ensured a smooth transition into formal schooling. Complementing this, the *NIPUN initiative* has strengthened mathematics teaching across all 735 Government schools through teacher training, exposure visits and school-based interventions. As a result, children demonstrating confidence in basic mathematics increased from 17 percent in 2024 to 72 percent in 2026. Building on this progress, the programme will now be extended to Class III.

Our commitment also extends to children who have dropped out of the formal education system. *Mission MAYA* (Mission for Adolescents and Youth Advancement) aims to identify, counsel, rehabilitate and reintegrate Out-of-School Children through coordinated inter-departmental efforts. Initially piloted in Namchi, the initiative will now be expanded statewide.

We are transforming schools to deliver excellence with equity. *The Chief Minister's Model School at Assam Lingzey* stands as a benchmark of future-ready education, integrating academics, sports, vocational training and leadership development through modern facilities including STEAM laboratories and residential learning environments. Encouraged by its success, we are in the process of establishing more such model schools. Academic quality is also being strengthened through the Monitoring of School Academic Performance initiative and the State Academic Achievement Survey conducted in March 2026, which has established a strong foundation for targeted learning interventions. The *Student Study Tour* initiative further continues to broaden student exposure to institutions of excellence, heritage sites and innovation hubs.

Recognising that education must nurture both the mind and the spirit, wellness and value-based learning have been integrated into the curriculum through yoga, mindfulness and mental health programmes. Dedicated weekly periods have been introduced for these activities, while teachers across the State have been trained

in yoga instruction, mindfulness and meditation practices to strengthen emotional resilience and life skills among students.

At the Secondary and Senior Secondary levels, the State Government has achieved 100 percent coverage of vocational education across all Government schools, with nearly 15,000 students enrolled annually under NSQF-aligned programmes. STEM laboratories are also being established to foster scientific temperament, while collaboration with IISER Pune has strengthened science and mathematics education through large-scale teacher training across all Districts.

The State Government also remains committed to dignity and gender equity in education through the *Bahini Scheme*, under which nearly 16,000 girl students receive free sanitary napkins annually, improving attendance and retention.

Focused interventions have also strengthened academic outcomes and aspirational pathways. The *Chief Minister's Mentorship Programme* has significantly improved pass percentages and increased the number of high-performing students and schools achieving near-perfect results. *Mission Lakshya* is preparing our brightest minds for IIT-JEE and NEET within the State, while the *Chief Minister's Education Assistance Scheme* has supported 1,399 students in pursuing higher education across India and abroad.

Sikkim is also advancing lifelong learning through the *ULLAS programme*, under which 14,447 adult learners have achieved foundational literacy. Sikkim is now on track to achieve full functional literacy and be declared a fully literate State in 2026.

At the higher education level, significant strides are being made to strengthen access, quality and governance. The establishment of the *Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose University of Excellence at Chakung* and the *Khangchendzonga State University at Temi Tarku* marks a major step towards multidisciplinary and globally aligned education. The *Sikkim Government Vocational College at Dentam* has also been inaugurated to strengthen skill-based higher education. In medical education, the State has secured 80 MBBS seats annually at the Sikkim Manipal Institute of Medical Sciences exclusively for Sikkimese students, including 50 fully funded seats.

To support global academic excellence, the *Nar Bahadur Bhandari Fellowship Scheme* provides financial assistance of up to ₹50 lakh for meritorious students pursuing Master's programmes at leading international universities, while the *APATAN Fellowship Scheme* supports doctoral studies in regional languages and literature. Further, the Sikkim Private

Universities Act, 2025, has established a transparent and unified regulatory framework to ensure quality, accountability, accreditation and protection of student interests.

Through these interventions, the State Government is transforming education into a powerful instrument of equity, opportunity, innovation and human development, ensuring that every learner in Sikkim contributes meaningfully to the vision of a Viksit Sikkim.

My fellow citizens,

Tourism continues to remain one of the most important pillars of Sikkim's economy, contributing significantly to employment generation, rural livelihoods, cultural preservation and sustainable economic growth. The State Government has consistently pursued a comprehensive and forward-looking tourism policy focused on infrastructure creation, destination diversification, eco-tourism, spiritual tourism, adventure tourism, heritage conservation, skill development and community participation, with the larger vision of positioning Sikkim as a premier all-season global tourism destination.

In recent years, Sikkim has witnessed remarkable progress in tourism infrastructure development. *Passenger ropeways at Bhaleydhunga, Yangang and Pelling* have been successfully inaugurated and operationalised, greatly enhancing accessibility and visitor experience. Under the PM-DevINE scheme of the Ministry of DoNER, iconic projects such as the *Skywalk at Bhaleydhunga* and the *Glass Bridge at Singshore* are under implementation and are expected to place Sikkim among India's leading high-value tourism destinations. Similarly, under the SASCI scheme, the development of a multi-level parking facility and allied amenities at Nathu La will significantly improve traffic management and tourist convenience in one of the State's most strategically important destinations.

The State Government has also focused on expanding and diversifying tourism circuits across the State. The opening of Chola Pass and Dokala Pass under the *Bharat Ranbhoomi Darshan* initiative marks a historic milestone in promoting battlefield tourism while honouring the courage and sacrifices of the armed forces. Under the Challenge Based Destination Development Scheme, projects such as the *Kabi Chronicle Project* and the *Echoes of Valour Project at Gnathang Valley* are being developed to showcase Sikkim's unique historical and cultural legacy. At the same time, projects under the Swadesh Darshan such as the Gangtok Cultural Village at Namli, Eco-Wellness Experience at Yuksom and the Four Patron Saints of Sikkim at Yuksom under the

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PRASHAD scheme are strengthening spiritual, cultural and wellness tourism in the State.

Recognising the transformative role of rural tourism in generating grassroots livelihoods, the State Government has launched the *Mega Homestay Scheme* targeting the establishment of 1,000 homestays across the State. This initiative is empowering rural communities, promoting entrepreneurship, reducing regional disparities and preserving indigenous architecture, traditions, cuisine and cultural heritage through authentic community-based tourism experiences. Several State-sponsored projects promoting pilgrimage tourism, eco-tourism, wellness tourism and cultural tourism are also progressing across Districts, including *Brindabhan Dham at Dodak*, *Herbal Medical and Spiritual Healing Tourism Complex at Nandugaon*, *Rabindranath Tagore Park and Cultural Centre at Meghidara* and *Regional Kirat Rai Linguistic and Cultural Research Centre at Paren Goan*.

Alongside infrastructure and destination development, the State Government continues to prioritise human resource

development through extensive skill enhancement programmes under Sikkim INSPIRES, creating a trained and professional tourism workforce while generating sustainable employment opportunities for local youth. Reflecting the success of these sustained efforts, Sikkim recorded a tourist footfall of 17.2 lakh visitors in 2025 and has been performing significantly well in the implementation of the Swadesh Darshan Scheme.

My fellow citizens,

At the heart of Sikkim's development journey lies the progress, empowerment and resilience of its villages and rural communities.

The State Government is implementing a comprehensive range of targeted programmes aimed at strengthening infrastructure, enhancing livelihoods and improving the overall quality of life in rural Sikkim.

With the support of the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana, rural connectivity has seen substantial expansion, with over 4,600 km of roads constructed, significantly improving access to remote areas. Under the Vibrant Village Programme, critical infrastructure including 8 long-span bridges and 3 roads covering 18.73 km in North Sikkim is under implementation. Further strengthening connectivity,

approval has been accorded for PMGSY-IV (Batch-I), covering 96 roads spanning 384.27 km at an estimated cost of ₹788.06 crore.

Housing security has also been a major focus under the Sikkim Garib Aawas Yojana, through which 3,000 houses in Phase I and 3,050 houses in Phase II, along with an additional 1,000 houses, have been successfully completed. Building on this progress, SGAY-II has been launched with a target of 10,000 houses, of which nearly 4,000 houses are currently under construction, ensuring safe and durable housing for economically weaker sections.

Ensuring access to safe drinking water remains a priority under the Jal Jeevan Mission. In Sikkim, 1,791 water supply schemes are under implementation, including 1,755 Single Village Schemes and 36 Multi Village Schemes. Of these, 1,223 Single Village Schemes and 26 Multi Village Schemes have been completed, ensuring reliable tap water supply to rural households and strengthening water security across the State.

The State Government is also focused on strengthening rural livelihoods through the State Rural Livelihood Mission (2016–2026), which has emerged as a cornerstone of inclusive development. A total of 5,869 Self-Help Groups has been formed and

supported, with ₹10.738 lakh provided as revolving fund assistance. Notably, 14,719 women have emerged as 'Lakshpati Didis', including 3,210 from Scheduled Tribe communities, reflecting tangible progress in enhancing incomes and economic resilience.

In the area of sanitation and environmental sustainability, the State Government continues to make significant strides through the Swachh Bharat Mission Grameen Phase II. Sikkim has achieved the distinction of being declared *India's first ODF Plus Model State* on August 14, 2023. Extensive infrastructure has been created, including 26,411 individual household latrines, 743 community sanitary complexes and thousands of soak pits and compost pits, alongside plastic waste management units, segregation sheds and resource recovery systems, promoting scientific waste management and environmental protection. Sikkim has also secured 3rd position among small States and UTs in Swachh Survekshan 2022, with Districts such as Mangan, Namchi, Soreng and Gyalshing performing exceptionally well.

To further strengthen grassroots governance, the separation from the Rural Development Department has been undertaken to ensure sharper administrative focus and improved efficiency. This has enabled enhanced attention to community development, strengthening of Panchayati Raj Institutions and capacity building through the State Institute of Rural Development, alongside more effective implementation of the Panchayats Act, 1993. In FY 2025-26 alone, 10,531 participants have been trained under various capacity-building programmes. Infrastructure has been strengthened with 10 Panchayat Bhawans completed, 22 Common Service Centres co-located and 10 Panchayat Learning Centres established.

Digital empowerment has also been prioritised through the establishment of a modern computer laboratory at the State Panchayat Resource Centre, Deorali, Gangtok and the distribution of computer systems to Panchayati Raj Institutions, transforming them into efficient, technology-enabled service delivery hubs. All 6 Zilla Panchayats and 199 Gram Panchayats have prepared and are implementing Panchayat Development Plans aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals through the eGramSwaraj platform, ensuring transparency and accountability.

In recognition of these efforts, Namphing Gram Panchayat Unit has achieved ISO Certification the first in the State, while Gyalshing Omchung Gram Panchayat Unit has secured 3rd rank nationally in the Deen Dayal

Upadhyay Panchayat Satat Vikas Puraskar 2025.

Together, these initiatives reflect the State Government's unwavering commitment to holistic rural development strengthening infrastructure, empowering communities, enhancing livelihoods and building a sustainable and inclusive future for all.

My fellow citizens,

Road connectivity has witnessed remarkable progress under the State Government, recognising that connectivity is the backbone of socio-economic development in a hilly and strategically located State like Sikkim. We have been steadfast in expanding, upgrading and strengthening the road network to ensure seamless connectivity to every village, market, tourist destination and border area.

Some of the major infrastructure works have been successfully completed, including key road up-gradation projects such as the Namchi–Birdhang road (9.38 km) and Tharpu–Daramdin road (22.23 km), along with the construction of multiple bridges across rivers such as Rangit, Kalej Khola and others, significantly improving inter-district connectivity and resilience.

The State has also leveraged support from central and external agencies, with projects funded under CRIF, NESIDS and NABARD-RIDF covering hundreds of kilometres of roads and bridges, further strengthening infrastructure capacity. Looking ahead, the State Government envisions upgrading highways to double-lane standards, replacing ageing bridges, improving border connectivity and adopting eco-friendly technologies. With a current road density of approximately 48 km per 100 sq.km, we aim to achieve 70 km per 100 sq.km by 2047.

My fellow citizens,

As I conclude, I extend my sincerest gratitude to your tireless contributions. Today, we stand proud of how far we have come together as a people and even more ready to shape the future with courage, ambition and renewed resolve. Let us build upon the strong foundations laid over the past five decades and continue striving towards an even greater Sikkim, one that is prosperous, sustainable, inclusive and full of opportunity for every generation.

Together, let us move forward in the spirit of a Sunaulo, Samridhdha ani Samarth Sikkim, contributing meaningfully to the vision of Viksit Bharat @2047.

Jai Hind!

Jai Sikkim!

Celebrating
51 YEARS
of Statehood

Hon'ble Vice President of India
Shri C.P. Radhakrishnan

Shri Om Prakash Mather
Hon'ble Governor of Sikkim

Shri Pawan Singh Tamang
Hon'ble Chief Minister of Sikkim

Sikkim welcomes
Hon'ble Vice President of India
Shri C.P. Radhakrishnan

INFORMATION AND PUBLIC RELATIONS DEPARTMENT
GOVERNMENT OF SIKKIM