



SIKKIM HERALD

Vol. 68 No. 30 (visit us at www.ipr.sikkim.gov.in)

Gangtok (Tuesday) August 06, 2024

Regd. No. WB/SKM/01/2023-2025



Budget Session 2024 commences

Gangtok, August 05: First Session (Part-II) of the Eleventh Assembly (Budget Session 2024-25) of the Sikkim Legislative Assembly (SLA) commenced at the Sikkim Legislative Assembly Secretariat, today.

The session presided over by Speaker SLA Mr Mingma Norbu Sherpa, began with the address by Governor Mr Om Prakash Mathur.

The Governor started his maiden budget address to the Assembly by highlighting the record turnout of 83.4% voters during the recently held Assembly elections. He congratulated the Chief Minister and his team for their resounding victory in the Sikkim Assembly Election and Lok Sabha Election.

The Governor highlighted that the COVID-19 pandemic and the Lhonak Lake burst of October 4, 2023, have created many challenges for the State, particularly, economic impact on power sector. Extensive damages to public infrastructure and private properties occurred as a result of the disaster. The disaster greatly affected the lifeline of Sikkim NH10, but despite these challenges, Sikkim has progressed by leaps and bounds, he stated.

He added that Sikkim emerged as one of the top gainers in the latest NITI Aayog Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) assessment. Its remarkable



progress underscores its unwavering commitment to sustainable development and equitable growth.

The Governor also highlighted Sikkim's achievements in health, education, tourism, agriculture, women empowerment and environmental sustainability.

The transformative progress has been driven by various schemes that reflect the dedication and hard work of Sikkimese citizens, he added.

He also said that Sikkim's vision aligns with the National Agenda of Viksit Bharat 2047, with this year's budget emphasising Bijli (electricity), Pani (Water), and

Sadak (Roads).

He concluded his address by calling upon all to unite in a shared vision for a prosperous, inclusive and resilient Sikkim. *(Full text of the Governor's budget address can be read on page 2).*

Thereafter, Chief Minister Mr Prem Singh Tamang, also the Leader of the House, moved the Motion of Thanks on Governor's address, which was seconded by Minister Mr Bhim Hang Limboo.

The discussion and voting on the Governor's address will be taken up on August 6, 2024.

During the Financial Business, Chief Minister, Mr Prem Singh Tamang, also the Minister-in-Charge of the Finance Department presented the Annual General Budget for the Financial Year 2024-25, comprising of the Explanatory Memorandum of the Government of Sikkim, Annual Financial Statement, Estimates of Receipts, and Demands for Grants for the Financial Year (FY) 2024-25.

The Chief Minister presented the fiscal profile for FY 2024-25, noting that Sikkim's GDP at current prices is projected to exceed ₹50,000 crore, reaching ₹52,555 crore, an 85% increase since 2018-19. The per capita

income for FY 2023-24 is ₹7,07,181, up 64% from 2018-19. The budgetary expenditure has also increased to ₹11,182 crore in FY 2023-24 from ₹6,940 crore in FY 2018-19.

Explaining the budgetary profile for the FY 2024-25, the Chief Minister read, 'against a gross expenditure provision of ₹14490.67 crore, (Rupees fourteen thousand four hundred ninety crore sixty seven lakh) the net outgo comes to ₹14002.69 crore (Rupees fourteen thousand two crore and sixty nine lakh) after taking into account recoveries amounting to ₹487.97 crore (Rupees four hundred eighty seven crore ninety seven lakh).'

While presenting the Annual Budget for the FY 2024-25, the Chief Minister in his budget address highlighted some of the nationally recognised initiatives and achievements of the State Government in governance and development:

Poverty Alleviation: Sikkim is the 4th best state in poverty alleviation with only 2.6% of its population living below the poverty line.

Education: The state has the 7th highest gross enrolment ratio at 38.6%, above the national average of 28.4%.

Digital Progress: Sikkim ranks 4th in digitalization among states with a population under 1 crore, as per the State of India's Digital Economy 2024 report.

Global Recognition: Hosted two major G20 events in March 2023, showcasing Green Development Strategies.

Sustainable Development: Significant improvement in NITI Aayog SDG scores, particularly in reducing inequalities and crime rates.

Water and Sanitation: Achieved a 96% score in clean water and sanitation.

Judicial Infrastructure: Highest court density in India, with 6 courts per lakh population.

Environmental Sustainability: 100% compliance with environmental standards for industries.

Economic Growth: Highest value-added by the manufacturing sector at 35.7%.

Health and Nutrition: Lowest percentage of stunted children under 5 years at 22.3%, below the WHO target.

Overall, Sikkim's progress highlights its commitment to sustainable development and equitable growth.

In line with the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047 envisioned by Prime Minister Mr Narendra Modi,

Contn. on page 6



Pearls of Wisdom

"Do the best you can until you know better. Then when you know better, do better."

-Maya Angelou

Full text of the address delivered by the Governor on the first day of the Budget Session 2024

Hon'ble Speaker and Esteemed Members of the Legislative Assembly,

It is my distinct privilege to present before this esteemed house the budget for the financial year 2024-25. This year has been marked by the successful conduct of the General Elections for the 32 Assembly Constituencies of the Sikkim Legislative Assembly and the single Lok Sabha seat from Sikkim. We witnessed a record voter turnout of 83.4% across the state, highlighting the democratic engagement of our citizens.

I would like to extend our heartfelt congratulations to the Hon'ble Chief Minister and his team on their historic and resounding victory in both the Sikkim Legislative Assembly and Lok Sabha elections. This remarkable achievement, resulting in the formation of the Government for a second term, is a testament to the trust and confidence the people of Sikkim have placed in your leadership and vision for our state.

Hon'ble Members,

The first five years of governance by my government witnessed significant changes and challenges. With perseverance and unity, Sikkim successfully overcame some of the most unprecedented situations.

First was the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic that impacted the whole world, including our country, starting in March 2019. The pandemic disrupted our lives, causing significant loss of lives and economic setbacks. On October 4, 2023, Sikkim experienced another tragedy with the bursting of the perimeter of Lake Lhonak, releasing a significant amount of water into the River Teesta. The most significant economic impact of this disaster was on the power sector. The disaster destroyed the Chungthang Dam, the largest dam in Sikkim, which produced 1,200 MW of electricity, along with other generating stations, totaling 1,800 MW of hydro power generation.

The immediate impact on the hydro power scenario is twofold. Firstly, the Government of Sikkim had resorted to external finance and its own resources to create this power capacity. Sikkim Urja Limited, a Government of Sikkim Enterprise, and Sikkim Power Investment Corporation together availed resources of ₹18,146 crore, which have now become non-performing. Besides the issue of loan repayment, the second issue is the revenue forgone as the project had started earning profits in 2022-23. The Government of Sikkim was also eligible for free power from the Teesta III project. With the plant being washed out, there is no longer the availability of free power, resulting in a revenue loss for the state. The annual loss of this revenue at the current cost of power is in excess of ₹300-400 crore annually.

Beyond the energy sector, there has been extensive damage and loss of public infrastructure and private assets, including dwelling units, agricultural land, animal husbandry, tourist centers, and boarding and lodging joints. The total loss is estimated to be over ₹25,000 crore (including Teesta III project), which is nearly 60% of the GSDP of the state during 2022-23. We are grateful to the Government of India for their firsthand assessment of the situation and the immediate release of ₹205 crore from the National Disaster Relief Fund to commence rehabilitation and reconstruction work. My Government has submitted a detailed memorandum to Central Government which is under consideration.

The disaster also affected connectivity to Sikkim through the National Highway. My Government has already requested the National Highway Authority to restore effective connectivity through NH10, which is the lifeline of Sikkim. We have been seeking a Special Package for restructuring, renovation, and up-gradation of NH10, which includes modern and appropriate highway designs such as improving the load-bearing capacity of the road, shortening distance measures like geometric improvement of curves and bends, construction of new bridges over rivers and rivulets, and counter fort RCC walls below the road to increase the width as well as protect the roads. Considering the geo-strategic importance of the state, the NH10 highway must be upgraded and modernized for the benefit of the tourism sector, industries, and the general public of Sikkim and adjoining areas, besides the strategic and security considerations.

With the submergence of low-lying areas during the disaster, most of the relief material, including construction materials, had to be brought over a longer lead, raising the costs. Even the private sector faced cost escalation, which led to trade diversion affecting the GST collections of the state. Our estimates suggest that each day of closure of NH10 results in an overall loss to the economy of around ₹100 crore, including the loss of GST revenue.

Despite these challenges, Sikkim has progressed by leaps and bounds, especially in areas of prime focus such as health, education, social welfare, and infrastructure development. Sikkim has emerged as a shining example of progress and prosperity, guided by the principles of democracy, inclusivity, and sustainable development. Our state's performance in Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Multidimensional Poverty Index reflects our commitment towards eradicating poverty, promoting industry and innovation, fostering sustainable communities, and combating climate change.

The recent India Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) Report by NITI Aayog has positioned Sikkim with the third-lowest percentage (3.82%) of multidimensionally poor populations in India.

Hon'ble Members,

As per the latest NITI Aayog's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) assessment, Sikkim has significantly improved its overall SDG scores compared to the previous survey conducted in FY 2020-21.

One of the notable achievements is our progress in reducing inequalities under SDG 10. The data indicates a significant drop in crime rates related to women and within communities, reflecting our dedication to fostering a safe and inclusive society.

In the realm of clean water and sanitation, Sikkim has achieved a remarkable score of 96% on SDG 6. This milestone highlights our successful efforts to ensure that all residents have access to safe drinking water and adequate sanitation facilities.

Sikkim also stands out in terms of judicial infrastructure, boasting the highest court density in India with 6 courts per lakh population. This extensive judicial infrastructure is crucial for ensuring timely justice and upholding the rule of law, further reinforcing our commitment to maintaining a fair and just society.

Environmental sustainability is another area where Sikkim excels. Our state

has achieved 100% compliance rate with environmental standards for industries which reflects our commitment to sustainable industrial practices and environmental protection, ensuring that economic growth does not come at the expense of our natural resources.

In terms of economic growth, the value added by the manufacturing sector in Sikkim stands at 35.7%, the highest in the country. This achievement underscores the robustness of our industrial base and its significant contribution to the state's economic development. It also highlights the effectiveness of our policies aimed at fostering industrial growth and innovation.

In the field of nutrition and health, Sikkim has made remarkable progress. According to the National Family Health Survey-5 (2019-2021), while 35.5% of children under the age of 5 in India are stunted, Sikkim has the lowest percentage of stunted children under 5 years at 22.3%. This achievement is below the national target of 23.7% set by WHO's Global Nutrition Targets Tracking Tool, indicating the success of our initiatives in combating malnutrition and promoting child health.

Overall Sikkim has emerged as one of the top gainers in the latest NITI Aayog Sustainable Development Goals assessment since the last baseline survey. This remarkable progress underscores our unwavering commitment to sustainable development and equitable growth.

Sikkim has also received recent recognition in the Logistics Ease Across Different States (LEADS) survey, along with our initiatives for environmental conservation, financial inclusion, and rural development, testifies to the dedication and hard work of our people.

The Credit-to-GSDP ratio in the State of Sikkim has seen remarkable growth. Rising from the lowest position among the North-Eastern states, Sikkim has now secured a place among the top three. As of September 30, 2023, the Credit-Deposit (CD) Ratio in our state stands at an encouraging 64%. This marks a notable improvement from previous years, reflecting a positive trend in credit accessibility and utilization.

Sikkim has gained recognition as one of the leading mountain states with exceptional financial inclusion, achieving full banking coverage across all blocks, leaving no area unbanked. As of September 30, 2023, Gyalshing district has successfully attained 100% digital enablement. Moreover, the remaining five districts, on average, have surpassed the 90% mark in their digital enablement progress.

Sikkim proudly boasts 32 bank branches and 36 ATMs per lakh population, with Gangtok alone having 43 bank branches and 28 ATMs per lakh population. This starkly contrasts with the national average of 14 bank branches per lakh population, vividly showcasing the extensive presence of banks in Sikkim.

Hon'ble Members,

I now take this opportunity to elucidate some of the significant achievements made by my Government across various priority sectors. These initiatives, introduced during our first term, have been pivotal in driving transformative progress and advancing the well-being of our state.

1. **The Sikkim Aama Sahyog Yojana:** In 2023, my Government introduced the pioneering Sikkim Aama Yojana, which offers a financial grant of ₹20,000 to eligible non-working, unwed, widowed, divorced, or separated mothers between the ages of 18 and 59 residing in Sikkim. This initiative underscores our commitment to gender equality and the welfare of women across the state.

In the financial year 2022-23, the State Government allocated ₹32.00 crores to support 16,000 beneficiaries under the SASY. For the financial year 2023-24, the budget was significantly increased to ₹65.00 crores, enabling support for 31,247 beneficiaries.

These initiatives reflect our unwavering commitment to advancing women's rights and enhancing their role in society, ensuring they receive the support and recognition they deserve.

2. **Bahini Yojna:** This scheme focuses on the welfare and empowerment of girls by providing free sanitary napkins in government run schools and colleges.

3. **Mero Rukh Mero Santati:** Launched in 2023, this initiative aims to foster a deep connection between parents, children, and nature by planting 108 trees for every newborn in Sikkim. It received special recognition at the United Nations Climate Change Conferences, particularly at COP 28 in Dubai, with more than 300,000 plantations completed to date and 6,476 children have been registered in this programme, which not only celebrates new life but also enhances the state's green cover.

4. **Mobile Village Clinics:** The mobile clinics provide accessible healthcare to remote areas.

5. **Mukhya Mantri Atma Nirbhar Yojna:** This scheme Promotes self-reliance and entrepreneurship among the people of Sikkim.

6. **Mukhya Mantri Krishi Atma Nirbhar Yojna:** This scheme provides financial rewards for organic production of 19 locally-grown crops and has led to a phenomenal increase in crop production in the state.

7. **Milk Production Incentive:** Under this, registered farmers with the state's Milk Unions receive ₹8 per liter, one of the highest incentives in the country, thereby boosting the dairy sector.

8. **Pig Production Incentive:** Supporting the growth of the pig farming industry with targeted incentives. This has markedly increased local production and improved farmer incomes.

Hon'ble Members,

Allow me to highlight some of the key achievements of my Government across various priority sectors.

Sikkim has made significant strides in health indicators, with institutional births at 94.7% and full immunization at 97.9%, both surpassing national averages. Additionally, the Infant Mortality Rate in Sikkim is 5 per 1,000 live births (SRS-2020), which is notably better than the national average.

A significant milestone is the establishment of the Neurosurgery Department at STNM amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. Previously, patients with neurological

Contd. from page 2

Full text...

issues had to seek treatment in hospitals outside the state, presenting challenges for both patients and their families. Since its establishment, the Neurosurgery Department at STNM has treated over 2,000 patients and conducted more than 5,000 outpatient consultations, including complex procedures like transnasal brain tumor surgery and intracranial aneurysm surgery. In 2023, the department successfully performed an endovascular procedure, reflecting its commitment to advancing medical capabilities.

Another notable achievement is the installation of the Electrophysiology Study (EPS) and Intravascular Ultrasound (IVUS) facilities at STNM Hospital's Cardiac Catheterization Laboratory. EPS is crucial for assessing and treating heart rhythm disorders, while IVUS technology provides precise analysis of blockages within coronary arteries, essential for optimal therapeutic interventions for heart-related ailments.

Health infrastructure across all districts has been significantly augmented, benefiting our citizens and ensuring healthcare access in all regions. The Namchi District Hospital is being upgraded from a 300-bedded to a 500-bedded facility for improved healthcare services.

The **Mukhya Mantri Swasthya Suvida Yojna and Chief Minister's Medical Assistance Scheme** have provided crucial financial aid, ensuring healthcare access for various segments of our society, including those not covered under existing health schemes. To date, over ₹31 crores have been disbursed to more than 7,717 patients under the Mukhya Mantri Swasthya Suvida Yojna.

The Mobile Village Clinic programme has extended healthcare services directly to remote communities, conducting over 1,305 camps, benefiting 40,451 patients, and performing 15,863 medical tests. These clinics offer a comprehensive range of health services, focusing on both communicable and non-communicable diseases and maternal and child health, thereby promoting overall well-being among underserved communities.

These achievements are commendable; however, the decline in the Total Fertility Rate (TFR) to 1.1, well below the replacement level of 2.1, poses a significant challenge. Concerted efforts are necessary to address this trend to avoid potential demographic implications.

We also lag behind in a few areas compared to the national average, such as early initiation of breastfeeding within one hour of delivery and exclusive breastfeeding for six months. Additionally, Sikkim faces the dual burden of over-nutrition and under-nutrition. Out-of-pocket healthcare expenditure in Sikkim is also higher than the national average. Late marriages and related health issues, including low fertility rates and increasing C-section rates, are growing concerns.

The challenges we face include remoteness and accessibility, behavioral changes in healthcare workers, lack of community awareness about nutritional value, high cost of health services, and timely availability of grants. My Government's priority is to reduce out-of-pocket healthcare expenditure, improve early breastfeeding practices, reduce anemia among mothers and children, promote the "Eat Right" campaign to encourage healthy eating, enhance community participation in behavioral change, identify causes of malnutrition and address them systematically, and ensure proper documentation by ASHAs and ANMs.

My Government is committed to addressing these issues in the coming term and ensuring a positive change.

Hon'ble Members,

Sikkim has achieved numerous milestones in the education sector, demonstrating our unwavering commitment to providing quality education and skill development. The government allocates over 15% of the state budget to education, ensuring ample resources for this vital sector.

In terms of infrastructure and facilities in education sector, we have undertaken the construction of 105 new school buildings and significant renovations of existing structures, with over ₹30 crores allocated for these projects. Additionally, ambulances have been provided to 8 government colleges, including Nar Bahadur Bhandari Government College, Tadong and Sikkim Government Science College, Chakung, ensuring timely medical treatment for students when needed.

Regarding Higher Education Projects, our commitment to world-class infrastructure is evident in projects worth over ₹2000 crores underway in higher education. This includes the development of centers of excellence, universities, engineering colleges, and vocational colleges. The establishment of new universities and Post Graduate Extension Centers, along with the introduction of new departments and the construction of the Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose University of Excellence, are key elements of our vision for higher education.

Teacher Policies and Inclusivity are also a priority, with a policy to regularize teaching faculty after 8 years of probation. Free education, textbooks, uniforms, and additional measures like the Chief Minister's Merit Scholarship Scheme underscore our commitment to educational inclusivity. Special efforts are directed towards establishing educational institutions in remote areas, with nine new universities already established.

In terms of Quality Enhancement Programs, the Samagra Shiksha Scheme addresses universal access, equity, quality enhancement, vocationalization, and fortification of Teacher Education Institutes. To empower SCERT for academic excellence and research, the government is focused on foundational literacy and numeracy, improving teaching-learning outcomes, and implementing the National Initiative for Proficiency in Reading with Understanding and Numeracy (NIPUN).

Our Innovative Initiatives include the Bahini Scheme, which provides free sanitary pads to school-going girls, contributing to the holistic well-being of students. We have also implemented smart classes in 238 schools, where experienced teachers deliver lectures, and classes can be attended virtually, addressing the challenge of quality teacher availability in remote areas. Remedial teaching programmes are in place to help weaker students catch up.

In terms of literacy and enrollment, Sikkim boasts a literacy rate exceeding 90%, one of the highest in India, and a Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) in higher education of 75.8%. Our commitment to quality education includes introducing smart classrooms, remedial teaching programmes, and implementing the National

Education Policy (NEP) 2020. By August 15, 2024, we aim to provide high-bandwidth internet facilities to all college campuses under the Bharat Net Programme. The new four-year undergraduate structure under NEP 2020, offering dual major courses, will commence in 2024-25. Sikkim University is set to start new programmes, including courses in water resource management, river and mountain ecosystem development, and environment conservation.

In conclusion, Sikkim's education sector is advancing with robust infrastructure, inclusive policies, and innovative programmes, ensuring a brighter future for our students and the state.

Hon'ble Members,

In 2016, Sikkim proudly became India's first and only fully organic farming state, achieving global recognition for having the largest contiguous tract of organically certified fields. This landmark achievement has positioned Sikkim as a leader in organic farming.

To further this commitment, I am pleased to highlight one of the most impactful policies of my Government-the **Mukhya Mantri Pashudhan Samriddhi Yojna (MMPSY)**. Launched in 2020-21, this innovative scheme has been pivotal in enhancing local production of milk and pork. Through two major Production Linked Incentive Schemes-the **Milk Production Incentive Scheme and the Pig Production Incentive Scheme**-the Government has significantly supported farmers.

Under the Milk Production Incentive Scheme, registered farmers with the state's Milk Unions receive ₹8 per liter, one of the highest incentives in the country. Additionally, the Pig Production Incentive Scheme offers piggery farmers financial support ranging from ₹15,000 to ₹50,000 per farmer or household. These initiatives have markedly increased local production and improved farmer incomes.

The government has also introduced several supportive measures, including **Gwala Day** to honor dairy farmers, the Highest Milk Producer Award, and Grant-in-Aid for establishing milk cooperative societies in remote areas. These efforts underscore our commitment to advancing the livestock sector, making Sikkim a model for sustainable and innovative livestock practices.

A significant policy decision this year has been the enhancement of the Milk Union's milk procurement price. The new price structure has been increased to a minimum of ₹42 per kg for milk with 3.5% fat and 7.5% SNF, and a maximum of ₹71.20 per kg for milk with 8.0% fat and 10% SNF. This adjustment represents one of the highest procurement prices in the country and reflects our government's unwavering support for farmers.

This policy has led to a remarkable 42% increase in overall milk production from both organized and unorganized sectors between 2018-19 and 2022-23. Daily average milk production surged from 1,66,712.3 liters in 2018-19 to 2,37,068.5 liters in 2022-23 (source: Integrated Sample Survey, GoI). The Sikkim Milk Union Cooperative Union alone has seen daily milk collection and processing rise from 37,731.51 liters in 2018-19 to 50,506 liters in 2023-24, marking a 33.86% increase. Over ₹1.00 crore is now disbursed monthly to dairy farmers as a Milk Production Incentive through various organized Milk Unions. As of 2023-24, the total milk incentive disbursed to farmers in the organized sector amounts to ₹56,55,37,640 (Rupees Fifty-Six Crore Fifty-Five Lakh Thirty-Seven Thousand Six Hundred and Forty only).

In the piggery sector, the **Pig Production Incentive Scheme (PPIS)**, launched by my Government on October 28, 2021, has been highly beneficial. This scheme aims to enhance pork production and support pig farmers. As of 2023-24, ₹6.00 crore has been disbursed to 4,542 eligible piggery farmers. This has resulted in unprecedented growth in pork production, increasing from 800 MT in 2020-2021 to 1580 MT in 2022-2023 (source: Integrated Sample Survey, GoI).

Additionally, to support local farmers, the **Mukhya Mantri Krishi Atma Nirbhar Yojna** has been implemented to encourage the expansion of cultivation areas. This programme provides financial rewards for the organic production of 19 locally grown crops. Incentive rates include ₹100 per kg for large cardamom, ₹20 per kg for ginger, orange, and cherry pepper, and various rates for other crops. Since its inception, ₹25,67,53,765 has been disbursed to 35,264 farmer beneficiaries, fostering sustainable farming practices and contributing to agricultural growth.

Under the flagship **Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojna (PMKSY) Per Drop More Crop (PDMC)** programme, Sikkim has covered 13,229.60 hectares, benefiting 32,072 farmers to date.

Since Sikkim achieved 100% certified organic status in 2016, the State Government has focused on marketing by developing an organic value chain. To accomplish this, farmers have been registered into **Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs)**, and post-harvest management infrastructure has been established for processing and branding.

Notably, an integrated processing facility has been set up at Rangpo, with a processing capacity of about 5.0 tonnes per hour, through the joint venture company **Sikkim-IFFCO Organics Limited**. This facility will add value to ginger, turmeric, big cardamom, and fafar (kind of millet). The value-added products will be marketed as 'Sikkim Organic' in both domestic and international markets.

These comprehensive policies and initiatives not only enhance productivity across sectors but also mark significant achievements in our ongoing journey towards sustainable and innovative agricultural practices in the post-merger era.

Hon'ble Members,

Sikkim has achieved remarkable acclaim in the tourism sector, positioning itself as a leading destination in India. In 2016, Sikkim was recognized as India's first fully organic farming state, and this distinction has been further enhanced by significant strides in tourism development. The state's outstanding efforts were acknowledged when it ranked first among all States and UTs for implementing the Swadesh Darshan Scheme, as evaluated by the Ministry of Tourism in March 2020. Furthermore, in April 2022, Sikkim received the prestigious award for being the Most Proactive State under the Regional Connectivity Scheme from the Ministry of Civil Aviation.

Tourism statistics reflect the sector's recovery and growth. In 2019, Sikkim welcomed 1,421,823 domestic tourists, but this number dropped to 316,408 in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The figures improved in subsequent years, with 511,489 domestic tourists in 2021, 1,625,573 in 2022, and 1,060,141 up to October

Contd. on page 4

Contd. from page 3

Full text...

2023. For foreign tourists, the numbers also showed fluctuation, from 142,182 in 2019 to a decline in 2020 with 31,640, followed by an increase to 51,148 in 2021, 162,557 in 2022, and 76,529 up to October 2023.

The State Government has embarked on several ambitious projects to transform Sikkim into a premier destination for adventure tourism. Noteworthy initiatives include the development of paragliding and rock climbing facilities at Tarey Bhir in Namchi District and the enhancement of the world-renowned Dzongri-Goechala trekking trails. Additional projects have focused on improving tourist infrastructure, such as the development of facilities for the Kailash Manasarovar Yatra at 18th Mile (JN Road) and Hangu Lake near Baba Mandir in Gangtok District, the remodeling and upgradation of the Burtuk Helipad in Gangtok, and the construction of tourist walkways, yak trails, viewpoints, and landscaping at Tsomgo Lake.

The government has also sanctioned numerous theme-based projects under State Sponsored Schemes that are either ongoing or nearing completion. These projects aim to position Sikkim as a major destination for pilgrimage tourism. They include the development of Mangarjung at Mangsari in Soreng District, the construction of the Eco-Tourism Pilgrimage site at Dodak (Brindabhan Dham), the creation of Four Patron Saints at Yuksom in Gyalshing District, and the establishment of the Regional Kirat Rai Linguistic and Cultural Research Centre in Paren Goan, Soreng District. Other notable projects include the development of Rabindranath Tagore Park and Cultural Centre at Meghi Dara in Rinchenpong, Soreng District, and the construction and beautification of Rolu Mandir in Namchi District.

Recognizing the potential of rural tourism, the State Government has launched the Mega Homestay Scheme, which aims to construct 1,000 homestays to boost rural tourism and provide employment opportunities, especially for the youth.

Tourism has become a cornerstone of Sikkim's economy, driven by comprehensive initiatives aimed at enhancing the tourism experience. Notable among these is the Bhaleydhunga Ropeway, which opened in February 2023. This state-of-the-art ropeway, stretching 3.5 kilometers and ascending from 1,800 meters to 3,500 meters above sea level, is expected to become a significant attraction. Future plans include adding a Sky Walk to further enhance the tourist experience, with funding options currently being explored.

Overall, Sikkim's picturesque landscapes, rich cultural heritage, and strategic investments in tourism infrastructure have solidified its status as a premier destination, with ongoing efforts to ensure that the state remains one of the most sought-after places for both domestic and international tourists.

Hon'ble Members,

In our unwavering commitment to ensuring that every citizen enjoys a dignified life with proper shelter, my Government has introduced several significant measures in housing and urban development. A notable initiative in this regard is the **Sikkim Urban Garib Awas Yojna (SUGAY)**, a pioneering state-sponsored urban housing scheme designed to align with key Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This scheme contributes to:

- **Goal 3: Good Health and Well-Being** by providing well-designed individual and group housing.
- **Goal 5: Gender Equality** by allotting housing flats in the name of the female head of the household.
- **Goal 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities** by offering affordable and safe housing to the urban poor.

Under this scheme, we are constructing a total of 260 social housing flats, each measuring 688 square feet, and 502 individual houses, each measuring 678.50 square feet, across all seven Urban Local Bodies (ULBs). Additionally, a three-storied structure is being integrated into the Social Housing Complex at Gangtok under the "Shelter for Houseless Households" programme. This facility will include male and female dormitories with a total capacity for 40 inmates, as well as a kitchen, dining area, office, and caretaker's quarters, ensuring dignified shelter for the destitute.

Looking ahead, the Department's vision for urban development aligns with Goal 11 of the Sustainable Development Goals, which aims to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable. Under the Sikkim Garib Awas Yojana, 3,050 houses have already been completed and furnished with essential amenities such as furniture and TVs to ensure comfortable living. An additional 11,000 houses are currently under construction.

Moreover, as part of the **Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojna**, significant progress has been made with 1,171 out of 1,409 sanctioned houses successfully completed, providing homes to deserving beneficiaries. These ongoing and planned initiatives reflect the government's dedication to enhancing urban infrastructure and housing, with the goal of providing quality living spaces for those in need and fostering inclusive and sustainable urban development.

Hon'ble Members,

Sikkim has made remarkable strides in rural development through the effective implementation of various Central and State schemes, with a particular focus on enhancing access to safe drinking water and improving road connectivity.

Under the **Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM)**, significant progress has been made in providing Functional Household Tap Connections (FHTCs) to rural households. Out of a total of 131,880 households, 118,035 have been equipped with FHTCs, representing 89.50% of the total. The remaining 10.5% of households are scheduled to receive these connections soon. The pace of implementation has been steady and impressive: from having no connections until March 2019, the state had achieved 70,345 FHTCs by April 2020. Subsequent years saw targeted achievements with 10,278 FHTCs in 2020-21, 8,028 in 2021-22, 19,409 in 2022-23, and 9,971 in 2023-24.

The **Har Ghar Jal** initiative has also made notable progress, targeting six blocks, 34 Panchayats, 199 villages, and 400 habitations. To date, the state has achieved 1 panchayat, 42 villages, 111 habitations, and 1,652 households provided with Har Ghar Jal facilities.

Simultaneously, the **Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojna (PMGSY)** has been instrumental in connecting previously inaccessible areas with all-weather roads.

The primary objective of PMGSY is to provide year-round connectivity to rural habitations with populations of 250 or more. This initiative has greatly enhanced transportation, facilitating access to essential services and fostering economic opportunities. Improved road connectivity has also boosted village tourism, agricultural markets, and overall living standards.

Since the financial year 2019, the PMGSY has achieved substantial progress. The state has constructed 51 roads spanning a total of 749.34 kilometers. This includes three roads in 2019-2020 with a total length of 68.215 km, two roads in 2020-2021 covering 156.956 km, four roads in 2021-2022 with a length of 141.12 km, 22 roads in 2022-2023 spanning 281.859 km, and 19 roads in 2023-2024 covering 94.44 km. Additionally, one road with a length of 6.75 km has been constructed for 2024-2025.

These comprehensive efforts reflect the state's commitment to improving rural living conditions, ensuring access to essential services, and fostering economic development through enhanced infrastructure and water supply initiatives.

Hon'ble Members,

Sikkim is deeply committed to the progress and empowerment of women, recognizing their crucial role as the foundation of our society. In a landmark initiative to ensure their representation, we have secured reservations for women in all government offices. Our Panchayat elections have seen a remarkable achievement, with women occupying over 53% of the seats, thanks to our policy mandating a minimum of 50% reservation for women.

Hon'ble Members,

I am pleased to share the remarkable progress our state has achieved across various parameters of the National Strategy for Financial Inclusion. Notably, our performance under the **PM Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojna (PMJJBY)** is exceptional, with coverage reaching an impressive 117% of **PM Jan Dhan Yojna (PMJDY)** accounts. This is a substantial leap beyond the national average of 35%. Similarly, our success under the **PM Suraksha Bima Yojna (PMSBY)** is outstanding, with coverage extending to 239% of PMJDY accounts, far surpassing the national average of 79%. This achievement highlights our commitment to not only covering PMJDY accounts but also extending the benefits of PMJJBY and PMSBY to non-PMJDY accounts throughout our state.

Our advancements also include the **Atal Pension Yojna (APY)**, where we have made significant strides. With a coverage of 90% of eligible beneficiaries, Sikkim is on track to ensuring financial security for our senior citizens.

These accomplishments underscore our dedication to enhancing financial inclusion and ensuring that our citizens benefit from essential financial security programmes.

Hon'ble Members,

Environmental conservation has been a cornerstone of the Sikkim Government's agenda, reflecting our commitment to preserving our natural heritage and promoting sustainable practices. Since 2019, my Government has implemented several innovative policies and interventions to foster a greener and more sustainable future.

One of our key initiatives is the annual celebration of **Sikkim Paryavaran Parva** from July 1-14, themed "Leave a Green Legacy." This fortnightly event serves as a significant platform for celebrating the human-nature connection. It features various environmental initiatives, including workshops on endangered species, water conservation, and zero waste lifestyles, alongside clean-up drives, green reels competitions, and other activities. These events engage the public, strengthen the bond between people and nature, and inspire collective responsibility towards environmental stewardship.

Under the **Sikkim Shishu Samridhi Yojna**, a fixed deposit of ₹10,800 is opened in the name of each child, redeemable only when the child turns 18. This initiative supports the financial security of children while fostering long-term environmental awareness.

The **Mero Bato Mero Bot** campaign, a collaborative effort between the Forest and Environment Department and the Roads and Bridges Department, focuses on greening roadways. It promotes the planting and maintenance of trees along roadsides, enhancing green cover, and raising environmental awareness through active community participation.

Through the **My Child from the Wild** programme, individuals or groups can adopt an animal through a mutual agreement with Park Management. Sponsors support conservation efforts and enjoy benefits such as free park entry and access to zoo programmes, which fosters public participation in wildlife conservation.

In a pioneering move, the **Blue Duke (Bassaronadurga)** was declared as the State Butterfly of Sikkim on June 5, 2022. This designation, achieved through a consortium of experts and public voting, underscores Sikkim's dedication to celebrating and protecting its unique biodiversity.

The '**Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam**' campaign, launched by the Hon'ble Prime Minister as a gesture of respect for mothers and a commitment to sustainability is being actively followed and successfully implemented in Sikkim.

Through these innovative policies and community-driven initiatives, the Government of Sikkim continues to advance its environmental stewardship goals and foster a more sustainable future for all.

Hon'ble Members,

Ease of living is the ultimate outcome of our developmental efforts, as the core aim of all initiatives is to enhance the quality of life for our citizens and inspire optimism about their future. Sikkim is well-placed in many critical civic facilities essential for ease of living. According to the 78th NSSO survey, we stand out in several key indicators:

- **Water Access:** Nearly 75% of rural and 87% of urban facilities have access to water for their exclusive use, surpassing the national averages of 49% and 65%, respectively.
- **Sanitation:** Sikkim is an open defecation-free state and the first to achieve this milestone. Over 94% of families have access to handwashing facilities with soap or detergent, compared to the all-India average of 82%.
- **Energy:** Nearly 94% of facilities use LPG as their main cooking medium, well above the all-India average of 47%. Additionally, about half of the families use

Contd. on page 5

Contd. from page 4

Full text...

clean energy for cooking, heating, and lighting.

- **Bank Access:** Over 90% of individuals have bank accounts, facilitating direct benefit transfers and promoting financial literacy.

- **Indebtedness:** Sikkim has a relatively low indebtedness rate, with only 7.7% of individuals over the age of 18 in debt, significantly lower than the national level.

Hon'ble Members,

On July 23, 2024, the Hon'ble Union Finance Minister unveiled the Final Budget, focusing on employment, skilling, MSME support, and middle-class welfare. This budget aligns with our broader vision and national goals, emphasizing productivity and resilience in agriculture, fostering employment, promoting social justice, advancing manufacturing and services, urban development, energy security, and investing in infrastructure and innovation.

Our vision aligns with the Union Budget and the national agenda of **Viksit Bharat @ 2047**, a transformative blueprint to propel India into the ranks of developed nations by 2047, marking the 100th year of independence. This vision is built on four key pillars: economic growth, environmental sustainability, social progress, and good governance.

In line with this vision, the Government of Sikkim has identified five pivotal areas for economic acceleration:

1. **Enhancing Youth Employability:** We are committed to improving job prospects for the youth through targeted skill development programmes and employment initiatives.

2. **Developing Sikkim as a Healthcare and Wellness Hub:** We aim to leverage our growing pharmaceutical industry to establish world-class healthcare and wellness infrastructure, supporting industry, trade, tourism, and health sectors.

3. **Innovative Practices in Agriculture and Food Processing:** Investments in cutting-edge agricultural techniques and food processing are intended to boost productivity and economic sustainability.

4. **Promoting Tourism and MSME Sectors:** We aim to diversify the state's economy by developing tourism and supporting micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs), creating new growth opportunities.

5. **Improving Civic Amenities and Social Infrastructure:** Enhancing urban and rural infrastructure, including roads, water supply, and public services, is a key focus to elevate residents' quality of life.

In addition to these priorities, this year's budget will emphasize Bijli (Electricity), Pani (Water), and Sadak (Roads), alongside health and education.

Bijli (Electricity): Both the Government of India and the Government of Sikkim are committed to ensuring 24x7 reliable electricity. Although Sikkim nearly achieved complete electrification, the power sector faced challenges when floods in October 2023 damaged the Teesta III project and its adjoining dam, affecting nearly 1,800 MW of power. In response, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) has approved a \$148.5 million loan to modernize and climate-proof the distribution system. This project supports Sikkim's Power for All initiative, enhancing distribution networks, operational efficiency, and renewable energy integration. It involves upgrading 770 kilometers of medium-voltage lines, replacing 580 kilometers of aging conductors, modernizing 26 power substations, installing 15,000 units of street lighting in remote areas, and conducting electricity conservation and safety awareness programmes.

Pani (Water): Our focus on safe drinking water continues through the Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM) and Atal Mission for Urban Rejuvenation and Transformation (AMRUT). By 2030, we aim to ensure piped water supply to all households. As of July 2024, piped water is available to 88.6% of households, a significant improvement from 37.4% in 2021-22. Rural areas have achieved 100% access to improved water sources, though urban areas face challenges related to water quality, connectivity, and metering. Addressing these concerns requires a citizen-centric approach, including managing water resources, ensuring regular availability, and implementing user charges.

Sadak (Roads): Despite challenges from the pandemic and recent floods, progress in road construction and maintenance is significant. Our vision includes upgrading and widening state highways and major district roads, replacing single-lane bridges with double-lane structures, enhancing inter-district connectivity through tunnels and viaducts, and improving roads to major tourist destinations. Landslide mitigation and helipad construction at tourist sites are also underway to enhance accessibility and promote tourism. Ensuring all-weather connectivity to unconnected habitations and providing double-lane connectivity to international borders are key objectives. Roadside amenities will be developed to enhance the travel experience.

This year's budget embodies a holistic approach to development, focusing on critical areas to foster socio-economic growth and improve the quality of life for all residents of Sikkim.

Hon'ble Members,

As we convene for the Eleventh Assembly Budget session for FY 2024-25, I am confident we will address the needs and aspirations of our people and the developmental requirements essential for the well-being of our state. The budget we present today is a meticulously crafted roadmap balancing fiscal prudence with strategic investments in infrastructure, education, healthcare, and sustainable development.

Our commitment remains steadfast in empowering our citizens, nurturing our youth, and safeguarding our natural resources. As we navigate current challenges and embrace future opportunities, let us unite in our shared vision for a prosperous, inclusive, and resilient Sikkim. Together, we can turn our aspirations into reality and continue to build a state that we can all take immense pride in.

Thank you.

JAI BHARAT!!

JAI SIKKIM!!

Health and Family Welfare Department STNM Hospital, Sochakgang Government of Sikkim

Ref. No. 19/STNMH/GH/2024

Dated:02/08/2024

NOTICE INVITING QUOTATION

The sealed quotation are invited from the local reputed registered medical shop located at Gangtok operating 24X7 throughout the year for the supply of JSSK (Janani Sishu Suraksha Karyakaram) drugs and consumables for STNM Hospital, Sochakgang, under Maternal and Child Health, for the year 2024-25.

Terms & Condition:

1. The quotation forms can be collected from the office of Sr. Accounts Officer (STNM Hospital, Sochakgang) on production of Original Bank receipt/Challan from SBS of ₹5000/- credited under revenue head 0210-01-800 other receipt from 12th August '24 to 14th August '24 from 11 AM to 3PM.

2. The firm shall deposit TDR of ₹100000/- (one Lakh) in favor of Sr.AO, STNM Hospital, Sochakgang for the supply of drugs and consumables under JSSK, form State Bank of Sikkim along with the sealed quotation. The department will not liable to pay the interest on the said amount.

3. The duly filled up Tender form should reach the office of Medical Superintendent, STNM Hospital, Sochakgang within 12:00 PM of 28th August '24. The Tender received after 12 Noon of 28th August '24 will not be entertained.

4. The sealed quotation will opened on the same day at 2.00PM in the office of Medical Superintendent, STNM Hospital, Sochakgang.

5. Terms and condition shall be applicable as per the general purchase condition and details will be indicated in the tender form.

6. The department committee reserves the right to accept or reject any or all tender without assigning any reasons thereof.

7. For further information visit the office of the undersigned.

Medical Superintendent
STNM Hospital, Sochakgang
(398, iii)

Sikkim Public Service Commission Old Tourism Complex, MG Marg, Gangtok-737101

Fax 03592-207572

Ref.No.21/SPSC/EXAM/2024

Dated:02/08/2024

EMPLOYMENT NOTICE

Online Applications are invited from the eligible local candidates for filling up **one post of Librarian in Sikkim Government Pharmacy College on temporary regular basis in the Academic Level-10 of Pay Matrix (UGC Scale) under Health and Family Welfare Department, through direct recruitment:**

The candidates are advised to visit the Sikkim Public Service Commission website for details of Advertisement and date of written examination, eligibility conditions, and Scheme of Examination etc from official Website i.e. www.spsc.sikkim.gov.in. Any further instructions/Corrigendum/ Addendum would be uploaded only on Sikkim Public Service Commission website.

Additional Secretary of Exams
Sikkim Public Service Commission
(397, ii)

Sikkim Public Service Commission Old Tourism Complex, MG Marg, Gangtok-737101

Fax 03592-207572

No.18/SPSC/EXAM/2024

Dated: 26/7/2024

EMPLOYMENT NOTICE

Online Applications are invited from the eligible local candidates for filling up of the following posts through direct recruitment:

1. **Filling up of 05(five) posts of Laboratory Assistant in Sikkim Government Pharmacy College Service under Health & Family Welfare Department.**

2. **Filling up of 01 (one) post of Storekeeper in Sikkim Government Pharmacy College Service under Health & Family Welfare Department.**

The candidates are advised to visit the Sikkim Public Service Commission website for details of Advertisement and date of written examination, eligibility conditions, and Scheme of Examination etc. from official Website i.e. www.spsc.sikkim.gov.in. Any further instructions/Corrigendum/Addendum would be uploaded only on Sikkim Public Service Commission website

Additional Secretary of Exams
Sikkim Public Service Commission
(391, i)

Government of Sikkim Public Health Engineering Department Gangtok

Ref No:PHC/4428/GEN/23-24/401

Date: 01/08/2024

"Appeal appeal appeal appeal"

The Public Health Engineering Department proposes to enhance its water supply services through active cooperation from the citizen of the state.

One of the reasons for water shortage is wastage through overflowing from overhead tanks.

The PHED feels that the wastage can be controlled by providing suitable water control point at the inlet of the water supply pipeline. The heavy duty Ball-cock is one such simple device which can be fitted at the inlet of the water supply pipeline to receive water till the tank is full and stops automatically. All the consumers are hereby requested to install ball-cock at the respective overhead tanks.

The Junior Engineer of the PHED will assist the consumers to install such ball-cock at the inlet water storage. It is a humble appeal to all the esteem consumers to cooperate the department to save water from wastages.

Water saved from wastage will fulfil those in need. Soliciting cooperation and support from the esteem consumer to enhance the water supply.

Chief Engineer
PHED, Gangtok

Sikkim honours drivers on Sarathi Samman Diwas, Chief Minister makes announcements for drivers' welfare

Gangtok, August 2: State Level Sarathi Samman Diwas celebration was organised by Department of Transport at Manan Kendra, Gangtok, today.

Chief Minister Mr Prem Singh Tamang attended the programme as the chief guest along with Madam Krishna Rai.

It may be mentioned that Sarathi Samman Diwas, previously known as Chalak Diwas, is organised by the State Government to honour contributions of the state's vehicle driving community also known as sarathi's. The celebration this year, initially scheduled for July 27, was postponed to August 2.

The event also had the presence of Mr MN Sherpa Speaker SLA, Deputy Speaker SLA, Cabinet Ministers, MLAs, Zilla Adhyaksha, Upadhyaksha, Mayor, Deputy Mayor and Councillors GMC, Former Legislators, Mr Raj Yadav Commissioner cum Secretary, Transport Department, Mr Manish Pradhan Secretary, Transport Department, other dignitaries, officers and staff from the Department, and members of the Driver's Associations from Sikkim and West Bengal.

The Chief Minister in his address expressed that Sikkim is first State in the country to observe 'Sarathi Samman Diwas', celebrating and acknowledging the contributions of Sarathi community. He emphasised the crucial role Sarathis play in shaping the State's progress, which deserves significant recognition.

The Chief Minister also highlighted Prime Minister's vision of Viksit Bharat initiative to make India a developed nation by 2047, to celebrate the country's 100th year of independence. He urged everyone to unite under the banner of 'Team Sikkim', to promote Sunawlo and Samridha Sikkim to contribute to the Prime Minister's vision.

He further highlighted the initiatives provided by the State Government to the Sarathi community, including the reservation of medical seats for members of the driving association and addressed the grievances put

forth by various Driver's Associations.

In recognition of the dedicated service of the Sarathis, the following announcement was made by the Chief Minister:

-Reduction on fine for challan without Pollution Under Control certificate to ₹500/-, (previously set at ₹10,000/-) However, if the certificate is not produced within 15 days, the fine will revert to ₹10,000/-.

-Insurance Policy for Drivers: Drivers are to submit the necessary documents to the Sarathi Welfare Board to benefit from this policy.

-Sikkim Cab App, a new platform to revolutionise taxi booking through an online system and enhance earning opportunities for taxi drivers.

-Reciprocal Transport Agreement with West Bengal to be established, which will increase the quota of taxi vehicles from Sikkim, benefiting the transport operators.

-Sikkim Voter Card holders will be permitted to drive luxurious vehicles.

Mr Madan Cintury MLA-cum-Advisor Transport Department, applauded the Chief Minister's vision of honouring the Sarathi community in the State. He noted that it is a matter of pride for Sikkim to be the first state in the nation to celebrate Sarathi Samman Diwas.

The Advisor also commended the initiative of recognising drivers from neighbouring states and assured that the Chalak Welfare Board and the Government are working together in the best interest of the driving community.

Mr Sanjeet Kharel MLA-cum-Advisor Power Department expressed gratitude to the dignitaries for attending the celebration. Additionally, he extended his appreciation to the State Government for all the policies introduced for the Sarathi community.

In his welcome address, Mr Sonam Ongdup Bhutia, Chairman-Sarathi Samman Welfare Board, expressed gratitude to the Chief Minister for providing a platform for the Drivers' Association to

voice their grievances. He also thanked the Chief Minister for the initiatives to support the driving community. Furthermore, he encouraged the driving community to collaborate with the Chief Minister's initiatives under Team Sikkim and work towards the upliftment of the State.

The programme also included a video presentation showcasing the achievements of the Transport Department and highlighting contributions of the Sarathi community.

This was followed by the inauguration of Sikkim Cab App by the Chief Minister.

The event also saw presentation of Certificates and Awards to the following:

- Ex-gratia to accident victims of ₹5 lakhs,
- Sarathis, whose children achieved Gazetted post, studying/MBBS, BDS, or PhDs,
- Best performing drivers of SNT Truck/Tanker/Bus Drivers and Bus Conductor
- Senior most Government drivers
- Senior most taxi drivers
- Best disciplined drivers
- Best Sarathi Award (awarded 12 Wagon RVXI)
- Best drivers and associations who contributed towards the society differently
- Association of West Bengal by State Chalak Wing

Furthermore, the Chief Minister also released a Magazine published by Bering Kerabari Drivers-cum-Owner Welfare Association under Chujachen Constituency followed by the release of the song 'Vijay Bhawa' by Laxuman Pradhan.

During the event, the Chief Minister was felicitated by the Transport Department, State Chalak Wing and Sarathi Welfare Board.

Sikkim Mechanical Engineering Service (SMES) also felicitated the Chief Minister and offered cheque as their contribution towards Chief Minister's Relief Fund (CMRF). Felicitations to the Chief Minister were also presented by various Driver's Associations.

Appropriation Bill, 2024 (Bill No. 17 of 2024), for the Demands for Excess Grants/Appropriation 2014-15, moved by Chief Minister.

Earlier, during the Legislative Business, the Chief Minister who is also the Minister-in-Charge of the Finance Department introduced two Amendment Bills;

1. The Sikkim Court Fees and Stamps on Documents (Amendment) Bill, 2024 (Bill No. 22 of 2024)

The Bill was introduced to provide a convenient alternative to traditional paper stamps. The concept of e-stamping is a way to modernise the payment of stamp duty electronically which shall have the same legal status as conventional stamps imprinted on instruments. E-stamping makes



verification easier, reduces errors and is easily traceable. The digital alternative simplifies and secures the process of authentication using unique identification numbers and electronic verification.

The Sikkim Court Fees and Stamp on Documents (Amendment) Act, 2024 intends to insert clause (a) after Rule 4 to include digital e-stamping for execution of documents.

With the above object in view, the Bill has been framed.

2. The Sikkim Online Gaming (Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2024 (Bill No. 24 of 2024)

Sikkim Online Gaming (Regulation) Act, 2008 was passed by the Sikkim Legislative Assembly (Act No. 23 of 2008) with a view to regulate the operation of Online Gaming and Sports Gaming in the State of Sikkim.

With the passage of time, it has become necessary to amend clauses in the Principal Act, therefore, the State Government has deemed it expedient to redefine the term Intranet Gaming Terminal and insert clauses for penalties for unlicensed operators.

With this objective in view, the Bill for the amendment of the Sikkim Online Gaming (Regulation) Act, 2008 has been framed.

Likewise, Minister-in-Charge of Tourism and Civil Aviation Department, Mr Tshering Thendup Bhutia, introduced the Sikkim Registration of Tourist Trade Bill, 2024 (Bill No. 23 of 2024), which states;

Sikkim Registration of Tourist Trade Bill 2024 is proposed to establish a legal framework for regulation of tourism related activities in Sikkim ensuring that all stakeholders adhere to standards that promote safety, quality and ethical practices augmenting the quality of service delivery by the tourism entity operators in making Sikkim the choicest tourist destinations in the country.

The Bill articulates key policies relating to responsible tourism and mandated behaviours of stakeholders, tourists, travellers as well and proposes fines for

noncompliance with provisions articulated in the bill and the rules that would be framed under the Act following its promulgation. The Bill describes offences for acts of commission and omission involving violation and non-compliance with policies and rules, while ensuring that the stakeholders play by the dictums of sustainable tourism, act responsibly towards environment and demonstrate commitment towards community development while pursuing tourism related operations and activities.

It is also envisaged to empower the Tourism and Civil Aviation Department with provisions that shall ensure; (i) professional management of operations and activities related to leasing of tourism assets and infrastructures (ii) boost to the local economy by fostering tourism as a significant economic driver, creating job opportunities and encouraging local entrepreneurship (iii) safeguarding the interests and rights of the tourists by ensuring the provision of high quality services and preventing exploitation and fraud (iv) ease of processes for issuance of permits (v) monitoring the operations and activities of Hotels, Restaurants and Tour operators in compliance to the policies and guidelines (vi) enable real time factual online information to proactively assist the tourists and travellers to make informed decisions.

The Bill has provisions for restructuring the Department with the formation of a Directorate for effective planning, monitoring and enhancing the tourism industry in Sikkim. Further the Bill also has a provision to constitute a Consultative Committee to seek feedback and inputs from stakeholders for improvements to be made in the operations and activities related to tourism.

With these objectives in view, this Bill has been framed.

The discussions and voting on the above bills would be taken up on August 6, 2024.

The House was then adjourned till 11:00 am, August 6, 2024.

Contd. from front page

Budget Session...

the Government of Sikkim has identified five important areas for accelerating economic growth consistent with the Viksit Bharat agenda. These areas are: improving the employability of youth in Sikkim, developing Sikkim as a healthcare and wellness hub, implementing innovative practices in agriculture and food processing, promoting the tourism and MSME sectors and enhancing civic amenities and social and economic infrastructure.

The Chief Minister, in his address, stated that the budget placed today reflects the government's strategic focus on

key sectors such as prioritising tourism, roads, water, electricity, education, forests, social security and development.

Concluding his address, the Chief Minister said that the State Government would continue to drive transformative change, ensuring that every Sikkimese has the opportunity to thrive and contribute to the state's continued success.

Additionally, the Chief Minister presented the Demands for Excess Grants/Appropriation for the Financial Year 2014-15, which was moved for consideration and thereafter, passed by the House.

The session also saw the introduction, consideration, and passing of the Sikkim

**Read and Advertise
in
Sikkim Herald**