



SIKKIM HERALD

Vol. 68 No. 04 visit us at www.ipr.sikkim.gov.in

Gangtok (Sunday) January 26, 2025

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

Republic Day Messages of Governor and Chief Minister of Sikkim

On this momentous occasion, we reflect on the remarkable journey Sikkim has undertaken transforming from a small kingdom into a progressive and inclusive state, focused on empowering its people and fostering sustainable development.

- Governor



Om Prakash Mathur
Governor of Sikkim

Dear citizens,

On this momentous occasion of our 76th Republic Day, I stand before you filled with immense pride and gratitude as we celebrate the triumph of democracy, justice, and freedom in our nation. Today, we remember the sacrifices made by countless individuals who shaped the India we live in today. It is a day that reminds us of the spirit of unity, diversity, and progress that binds us together as a nation.

This year, as we celebrate the 50th anniversary of Sikkim's statehood, we look back with pride at the immense strides we have made. From the fields of tourism, health, education, and infrastructure to the areas of governance and digital connectivity, we continue to push forward, ensuring that no one is left behind in our journey of progress.

Dear citizens,

This year marks 50 years of Sikkim's merger with the great nation of India. As we gather here, we also reflect upon the remarkable journey that Sikkim has undertaken over the past 50 years, transforming into a model of development and progress. Embracing the ideals enshrined in our Constitution, Sikkim has always honored its heritage, preserved its culture, and worked tirelessly toward a sustainable and inclusive future for all its people.

As we celebrate our progress, I am proud to share that Sikkim has made significant strides in various sectors. According to the latest NITI Aayog Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) assessment, Sikkim has shown remarkable improvement in its overall SDG scores compared to the previous survey conducted in FY 2020-21.

One of the key achievements is in SDG 10: Reduced Inequality. The data

reveals a significant reduction in crime rates related to women and within communities, highlighting our unwavering commitment to fostering a safe and inclusive society.

In the realm of Clean Water and Sanitation (SDG 6), Sikkim has achieved a commendable 96% score, a testament to our successful efforts in providing safe drinking water and adequate sanitation to every resident.

Sikkim also leads the nation in judicial infrastructure, with the highest court density in India-6 courts per lakh population-ensuring timely justice and reinforcing our commitment to a fair and just society.

In terms of Environmental Sustainability, our state has achieved a 100% compliance rate with environmental standards for industries. This reflects our dedication to sustainable industrial practices and safeguarding our natural resources.

On the economic front, the manufacturing sector in Sikkim contributes a significant 35.7% to our state's GDP, the highest in India. This demonstrates the strength of our industrial base and the effectiveness of policies aimed at promoting innovation and industrial growth.

Sikkim has also made remarkable progress in the field of nutrition and health. According to the NFHS-5 (2019-2021), Sikkim has the lowest percentage of stunted children under 5 years, at 22.3%, compared to the national average of 35.5%. This achievement highlights our success in combating malnutrition and promoting child health.

These milestones are a reflection of our state's unwavering commitment to sustainable development, social equity, and holistic growth.

Moving forward, in alignment with the vision of a *Viksit Bharat* (Developed India) by 2047, as envisioned by our Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modiji my Government has identified several key areas to accelerate its growth. These areas include enhancing youth employability, establishing a healthcare and wellness hub, boosting agriculture and food processing, fostering tourism and MSME development, and advancing infrastructure and social development.

Sikkim has already established itself as a pharmaceutical manufacturing hub and has the potential to become a leading centre for healthcare and holistic wellness. Additionally, my Government

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As we move forward, our commitment to building 'Sunaulo Sikkim, Samridha Sikkim, Samarth Sikkim'-a golden, prosperous, and self-reliant state-remains steadfast

- Chief Minister

My dear fellow citizens,

On this momentous occasion of the Republic Day of our great nation, I extend my warmest greetings to each one of you. Today, as we unfurl the tricolour with immense pride, let us take a moment to reflect on the sacrifices of our freedom fighters and the ideals enshrined in our Constitution. Their vision of justice, liberty, equality, and fraternity continues to guide our great nation on its path to progress.

This Republic Day holds a special significance for Sikkim as we celebrate 50 years of statehood. Since May 16, 1975, when Sikkim became the 22nd state of India, we have embraced democracy and development with unwavering commitment. This historic milestone marks five decades of progress, perseverance, and collective aspiration, shaping Sikkim into a model state for the nation. Our journey as a constituent state of India has been one of remarkable transformation-one that has seen Sikkim evolve from a small Himalayan kingdom into one of the most progressive, inclusive, and environmentally sustainable states in the country.

This progress has been the result of visionary leadership, dynamic policies, and the indomitable spirit of our people, who have worked tirelessly to ensure that Sikkim continues to grow while preserving its unique heritage and values. It is a moment of immense pride for every Sikkimese and an opportunity to reflect on our journey, recognize our achievements, and reaffirm our commitment to a **"Sunaulo Sikkim, Samridha Sikkim, and Samarth Sikkim"**.

The journey, however, has not been without its challenges. As a small Himalayan state, we have faced geographical constraints, connectivity limitations, and the recurring threats of natural calamities. Despite these adversities, Sikkim and the people of Sikkim have demonstrated unwavering resilience, unity, and adaptability, ensuring that we continue to move forward, turning challenges into opportunities.

My fellow citizens,

Through our concerted efforts, Sikkim has emerged as a pioneer in sustainable development, setting national and global benchmarks in environmental conservation, organic farming, and ecological preservation. As India's first fully organic farming state, we have revolutionised agriculture by



Prem Singh Tamang
Chief Minister of Sikkim

eliminating chemical fertilizers and pesticides, promoting sustainable farming practices, and empowering our farmers with eco-friendly alternatives.

The State Government's commitment to sustainability extends beyond agriculture. Sikkim has been at the forefront of biodiversity conservation, afforestation, and waste management. We take immense pride in being the first state in India to achieve ODF Plus status, ensuring universal sanitation, hygiene, and clean water access for our citizens. Our policies on waste reduction, plastic-free zones, and green energy have established Sikkim as a model state for responsible and sustainable living.

Initiatives like Mero Rukh Mero Santati, which inspire every family to plant 108 saplings to celebrate the birth of a child, have significantly bolstered afforestation efforts while fostering a profound bond between our people and nature. These visionary programmes have received national and international acclaim, cementing Sikkim's reputation as an eco-conscious state dedicated to safeguarding the planet for future generations. Complementing this is Sikkim Shishu Samridhhi Yojana, which provides a fixed deposit of ₹10,800 for every newborn. This amount, redeemable when the child turns 18, is an unprecedented initiative of the Government that supports families and underscores the harmonious relationship between humanity and nature, blending environmental stewardship with social welfare.

Moreover, Sikkim has consistently been ranked among the world's top tourist destinations due to the State Government's efforts to promote

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aims to revitalise rural economies through innovative farming practices and promoting non-farm activities.

A central focus of our efforts is the *Ease of Living* agenda, which our Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modiji has championed. This initiative aims to provide better access to social and economic infrastructure, strengthen livelihood opportunities, and ensure that life becomes more affordable and sustainable for every citizen.

Towards these goals, my Government has embarked on various missions which I shall highlight on this momentous occasion.

Dear citizens,

Tourism plays a crucial and transformative role in Sikkim's economy, contributing significantly to our GDP and supporting approximately 18% of our population through direct and indirect employment. This makes tourism one of the main drivers of economic growth in the state. My Government is committed to propelling this sector to new heights, with a clear focus on enhancing the overall tourism experience while maintaining sustainability and preserving our state's unique natural beauty and cultural heritage.

To this end, we are actively developing a wide range of tourism experiences, including conventional leisure tourism, ecotourism, adventure tourism, cultural and religious tourism, village homestays, health and wellness tourism, and MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions) tourism. These initiatives are designed to cater to both domestic and international travellers. The focus is not only on increasing the number of visitors but also on promoting high-value tourism, which targets travellers who are willing to stay longer and spend more, thereby boosting the state's economic growth.

We are placing significant emphasis on high-quality hospitality and unique cultural experiences, as well as adventure tourism, to make Sikkim an attractive destination for premium tourists. By encouraging the development of luxury hotels, eco-friendly resorts, and homestays, we aim to offer a blend of relaxation, adventure, and cultural exploration. Sikkim is being positioned as a peaceful retreat in nature, as well as a destination for those in pursuit of thrilling adventures or immersive cultural experiences.

Several ambitious infrastructure projects are currently underway to support and enhance the state's tourism infrastructure. One of the most notable initiatives is the construction of a state-of-the-art convention centre in Gangtok. This centre will cater to international and national

conferences, exhibitions, and events, thus boosting Sikkim's appeal to business travellers and conference tourism. Another landmark project in South Sikkim is the 'Eco-friendly ropeway connecting Dhapper to Bhaleydhunga', which spans 3,024 meters and features 18 cabins, offering tourists panoramic views of Sikkim's scenic landscapes. Furthermore, a 240-meter skywalk is being constructed at Bhaleydhunga, located at an altitude of 3,300 meters, which will provide a 360-degree view of the surrounding hills and valleys, enhancing the tourism experience.

In Gyalshing District, the completion of the 'Passenger ropeway from Pelling Helipad to the Sangacholing Monastery hilltop' offers awe-inspiring views of the Khangchendzonga Mountain range and is expected to attract both religious and adventure tourists. Additionally, under the PMDeVINE initiative, the Singshore Bridge in Gyalshing District is being converted into a glass-bottom skywalk. This skywalk will provide an unparalleled view of the deep gorge below, making it a major attraction for adventure enthusiasts and nature lovers alike.

Recognising the importance of religious tourism, Sikkim continues to be a key alternative route for the Kailash Mansarovar Yatra, a pilgrimage that has been disrupted over the past two years. Despite this, Sikkim remains an ideal location for this spiritual journey, with the necessary infrastructure to support and accommodate pilgrims. To further improve connectivity, Sikkim has started operating a 20-seater Helicopter service connecting Bagdogra to Gangtok.

With these initiatives, my Government is committed to positioning Sikkim as a global tourism hub, offering cutting-edge infrastructure while preserving our rich cultural heritage and natural beauty. This holistic approach will ensure long-term growth and prosperity for the state, benefitting both our citizens and the visitors who come to experience the magic of Sikkim.

Dear citizens,

Moreover, by enhancing the road network, building eco-friendly projects, and improving connectivity, Sikkim is poised to become a key player in the global tourism sector.

The Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY) has played a pivotal role in improving rural road connectivity across Sikkim. Over the past five years, my Government has constructed 183 roads spanning 749.34 kilometers and 51 long-span bridges. With the completion of the first two phases of PMGSY, Phase III has already been sanctioned, which includes the upgradation of 45 roads covering 285.90 kilometers. Additionally, the Vibrant Village Programme has granted funds to develop roads and bridges in Mangan District,

aiming to connect remote villages near the international border and further enhance connectivity.

Dear citizens,

My Government is effectively implementing the Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM) and the Atal Mission for Urban Rejuvenation and Transformation (AMRUT) to provide safe drinking water and proper sanitation. We are focused not only on increasing the quantity of water supply but also ensuring its quality.

According to the Niti Aayog SDG Progress Report (July 2024), Sikkim has made significant strides, with piped water supply now reaching 88.6% of households, up from 37.4% in 2021-22. All rural households now have access to improved water sources, and we aim for 100% coverage in urban areas. The JJM also focuses on local water management, including rainwater harvesting, groundwater recharge, and wastewater reuse, integrated with other government schemes. Every tap connection is linked to the Aadhar number, and infrastructure is geo-tagged for monitoring.

As of now, 91.39% of Sikkim's 1,31,880 households have Functional Household Tap Connections, with full coverage expected in the 2024-25 financial year. Additionally, 3 Blocks, 53 GPUs, 123 Villages, and 1813 habitations have been declared Har Ghar Jal (every household with tap water).

With continued effort, we aim to achieve 100% coverage, significantly contributing to the well-being and prosperity of our state.

Dear citizens,

The Swachh Bharat Mission-Grameen (SBM-G), launched by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi in 2014, aimed to make India Open Defecation Free (ODF). By 2019, over 100 million household toilets were built, and more than 600,000 villages were declared ODF. This mission has become the world's largest behavioural change movement.

My Government has made significant strides in sanitation, complementing our tradition as a Clean and Green Destination. The Rural Development Department won a record 9 National Awards under Swachh Survekshan 2022, including the 3rd Best State in Sanitation among small states and UTs, and 1st Position (North East Zone) for Mangan District. Namchi District ranked 2nd, and Soreng and Gyalshing Districts placed 3rd.

A historic achievement was Sikkim being recognised as the 1st ODF Plus Model State on August 14, 2023. This designation indicates that the state has robust systems for the safe and scientific management of solid and liquid waste, adequate IEC and awareness signages, and a clean, visually appealing environment.

These efforts highlight

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development without compromising our pristine landscapes, rich cultural heritage, and eco-tourism experiences. Our emphasis on sustainable tourism and responsible travel has ensured that tourism remains a key economic driver while maintaining ecological balance. From the majestic Khangchendzonga ranges to the serene lakes and vibrant monasteries, our state continues to captivate visitors from across the globe.

In addition, our dedicated efforts towards infrastructure development have played a crucial role in enhancing connectivity and improving quality of life for our citizens. While challenges remain—such as the vulnerability of NH10 to natural disruptions and the need for more reliable air connectivity—our continued investments in roadways, digital connectivity and urban planning are paving the way for a more accessible and connected Sikkim.

My Fellow Citizens,

With a population growth rate of nearly one percent, Sikkim boasts one of the highest per capita Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) growth rates in the country. Over the past 12 years, our per capita income has nearly quadrupled, making it the highest among all states.

Looking ahead, our overall GSDP is projected to surpass ₹50,000 crore mark in 2024-25—a remarkable milestone in our economic journey.

Sikkim has been a trailblazer in Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), consistently ranking highest among the North-Eastern states. Our Multi-Dimensional Poverty Index (MPI) stands at an impressive 0.011, positioning us just behind Kerala and Goa-states with long-standing economic advantages. In key SDG parameters such as climate action, clean water and sanitation, and decent work, we have successfully met our targets. However, challenges persist in the areas of health and education, which remain priorities for our government.

To ensure inclusive and sustainable progress, we have integrated SDG-linked budgeting into our governance framework.

My fellow citizens,

The State Government is well aware that a state's true strength lies in its people, and has therefore made significant investments in education, healthcare, and social welfare to ensure that our citizens thrive. Our education system has evolved to provide quality learning opportunities, integrating modern technology, skill-based training, and inclusive policies to prepare our youth for the future. We have prioritised scholarships, digital literacy, and higher education initiatives, ensuring that

students from all backgrounds have the resources and opportunities to excel.

Our healthcare system has also seen transformational progress, with improved medical infrastructure, specialised health programmes, and accessible healthcare services.

With a focus on maternal and child health, preventive care, and wellness initiatives, Sikkim continues to set new standards in public health.

Additionally, our social welfare programmes have empowered marginalised communities, promoted gender equality, and uplifted rural populations, ensuring that development reaches every corner of our state. The State Government's focus on inclusive growth has made Sikkim a harmonious and progressive society, where tradition and modernity coexist in perfect balance. We have also made significant progress in ensuring equal representation and opportunities for all sections of society, particularly women, youth, and marginalised communities. Meanwhile, digital governance and e-services have transformed public administration in Sikkim, making government services more efficient, transparent, and accessible, bringing governance closer to the people.

My fellow citizens,

Let me take this opportunity to highlight some of the key initiatives undertaken by the State Government to uplift every sector of our economy and enhance the well-being of our people.

My fellow citizens,

Education remains at the heart of our development agenda, ensuring that every child has access to quality learning opportunities and skill development.

The Chief Minister's Merit Scholarship Scheme (CMMSS) continues to be a beacon of hope for economically disadvantaged and tribal children, benefiting 1,214 students so far. Additionally, to recognise and reward outstanding educators, we have introduced exposure trips within the country for State Awardees and Commendation Certificate recipients, facilitating the exchange of best teaching practices. One National Awardee Teacher gain international exposure through visits to Singapore, Malaysia, and Japan under this scheme. The State Government is providing similar opportunities to meritorious students, reinforcing our commitment to academic excellence.

To expand access to medical education, the State Government has taken landmark steps such as the 50 MBBS seats at Sikkim Manipal University (SMU) fully funded by the State Government. In addition to these, 30 additional MBBS seats have been made available on a payment basis exclusively for Sikkimese

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students, ensuring that more local students can pursue medical careers without having to leave the state.

The State Government, in line with the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, has also placed great emphasis on skill development and vocational training, equipping students with industry-relevant skills, fostering innovation, and creating pathways for employment and entrepreneurship.

Recognising the importance of menstrual hygiene and ensuring that no girl drops out of school due to lack of access to sanitary products, we have launched the Bahini Yojana. This initiative provides free sanitary napkins to girl students in Government Schools and colleges, promoting menstrual hygiene, health, and dignity. By addressing this critical issue, we are empowering adolescent girls, reducing dropout rates, and ensuring that their education remains uninterrupted.

My fellow citizens,

Ensuring accessible, high-quality healthcare for every citizen has been a cornerstone of our governance. Today, I am proud to share the remarkable progress we have made in revolutionising Sikkim's healthcare system and making advanced medical care accessible within our state. Our relentless efforts in medical advancements have positioned Sikkim as a leader in specialised healthcare within the region.

The New STNM Hospital has achieved major milestones in its super-specialty departments, ensuring that cutting-edge treatments are now available within the state. In Medical Oncology, the introduction of immunotherapy and radiotherapy has transformed cancer care. The Plastic & Reconstructive Surgery and Burns Unit has successfully treated severe burn cases, conducted specialised surgeries, and collaborated with Mission Smile to provide life-changing cleft correction procedures. The Cardiology Department, equipped with a state-of-the-art Cath-lab, has performed more than 1,900 life-saving operations.

The Gastroenterology unit has introduced advanced procedures such as Argon Plasma Coagulation for bleeding ulcers and various stenting methods for cancer treatment.

Our Cardiothoracic Vascular Surgery team has performed breakthrough procedures, including Endovascular Laser Ablation and major lung and diaphragm surgeries. The Neurosurgery Department has enhanced its capabilities with advanced spine surgeries, brain tumour removals, and neuro-endovascular procedures. In Obstetrics & Gynecology, our doctors have successfully

conducted complex surgeries, including radical hysterectomies and cytoreduction for ovarian cancer. Similarly, our Urology Department has completed nearly 2,000 major procedures, improving treatment for conditions such as bladder stones and rare adrenal tumours.

The Head and Neck Surgical Oncology Department has completed over 210 malignancy surgeries and provided more than 1,500 day-care services, ensuring that fewer patients need to travel outside the state for expensive treatments.

To address the growing burden of chronic kidney disease, we have significantly expanded dialysis services to ensure accessibility across Sikkim. The New STNM Hospital alone now has 28 haemodialysis machines, catering to over 200 patients daily. Additionally, we have introduced Peritoneal Dialysis as an alternative, with free consumables provided to 41 registered patients. Overall, the state now operates 45 dialysis machines, serving 304 patients daily and conducting nearly 29,000 dialysis sessions annually. Additional dialysis centres at Jorethang and Soreng PHCs will soon be operational, further enhancing the availability of life-saving treatment.

Developing robust healthcare infrastructure remains one of our top priorities. The construction of new district hospitals in Singtam and Soreng is currently underway, while the Namchi District Hospital is being upgraded to a 500-bedded facility. Set to be inaugurated during the Prime Minister's visit as a part of our Golden Jubilee celebrations, the upgraded Namchi District hospital will significantly ease the patient load at the New STNM Hospital and serve the healthcare needs of Namchi, Gyalshing, and Soreng districts.

To extend healthcare services to every corner of our state, we have strengthened the Mobile Village Clinic initiative, bringing medical care directly to people's doorsteps, particularly in remote areas. This ensures that even the most isolated communities have access to essential healthcare services.

Our commitment remains firm—we will continue to build a healthier, stronger Sikkim, where quality healthcare is not a privilege but a fundamental right for all.

As we move forward, our commitment to healthcare remains unwavering. We have allocated substantial funds for procuring state-of-the-art medical equipment, alongside significant investments in upgrading the Nephrology Ward at the New STNM Hospital. Plans are also in place to establish kidney transplant facilities, ensuring that patients no longer need to travel outside Sikkim for specialised treatment. Additionally, we

continue to prioritise healthcare accessibility through the Mukhya Mantri Swastha Suvidha Yojana and the Chief Minister's Medical Assistance Scheme, ensuring financial support for those in need.

My fellow citizens,

Tourism remains a cornerstone of our economic growth, and the State Government is committed to transforming Sikkim into a world-class travel destination. With its unparalleled natural beauty, rich cultural heritage, and warm hospitality, our state has always captivated visitors from across the globe. To further enhance our tourism sector, we have undertaken several landmark projects that will elevate Sikkim's status as a premier destination for sustainable and adventure tourism.

One of our most ambitious projects is the eco-friendly ropeway from Dhapper to Bhaleydhunga at Yangang in Namchi District, completed with an investment of ₹209.57 crore. This remarkable infrastructure spans 3,024 meters and includes two stations—Dhapper (LTP) and Bhaleydhunga peak (UTP)—connected by 18 towers.

With a vertical rise of 1,348 meters and cabins seating eight passengers each, this ropeway offers a breathtaking experience, combining adventure with scenic grandeur.

Another major achievement is the completion of the passenger ropeway from Pelling Helipad to Sangacholing Monastery hilltop in Gyalshing District, developed with an investment of ₹166.72 crore. Built in collaboration with M/S POMA of France, this ropeway enhances connectivity to key tourist destinations, including the famous Chenrezig Skywalk and Sangacholing Monastery. Spanning 962 meters with a vertical rise of 81 meters, it offers panoramic views of the majestic Khangchendzonga range. With all construction completed, this attraction is ready for commercial operation, further strengthening Pelling's reputation as a must-visit location.

To position Sikkim as a leading eco-tourism hub, we have prioritised the construction of a state-of-the-art skywalk at Bhaleydhunga in Namchi District, with an investment of ₹396.14 crore. This landmark project, the first of its kind in India, features a 240-meter-long, 360-degree circular skywalk at an altitude of 3,300 meters. Its cantilevered glass floor offers visitors a stunning bird's-eye view of the surrounding hills and valleys. The site also includes a funicular linking the ropeway's upper terminal to the skywalk, a viewing gallery, and a 250-meter nature trail through the serene Meanam Wildlife Sanctuary. This project will significantly boost high-value tourism, bringing a new wave of adventure seekers to our state.

In Gyalshing District, the historic Singshore Bridge is being transformed into a glass-

bottomed skywalk, with an investment of ₹87.51 crore under the PM-DeVINE initiative. Once complete, it will stand as one of India's most spectacular skywalks, spanning 240 meters and standing at an altitude of 6,600 feet above a deep gorge. An additional 20-meter platform will be built below the bridge for adventure activities, and visitor-friendly amenities such as a cafeteria, parking, and viewpoints will further enhance the experience.

Recognising the need for high-quality event infrastructure, the State Government is also constructing a state-of-the-art Convention Centre at Namli, Gangtok, with an investment of ₹900 crore. This facility, equipped with a versatile conference hall, a mini conference hall, banquet and meeting rooms, guest accommodations, and even a heated swimming pool, will accommodate up to 2,000 guests. It is set to position Sikkim as a prime destination for conferences, business summits, and even luxury weddings.

These ambitious projects reflect our commitment to making Sikkim a global tourism destination while preserving our environmental integrity. By integrating sustainability with world-class infrastructure, we are opening new opportunities for our people, creating employment, and strengthening our economy. As we continue on this path, I invite all stakeholders—tourism entrepreneurs, local communities, and visitors—to join us in showcasing the best of Sikkim to the world.

My fellow citizens,

The State Government has also made significant strides in women's empowerment and social security, ensuring that women across Sikkim have greater access to financial independence, leadership roles, and social well-being. Through progressive initiatives and targeted support, we are committed to building a society where every woman can thrive, contribute meaningfully, and lead a dignified life.

The Sikkim Aama Sashaktikaran Yojana has provided financial assistance to thousands of single mothers, strengthening their economic security and supporting their children's future. Under this programme, mothers receive an annual financial grant of ₹40,000 in two installments, allowing them to invest in their children's education, start small businesses, or meet essential household needs.

Recognising the invaluable contributions of women to society, we have introduced 50% reservation for women in Panchayat seats, empowering them to take on leadership roles and actively participate in governance. Additionally, women now have reserved opportunities in contractual works, providing them with greater employment prospects and financial stability.

Apart from these, the State Government has introduced the Sikkim Aama Sahayog Yojana, a transformative initiative aimed at improving health, hygiene, and energy access in households across the state. Through this programme, mothers aged 18 to 59 will receive four free LPG cylinders refills annually, reducing their dependence on traditional cooking methods such as firewood and kerosene. By eliminating exposure to harmful smoke, this initiative will significantly improve respiratory health, reduce indoor pollution, and ease the burden of household work, particularly for women in rural areas. The programme also aligns with our broader goal of sustainable living and environmental conservation, making Sikkim a model state in clean energy adoption at the grassroots level.

Our commitment to gender equality and social security remains steadfast. Through these targeted policies and progressive programmes, we are shaping a more inclusive and equitable Sikkim, where every woman has the opportunity to achieve her full potential and contribute to the state's growth.

My fellow citizens,

Our zero-waste policies, afforestation programmes, and biodiversity conservation efforts have positioned Sikkim as one of India's most environmentally responsible states. Programmes like My Child from the Wild and Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam continue to inspire community-driven conservation efforts, promoting the harmonious coexistence of people and nature. Through progressive policies, innovative programmes, and active public participation, the State Government is ensuring that Sikkim remains a beacon of environmental leadership, sustainability, and prosperity for future generations.

My fellow Citizens,

As we celebrate the 76th Republic Day, it is a moment to reflect on our progress, achievements, and the challenges ahead. One such challenge demanding immediate attention is the declining Total Fertility Rate (TFR) in Sikkim, which has dropped from 2.75 in 1998-99 to 1.1 in 2019-21. With the replacement rate at 2.1, this demographic shift has serious long-term implications for our social and economic fabric. Addressing this issue requires a clear vision and strategic interventions to ensure a sustainable and inclusive future for our state.

This is not just a medical concern but a complex issue intertwined with socio-economic, psychological, and cultural factors. In response to our request, the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has extended its support, and an Inter-Departmental Working Group (IDWG) on TFR has been constituted to formulate a

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comprehensive action plan.

An Expert Group Meeting was also held in Gangtok on July 10, 2023, bringing together national experts to provide valuable recommendations.

Key actions have already been set into motion. A midterm evaluation of the Vatsalya Scheme is underway by Sikkim University, and an evidence-based Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) campaign has been developed with the World Health Organization (WHO). Partnerships have also been established with AIIMS New Delhi and the Army Hospital (Research & Referral), New Delhi, to set up an Assisted Reproductive Technology (ART) centre in Sikkim, with an MoU currently in progress. Meanwhile, a research study by the National Institute of Research on Reproductive and Child Health, Mumbai, is analysing socio-cultural and clinical factors affecting fertility trends.

To provide accessible and high-quality reproductive healthcare, a Reproductive Medicine Unit has been established at STNM Hospital in Gangtok, and plans are in place for a Level 1 ART (IVF and IUI) Unit to assist couples facing fertility challenges. These initiatives reaffirm our commitment to strengthening families and securing our demographic future.

Beyond healthcare interventions, the government has launched pioneering initiatives to promote economic empowerment, social security, and balanced demographic growth. The Sikkim INSPIRES (Integrated Service Provision and Innovation for Reviving Economies) initiative integrates demographic challenges with economic development. Implemented under the Planning and Development Department, it involves multiple government bodies and academic institutions, including Sikkim University and Sikkim Manipal Institute of Medical Sciences, with expert recommendations actively being implemented.

The Vatsalya Scheme, launched in 2022, provides financial assistance of ₹3 lakh to couples undergoing IVF and infertility treatments, ensuring that financial constraints do not hinder their journey toward parenthood. Additionally, recognising the importance of family-friendly policies, the Maternity Leave Entitlement Amendment 2022 offers 12 months of maternity leave and one month of paternity leave for government employees. To encourage larger families, an advance increment is granted on the birth of a second child, with an additional increment for the third, ensuring financial stability for growing families.

These strategic interventions reflect our unwavering commitment to

fostering a progressive, inclusive, and thriving Sikkim. By integrating economic stability, social security, healthcare, and demographic resilience, we are laying the foundation for a stronger, more sustainable future.

Families are the backbone of a thriving society, and their well-being is essential to our long-term prosperity. The measures we implement today will not only support the present generation but also secure a brighter future for generations to come. We are committed to supporting our citizens at every stage of life, from birth to education, from employment to retirement, ensuring that Sikkim continues to thrive as a progressive, inclusive, and prosperous state.

My fellow citizens,

In addition to the State Government's initiatives, including a few key measures that I have highlighted, Government of India schemes have been implemented with utmost sincerity, commitment, and dedication.

It is through these collaborative efforts, coupled with the steadfast support and guidance of the Central Government, that we can turn our vision of a *Viksit Sikkim* into reality which aligns seamlessly with the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi Ji's broader goal of a *Viksit Bharat-2047*.

My fellow citizens,

Looking ahead, the State Government remains steadfast in sustaining the momentum of progress and development. As part of our strategic vision, we have prioritized "*Bi-Pa-Sa*"-*Bijli, Pani, and Sadak* (Electricity, Water, and Roads), recognising these as the fundamental pillars of economic growth. Strengthening these core infrastructure sectors will not only enhance the quality of life for our citizens but also unlock new opportunities, drive sustainable development, and ensure that every Sikkimese is empowered to contribute to our shared vision of a self-reliant and progressive Sikkim.

As we move forward, our commitment to building a "Sunaulo Sikkim, Samridha Sikkim, Samarth Sikkim"-a golden, prosperous, and self-reliant state-remains steadfast. I extend my heartfelt congratulations to all the awardees for their excellence and dedication in their respective fields. Your contributions inspire us to strive for a better tomorrow and reinforce our collective resolve to realize the Sikkim we envision.

Before I conclude, I would like to underscore that on 16th May 2025, we proudly celebrate 50 years of Sikkim's statehood as the 22nd state of India with great enthusiasm, gest and fervour. This milestone marks a remarkable journey of progress and resilience, made possible by the unwavering support and collaboration of the Central Government.

We sincerely appreciate the assistance extended to us

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Sikkim's commitment to sustainable water management and sanitation, ensuring the state's continued growth as a clean and healthy destination.

Dear citizens,

Sikkim's power sector continues to make exceptional strides toward achieving energy security and sustainability. Known for its natural resources, especially hydroelectric power, Sikkim has become a leading player in renewable energy production. The state's vast hydroelectric potential has enabled remarkable progress in clean energy generation, aligning with both national and global goals to reduce carbon emissions. By harnessing our abundant water resources, we generate thousands of megawatts of hydropower, which not only meets our state's energy needs but also contributes significantly to the national grid.

In addition to hydroelectric power, my Government is committed to expanding the use of clean and renewable energy. We are actively integrating solar and wind power into our energy mix. Sikkim has already begun developing a comprehensive renewable energy roadmap, including wind farms and solar plants, to ensure long-term energy sustainability.

Improving energy distribution infrastructure is also a key priority. To this end, my Government has implemented essential reforms, including upgrading aging power lines and reinforcing resilience against natural disasters. When the devastating floods of October 2023 tested our infrastructure, our rapid restoration of power lines and services demonstrated our commitment to ensuring uninterrupted energy access for all citizens. We have also made significant strides with smart grids and smart metering systems, enhancing energy efficiency and improving power resource management.

However, Sikkim's power landscape was severely impacted by the October 2023 floods, which destroyed the Teesta III project and its adjoining dam, resulting in a loss of nearly 1,800 MW of power capacity. This disaster shifted Sikkim from a power-surplus state to one facing significant challenges in meeting its energy needs. In response, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) has stepped in to support the modernisation and strengthening of our power distribution system, approving a loan of \$148.5 million (approximately ₹1,220 crore). This partnership is a major boost for Sikkim as we work to restore and enhance our energy

by the Central Government across various sectors, which has been vital in shaping Sikkim's growth and development. I also urge

infrastructure to ensure a reliable power supply for all residents and businesses.

The ADB's financial assistance is pivotal in addressing the extensive damage to our distribution network caused by the floods and will help future-proof Sikkim's power infrastructure. The project will focus on the installation of 770 kilometers of climate-resilient underground or covered conductors, designed to improve the durability of the network and safeguard it against extreme weather events like floods and landslides. These climate-resilient conductors will replace vulnerable open-air lines, ensuring the safety and reliability of the system in the long term.

Moreover, 580 kilometers of aging and low-capacity conductors will be replaced with modern, high-capacity lines, improving overall energy efficiency and safety. The project also includes the upgrade of 26 power substations, which are critical to enhancing the quality and reliability of the electricity supply across the state. As part of this modernisation effort, a Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) system will be installed, enabling real-time monitoring and management of the distribution network to prevent outages and facilitate quicker responses to disruptions.

A particularly impactful component of this initiative is the installation of 15,000 units of public street lighting in remote and underserved areas, ensuring improved safety and visibility for residents, particularly in rural communities. The introduction of this street lighting will be transformative in enhancing public safety and supporting local economies by enabling activities after dark.

In addition to these infrastructure upgrades, the ADB-funded project will include extensive electricity conservation and safety awareness programmes aimed at educating rural communities on how to use electricity more efficiently and safely. These programmes will help promote energy-saving practices and raise awareness of potential hazards related to electrical systems.

The ADB's financial support goes beyond just physical infrastructure-it will also strengthen the financial sustainability of Sikkim's Power Department. By improving efficiency, reducing losses, and ensuring a more resilient system, this project will enable the Power Department to better meet the growing energy demands of our state while maintaining fiscal health. The assistance will play a crucial role in ensuring that Sikkim's power sector remains robust

everyone to passionately participate in celebrating our statehood.

Let us progress together, embracing innovation,

and future-ready.

Through these initiatives, we are steadily progressing towards our goals of providing essential services such as electricity (*bijli*), roads (*sadak*), and water (*pani*), which are fundamental to achieving our broader developmental objectives.

Dear citizens,

Healthcare in Sikkim has undergone a remarkable transformation in recent years, fundamentally changing the way we provide medical services to our people. Today, Sikkim stands as one of the most progressive states in India's healthcare sector, with significant improvements in infrastructure, capacity building, and service delivery. These advancements have led to exceptional changes in various health indicators.

In terms of birth and death registration, Sikkim has achieved notable success. The birth registration rate for children under five years stands at 96.5%, surpassing the national average of 89.1%. Similarly, death registration in the last three years is 75.5%, which is higher than the national rate of 70.8%.

Sikkim has made remarkable progress in reducing mortality rates. The neonatal mortality rate in the state is 5 per 1,000 live births, much lower than the national rate of 24.9 per 1,000 live births. The infant mortality rate in Sikkim is 5 per 1,000 live births, compared to the national rate of 28 per 1,000 live births. Additionally, the under-five mortality rate in Sikkim is 11.2 per 1,000 live births, significantly lower than the national rate of 41.9 per 1,000 live births.

In terms of maternal health, 70.0% of mothers in Sikkim received antenatal care during the first trimester, which exceeds the national average of 63.7%. Institutional births in Sikkim are at 94.7%, surpassing the national rate of 88.6%. Furthermore, 96.5% of births in Sikkim are attended by skilled health personnel, compared to the national figure of 89.4%.

When it comes to menstrual health, 86.3% of women aged 15-24 years in Sikkim use hygienic methods for menstruation, higher than the national average of 77.3%.

Sikkim also excels in child health and vaccination programmes. 80.6% of children aged 12-23 months are fully vaccinated, surpassing the national rate of 76.4%. Furthermore, 87.5% of children aged 9-35 months in Sikkim received a Vitamin A dose, compared to 71.2% nationally. Notably, all children aged 12-23 months in Sikkim received most of their vaccinations at a public health facility, which is higher

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inclusivity, and sustainability for a brighter future.

Jai Hind! Jai Sikkim!

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than the national figure of 94.5%.

In our super-specialty departments at the New STNM Hospital, we have achieved groundbreaking milestones. In Medical Oncology, we have introduced immunotherapy and radiotherapy, revolutionising cancer treatment. The Plastic & Reconstructive Surgery/Burns Unit manages complex cases, including head and neck cancer surgeries, and conducts yearly cleft camps in partnership with Mission Smile. The Cardiology Department, equipped with a state-of-the-art Cath-lab operation theatre, has performed over 1,900 successful surgeries. In Gastroenterology, we've introduced procedures like Argon Plasma Coagulation for bleeding ulcers, various stenting procedures for cancer treatment, and Endoscopic Ultrasound. Our Cardiothoracic Vascular Surgery Department has performed groundbreaking procedures, including Endovascular Laser Ablation and Decortication Surgery. The Neurosurgery Department has made significant advances in spine surgeries, brain tumor operations, and neuro-endovascular procedures. In Obstetrics & Gynaecology, we have successfully carried out pelvic surgeries and treatments for ovarian cancer. The Urology Department has completed around 2,000 major surgeries, including the removal of large bladder stones and complex kidney surgeries. The Head and Neck Surgical Oncology Department has conducted over 210 surgeries for head and neck cancers, significantly reducing the need for out-of-state treatments.

To address the declining Total Fertility Rate (TFR) in Sikkim, my Government launched the Vatsalya Scheme on April 7, 2022. Under this scheme, each couple is eligible for financial assistance up to ₹3,00,000 with ₹1,50,000 allocated for the first attempt and an additional ₹1,50,000 available for a second attempt, if needed.

Recognising Chronic Kidney Disease (CKD) as a critical public health issue, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, we have established dialysis centers in every district hospital. The New STNM Hospital now has 28 haemodialysis machines, including one designated for hepatitis and HIV-positive patients, serving 200 dialysis patients and conducting 18,149 dialysis sessions. We also introduced Peritoneal Dialysis as a pilot project in 2021, with 41 patients enrolled and provided with free consumables. A total of 45 dialysis machines are now operational across the state, serving more than 304 patients daily. Additionally, dialysis centres will soon be established in Jorethang and Soreng.

In terms of strengthening

healthcare infrastructure, new district hospitals have been established at Singtam and Soreng, and the Namchi District Hospital is being upgraded to a 500-bed facility, fully funded by the state exchequer. This project is expected to be completed and inaugurated in 2025, marking Sikkim's 50th anniversary of statehood. This hospital will serve the Namchi District and the adjoining areas of Gyalshing and Soreng, relieving the patient load at the New STNM Hospital.

We have continued to support critical health programmes with adequate financial allocation. Through the Mukhya Mantri Swastha Suvidha Yojana and the Chief Minister's Medical Assistance Fund, financial assistance is available for those in need of medical care. Additionally, we have created a maintenance fund for the New STNM Hospital to ensure its smooth operation, and a significant portion of funds has been allocated to the Mobile Village Clinic initiative, enhancing healthcare outreach to rural areas.

Dear citizens,

Sikkim's education system has long been a key driver of the state's growth and prosperity. My Government firmly believes that the foundation for the state's continued progress lies in an educated, empowered populace. Education is not just about increasing literacy rates but about equipping our children with the tools, skills, and knowledge necessary to thrive in an ever-changing global environment. Over the years, we have made significant efforts to build and upgrade schools, ensuring that every child in Sikkim, regardless of geographic location, has access to quality education. In line with our vision, the Sikkim State Education Policy focuses on fostering academic excellence, social and emotional development, and creativity, ensuring that our students are well-rounded individuals ready for the challenges of the future.

A major achievement in recent years has been the introduction of digital classrooms. These digital platforms provide students with access to modern learning tools, making education more engaging, interactive, and accessible. This initiative not only bridges the gap between rural and urban education but also ensures that students are exposed to the latest educational resources. The Sikkim Digital Education Initiative aims to equip our youth with critical 21st-century skills, including coding, e-learning, and IT training, which will prepare them for the evolving demands of a digital economy.

In addition to academic learning, my Government recognises the importance of preparing students for careers beyond traditional academic paths. To this end, we have incorporated vocational training and skill development into the

state's curriculum. This initiative equips our youth with practical, market-ready skills, empowering them to pursue careers in trades, entrepreneurship, and emerging sectors such as information technology, hospitality, and renewable energy. Through collaborations with national organisations, we offer internationally recognised certifications, preparing our students for a competitive global workforce and ensuring that no young person is left behind.

A major priority of my Government has been the expansion of internet access in remote and rural areas of Sikkim. Leveraging cutting-edge technologies like satellite communication, we are bridging the digital divide and ensuring that every citizen—whether a student, healthcare professional, or small business owner—has access to the digital tools necessary to succeed. This ambitious effort positions Sikkim to become one of India's most digitally connected states, unlocking opportunities in sectors such as e-commerce, digital entrepreneurship, education, and telemedicine, while fostering economic growth and innovation.

In furthering our commitment to equitable education, we are launching a Model Residential School in Assam Lingzey in February 2025. This institution will provide a holistic education to talented children from disadvantaged backgrounds, ensuring they have the opportunity to excel despite their socio-economic circumstances. The school will also serve as a model for implementing the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, which emphasises inclusivity, critical thinking, and creativity—values that align with our vision for education in Sikkim.

Sikkim has already made tremendous progress in implementing the NEP 2020, particularly in terms of foundational literacy and numeracy. Our state has set an ambitious goal of achieving a 100% Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) by 2030, ensuring that every child has access to quality education. In the 2022-23 academic year, our GER stood at 90.50% for elementary education, 78.96% for secondary education, and 65.11% for senior secondary education. These impressive figures are complemented by high transition rates, with 90.78% of students progressing from primary to upper primary, 98.35% from upper primary to secondary, and 98.35% from secondary to senior secondary. These achievements reflect our commitment to ensuring that every child in Sikkim progresses smoothly through the education system, regardless of their background.

To support this progress, we have heavily invested in enhancing learning resources. Our schools are now equipped with modern laboratories, vocational training resources,

and e-learning platforms like DIKSHA. Specialised training programmes for sports teachers ensure that students are not only academically proficient but also well-rounded individuals. This focus on vocational education has made Sikkim a leader in providing hands-on training opportunities. All 211 government schools now offer vocational trade opportunities, preparing students to enter the workforce immediately upon graduation. To ensure these institutions maintain high standards, we are establishing the State School Standards Authority (SSSA), which will monitor the quality of education and help schools meet national benchmarks.

We have also implemented robust educational management and monitoring systems. The Education Management and Monitoring Information System (EMMIS) plays a critical role in tracking student progress and informing policy decisions. This data-driven approach allows us to identify areas for improvement, streamline administrative processes, and ensure that our education system continues to evolve to meet the needs of our youth.

The Chief Minister's Merit Scholarship Scheme (CMMSS) continues to be a cornerstone of our efforts to provide equitable access to higher education. This scheme offers financial assistance to economically disadvantaged students enabling them to pursue higher education without the burden of financial constraints. To date, over 1,214 students have benefited from this initiative. We are also expanding the scheme to include students with special needs, ensuring that all students have the opportunity to succeed, regardless of their circumstances.

In addition to academic and vocational support, we recognise the importance of addressing health and hygiene challenges, especially for female students. Through the Bahini Yojana, we provide free sanitary napkins to students in government schools and colleges, benefiting over 30,000 girls. This initiative ensures that no girl is held back from attending school or participating in extracurricular activities due to lack of sanitary products. The PM SHRI Scheme has also contributed to improving academic outcomes in Sikkim. With 43 PM SHRI Schools across the state, we've seen significant improvements in exam pass percentages at both the Class X and Class XII levels.

Furthermore, we understand that the mental well-being of our students is just as important as their academic success. As part of our holistic approach to education, we've incorporated mindfulness and meditation into the curriculum, helping students manage stress, improve focus, and promote overall mental well-being. SCERT has also partnered with organisations to

create mental health support systems in schools, ensuring that students are equipped to handle the pressures of modern education.

We are committed to professional development for our teachers as well. Exposure trips for State Awardees and Commendation Certificate recipients allow teachers to learn from their counterparts in other states and bring back best practices, ensuring continuous improvement in the quality of education in Sikkim.

Looking ahead, we are transforming government colleges into multi-disciplinary Higher Education Institutes (HEIs) by 2025. These institutions will offer flexible four-year undergraduate programmes, giving students the freedom to design their educational pathways according to their interests and career goals. We are also constructing four new government colleges under the Rashtriya Uchhatar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA) and expanding Khangchendzonga State University (KSU) with funding from the PM-USHA scheme. This will position Sikkim as a leading hub for higher education and research.

In the fields of technical and medical education, the establishment of NIT campus at Khamdong and the allocation of 50 free MBBS seats at Sikkim Manipal University (SMU) will further elevate Sikkim's standing as a centre for academic excellence. These initiatives are part of our broader vision to provide world-class education, making Sikkim a preferred destination for higher learning.

At the heart of these reforms is the Sikkim Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERT), which has developed state-specific textbooks that are now being used as one of the resource materials by NCERT Delhi for preparing their textbooks. SCERT is also playing a key role in the PM e-Vidhya project, launching five DTH channels to enhance digital learning accessibility, especially in remote areas.

These wide-ranging initiatives are transforming Sikkim's education system into one that is dynamic, inclusive, and future-ready. By strengthening foundational literacy, expanding vocational training, and enhancing higher education opportunities, we are ensuring a brighter future for our youth, empowering them to contribute to the state's growth and success.

Dear citizens,

Environmental sustainability and conservation have always been at the heart of Sikkim's development strategy. Blessed with stunning natural beauty and rich biodiversity, Sikkim has long recognised the importance of preserving our environment. As we continue to grow, it is vital that we balance this growth with the preservation of our natural

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resources, ensuring that future generations inherit a cleaner, greener, and more sustainable Sikkim. From eco-friendly waste management systems to promoting sustainable agricultural practices, Sikkim is leading the way in green development.

In 2023, we launched the *Mero Rukh Mero Santati* initiative, aimed at strengthening the bond between parents, children, and nature. Through this programme, we plant 108 saplings for every newborn in the state. The initiative has received international recognition, including at the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP 28) in Dubai.

To date, 7,747 children have been enrolled in the programme, celebrating new life while significantly boosting our state's green cover. In total, over 4,50,000 trees have been planted, making a substantial contribution to the greening of Sikkim.

To further support the *Mero Rukh Mero Santati* initiative, my Government has also introduced the *Sikkim Shishu Samridhi Yojana*, which ensures the financial future of each child. Under this scheme, a fixed deposit of ₹10,800 is created in the name of every child, which becomes redeemable when the child turns 18. This initiative not only strengthens the financial security of our children but also encourages long-term environmental awareness and responsibility.

Mero Bato Mero Bot initiative, a collaborative effort between the Forest and Environment Department and the Roads and Bridges Department, focuses on greening our roadways. This programme encourages the planting and maintenance of trees along roadsides, which not only enhances our green cover but also raises environmental awareness through active community involvement. Similarly, *My Child* from the Wild programme allows individuals or groups to adopt an animal through an agreement with the Park Management. These sponsors contribute to wildlife conservation efforts and receive benefits such as free park entry and access to zoo programmes, thus promoting public participation in conservation.

Through these innovative policies and community-driven initiatives, my Government continues to strengthen its commitment to environmental stewardship. We are working towards a future where growth and sustainability go hand in hand, ensuring that the beauty and richness of Sikkim's natural environment is preserved for generations to come.

Dear Citizens,

My Government has set numerous ambitious

developmental goals that require substantial funding due to the magnitude of their objectives. In this regard, the external assistance provided by various agencies is advancing our progress and bringing us closer to realising our development aspirations.

Sikkim INSPIRES, funded by the World Bank, is a transformative initiative aimed at empowering the youth and women of Sikkim through skill development, mental health support, and entrepreneurship opportunities. The programme is designed to meet the evolving needs of the workforce and ensure that individuals are equipped to succeed in an increasingly globalised economy. With its multifaceted approach, INSPIRES is building a resilient, capable workforce that will contribute to Sikkim's long-term economic growth and prosperity.

Since its implementation, the programme has achieved remarkable success in various areas, driving significant progress for the state.

1. Women's Empowerment

INSPIRES has significantly empowered women through skill-building initiatives across various sectors, from healthcare to entrepreneurship. The programme promotes gender equality, fosters financial independence, and helps women break barriers to succeed in industries traditionally dominated by men.

2. International Career Opportunities

One of the programme's most significant achievements is the successful training and placement of 13 women nurses in Germany's healthcare sector. By providing comprehensive German language training and collaborating with state departments, INSPIRES has opened international career pathways in a high-demand field, ensuring that Sikkim's workforce remains competitive on the global stage.

3. Mental Health and Well-being Support

Recognising the increasing concerns around mental health, particularly among youth and women, INSPIRES has integrated vital mental health services into its framework. The programme includes a suicide prevention strategy, community-based counselling, and outreach initiatives aimed at reducing stigma and providing timely support to those in need.

4. Development of Women Entrepreneurs

The programme provides targeted training in business management, marketing, and financial planning, enabling women to start their own businesses. This initiative not only boosts women's financial autonomy but also contributes to the state's economic growth, with women-led businesses playing a crucial role in driving

local economies.

5. Youth Entrepreneurship INSPIRES fosters youth entrepreneurship by offering training and mentorship in business management and financial planning. This empowers young people, particularly in rural areas, to create their own employment opportunities, encouraging innovation, self-reliance, and economic resilience within their communities.

6. A quantitative research study to investigate the factors leading to low Total Fertility Rate (TFR) would involve identifying measurable variables and analysing data to understand their relationship with TFR.

As Sikkim expands the reach of the INSPIRES programme, it is positioning itself as a leader in empowering youth and women. With its focus on skill development, mental health support, and entrepreneurship, INSPIRES is setting a global example of inclusive and sustainable development, inspiring other regions and nations to follow suit.

Externally aided projects have played a transformative role in driving Sikkim's development, enabling us to address critical challenges in urban infrastructure, power supply, and

economic inclusion. The projects supported by the Asian Development Bank and the World Bank are a testament to the collaborative efforts of our Government, external agencies, and local communities in building a brighter future for Sikkim.

Dear Citizens,

This year marks the Golden Jubilee of Sikkim's integration with India, a milestone of profound significance. It has been 50 years since our beloved state became an integral part of the Indian Union in 1975. As we celebrate this momentous occasion, we reflect on the remarkable journey Sikkim has undertaken transforming from a small kingdom into a progressive and inclusive state, focused on empowering its people and fostering sustainable development.

I am pleased to announce that as part of our Golden Jubilee celebrations, my Government has planned a series of events throughout the year, culminating in a grand celebration on 16th May 2025, which will be honoured by the presence of the Prime Minister as our esteemed chief guest. This event will be a reflection of our growth, achievements, and

the collective spirit that has propelled us forward.

As we gather today to celebrate Republic Day, let us renew our commitment to the progress, unity, and welfare of our state. With the continued support of the Government of India and the tireless efforts of our people, I am confident that Sikkim will continue to shine as a model of sustainable development and inclusive growth. Together, we are building a future where every citizen can thrive.

I would also like to extend my heartfelt congratulations to today's Meritorious Service Awardees. Your dedication and exceptional contributions are the driving forces behind our strides towards a Viksit Sikkim and a Viksit Bharat. Your hard work and service inspire us all, as we work together to achieve even greater progress for our state and our nation.

As we move forward, let us embrace the spirit of unity and progress, working hand in hand to ensure that the next 50 years are filled with even more accomplishments, prosperity, and well-being for all.

Jai Hind!

