



**SPEECH OF SHRI PAWAN CHAMLING,  
CHIEF MINISTER OF SIKKIM,  
AT THE 53<sup>RD</sup> MEETING OF  
THE NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL  
TO CONSIDER ISSUES RELATING TO  
FOOD AND AGRICULTURE.**

**(VIGYAN BHAWAN, NEW DELHI**

**29<sup>TH</sup> MAY 2007)**

1. I bring with me the warmest greetings from the people of Sikkim to our Hon'ble Prime Minister, his distinguished Cabinet colleagues, the Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission, the Chief Ministers of all States and other distinguished members of the Planning Commission and senior officials present in this august gathering.

2. Sikkim is a very small landlocked state, having an area of only 7096 sqkm, which is barely 0.22 percent of the total geographical area. The State has a population of slightly above half a million, constituting 0.05 percent of the national population. The net cultivable area is about 1.10 lakh ha., which is less than 12% of the landmass. Only 15% area is irrigated and Horticulture covers 57% of sown area.

3. The agro-climatic condition in the State ranges from sub-tropical type to alpine condition in the upper reaches. Since growth of large and medium industries in the state is constrained by the geographical conditions, the educated

un-employed, particularly in the rural areas have to find employment opportunities in agriculture and horticulture. We have adopted development strategies with this objective.

4. Sikkim has been declared as an "Organic" state. Subsidy from State Plan Funds has been gradually brought down to zero. Farmers are being encouraged to propagate to adopt modern technology on organic farming.
5. The comparative advantage for Sikkim is in the field of Horticulture, including Floriculture and not in Food grain production. In the approach paper to the XIth Five Year Plan it had been suggested by the Planning Commission that Fertilizer consumption in Sikkim needs to be increased for enhancing agricultural out put. The Dy. Chairman, Planning Commission has also agreed with our contention.
6. Horticulture in the state includes a variety of flowers, fruits, vegetables, roots and tuber crops, spices and mushrooms. Horticulture has

established its importance in improving land use, promoting crop diversification, generating employment and providing nutritional security. Aided by the Central assistance under Technological Mission In Northeast (TMNE), the production graphs for various horticultural crops like fruits, vegetables, spices are showing an ever increasing trend.

7. Floriculture has also a tremendous potential in the state. The agro-climatic condition in the state is conducive for floriculture. The Bio-genetic diversity in the State is well recognized. Emphasis has been given to identification of entrepreneurs in the rural areas for expansion of the potential areas. Production and export through joint ventures as also encouraging farmers to take up cultivation for Cymbidium orchid, Anthurium, Alstomeria, Rose, Gerbera etc.. We are confident that the proposed International, Flower Festival in Gangtok during 2008, would be provided full support and assistance by Government of India, and would be a success.

8. On the development front my government has laid emphasis on pro-people schemes especially aimed at the poor and downtrodden. Special emphasis has been given in providing good governance with major emphasis on empowerment and decentralization of the people at the grassroots. The involvement of the people and the civil society in the development process would be crucial for the overall development of the state. My government's objective is to economically, socially, politically empower the people by decentralization and to have a meaningful partnership with the Panchayati Raj Institution. I am happy to state that much progress has been made in the development of villages. Our effort is to create urban facilities and services in every village in the state. We have transferred departmental functionaries concerned with 29 numbers of activities that are required to be delegated to the Panchayats along with required resources. We have been declared the third best performing state in the country in the implementation of Panchayati Raj. Women in

the state benefit from the reservation of one third of seats in the Panchayats. Women enjoy equal opportunities and respect in the state.

9. Animal Husbandry plays an important role in our efforts to boost the village economy. Our endeavour is to upgrade poor yielding stock by introducing better germplasm into indigenous genetic pool through artificial insemination and other breeding practices to produce high yielding varieties. Protection of livestock and birds is being made through intensive network of veterinary hospitals, dispensaries and artificial insemination centers. Our thrust is to expand and strengthen infrastructure for artificial insemination, create a seed stock of superior quality bush, bring about genetic improvement of important livestock breeds, and facilitate development of marketing avenues for sale of livestock products.

10. We are the first state in the country to have effectively banned use of non-biodegradable products like plastic bags and grazing of animals

in the reserved forest areas. Our forest cover has increased from 42.3% in 1991 to 45.97% in 2005-06. We are trying to transform our state into a fully organic state by 2010. The state has set up Green Mission throughout the state, which has attracted an overwhelming response from people.

11. We agree with the need for effecting improvements in the inflow of rural credit, seeds, fertilizer and irrigation facilities for effecting a growth in the agricultural sector from 2% in the Xth Five Year Plan to 4% as envisaged in the XIth Plan Document. In fact, the Planning Commission had assessed that in the first three years of the Xth Five Year Plan, the sectoral growth in Sikkim was higher than the All India average.
12. The outlay on agriculture has been increased by us from Rs. 6.22 crores during 2006-07 to Rs 8.45 crores in 2007-08 (An increase of 36%). Similarly, the outlay on Horticulture has been increased by us from Rs.7.72 crores during

2006-07 to Rs10.60 crores in 2007-08 (An increase of 37%). In the field of Animal Husbandry, the outlay has been increased form has been increased by us from Rs. 6.61 crores during 2006-07 to Rs 9.35 crores in 2007-08 (An increase of 41%). An increased allocation by Govt. of India in the field of Agriculture, as proposed by the NDC Sub-Committee on agriculture is welcome.

13. We also endorse the recommendation for re-structuring of AIBP and propose that for hilly terrain, the existing norms of 20 ha. be reduced to 5 ha. The Participatory Irrigation Management (PIM) approach for major and medium Irrigation projects is of more relevance to States other than Sikkim, as our terrain is not conducive for such irrigation projects. A similar position applies to establishment of Water Users Association. Nevertheless, in Water Shed Management, we are following participatory approach by involving the Panchayats. We also have no objection to designation of irrigation projects covering one lakh ha., as National Irrigation Projects.



14. In the field of Water Shed Management, the State is actively implementing the Integrated Water Shed Development Programme (IWDP), since renamed as Hariyali Project. A total area of 1.20 lakhs ha. spread over 20 (twenty) projects is thus being covered. The Zilla Panchayats are fully involved in implementation of the programme through Water Shed Committees. The Gram Panchayats are very much the pivot for implementation. One third of Panchayat Members in the State are women. As per guidelines self help groups and user groups have been established on Micro Water Shed wise basis. Water Shed Advisory and Monitoring Committees have also been established on a district wise basis and the District Collector coordinates their activities.

15. The Public – Private – Partnership (PPP) has made a start in the field of Horticulture through a venture for growing seed potato, involving a Tata Group Company. Joint ventures have also been established in the field of Floriculture, the State has also enacted the

APMC Act, the contract farming has yet to emerge in our State and as such, there is no instance of contract farming related dispute.

16. The Northeastern Region in general and Sikkim in particular have a large scope for agro-processing, particularly in respect of fruits. We have made some strides in the field of value addition to fruits / crops like Oranges, Passion Fruit, Cherry Pepper, Ginger etc., which are grown in the State. We feel that an early issuance of notification by Govt. of India under the new Northeast Industrial and Investment Promotion Policy (NEIIPP) would help in promoting the establishment of Agro-Processing Industry in the State.
17. The Northeastern States, owing to historical reasons, have a great scope for rural income generation through the promotion of small ruminants and poultry. An early introduction of the proposed new Central Sector Scheme for the same would be of great help in boosting the household income in rural areas. The scope

for fisheries promotion of fisheries in a large scale is somewhat inhibited by topological factors.

18. The Vaidyanathan Committee recommendations on cooperative credit structure are under active consideration of the State Govt. in consultation with NABARD. The State is also happy to note that Ministry of DoNER is actively promoting the introduction of World Bank Sponsored Livelihood Project in the Northeastern States in the XIth Plan period, in which, formation of Rural Self-help Groups, particularly of Women and tying up of rural credit is an important component.
  
19. While, appreciating the need for introduction of Modified National Agricultural Insurance (MNAIs), we agree that it is not desirable to have a single model for extending crop risk insurance coverage to the farmers. We would like to suggest that for the Northeastern States, a separate model is evolved by the Govt. of India through the Northeastern Council. This may also include differential premium regime for the States within the Northeastern Region.

20. The State fully agrees for introduction of Sanitary and Phyto Sanitary (SPS) regime for ensuring food safety standards. However, the knowledge base in our State in this field is very meager and State would request Govt. of India to actively disseminate the information. A similar approach may be taken in respect of fiscal support to agriculture in the context of market distortions, particularly in the context of the WTO regime.
  
21. The transfer of Technology to the farmers by KVK Network, duly involving the ATMAs would help in increasing the growth in the agriculture sector. The proposed revival of Seed Mini-kit Demonstration Programme is also a step in the right direction. The strengthening of Seed Village Programme and Incentivised supply of Certified/ Quality seeds is an area requiring attention on part of Govt. of India. We recognized the need for an Integrated Plant Nutrient System and have introduced the soil health card in the Northeastern in the State.

22. The State endorses the major recommendations of the working group on irrigation, though most of the recommendations pertain to major and medium irrigation projects and the canal based systems. The scope for ground water utilization in a hilly terrain is also strictly limited. Similar views apply to the recommendations of working group in dry land and rain fed farming. In this context, the state would like to suggest that the reclamation of degraded lands could be taken up as a Flagship Programme by the Central Government.
23. In the field of marketing reforms, contract farming and agro processing, there is a greater scope for Central intervention and increase assistance should be provided by the Central Govt. for establishment of ware housing and cold chain storage. The scope for private investment on this account in the Northeastern region is very limited. In the field of adoption of relevant technologies and their dissemination as also on the global issues, the views of the State have already been brought out earlier.

24. There are numerous of glaciers in the state. Many of the glaciers originate from Khangchendzonga which turn to streams and rivers. It is seen that these glaciers are receding which is a sign of danger. It could spell disaster for Sikkim's fragile economy and may lead to devastating floods and ultimate dryness in the river Teesta which is the lifeline of Sikkim. This will have disastrous effect not only for the agriculture in the State but would also affect our hydro-power generation system. As such, I would urge Government of India to take up the initiative for studying the receding glacier system in the entire Himalayan region. I understand that some headway has already been made in the context of the global environment initiative.

25. Till five years back, quota for the state on the PDS was 6000 metric ton rice per month. Now, the quota has been reduced to 3316 metric ton. The state Government has appraised Union Food Ministry about the shortfall. It is felt that the quota for rice per month has to be brought

up to 6000 metric ton per month. It is also felt that one time special package of rice would help in maintaining a buffer stock to ensure food security during the time of emergencies due to frequent landslides and road blocks, which are the bane of the State.

26. In fact, I would urge Government of India to expedite the commencement of road up-gradation and improvement works on NH 31 A, which is the lifeline of the State. In fact, improvement these works had been sanctioned by Govt. of India more than one year back, however, works are yet to commence. Similarly, the extension of rail network to our State would not only help in improving the food security, but also help in reducing the price of commodities.

**Thank You**

**Jai Hind**