

Hydropower will make Sikkim Richest state: Union Minister

Gangtok: Union Power Minister Sushil Kumar Shinde has praised the Pawan Chamling government for going ahead with optimum utilization of the hydropower resources of the state. The Himalayan state was on course to become the richest state in India upon commissioning of the ongoing hydel projects in a few years' time, he said. The revenues from the hydropower projects will not only boost the coffers of the state exchequer, but also bring about an overall socio-economic development in Sikkim, he added.

Mr. Shinde came to Sikkim on Saturday on a three-day visit within four months of his taking charge of power ministry for second consecutive terms in the UPA government, led by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh. On the day he chaired the 16th Power Finance Corporation Ltd (PFC) meeting held in Sikkim. Later in the evening he was talking to reporters. Asked about the status of the six hydel projects which were put on hold by the ministry of environment four months ago, the Union Minister said, "I have taking up the matter at the higher level for grant of clearances to the six hydel projects." He however maintained that the environmental issues must be taken due care of in conceiving hydropower projects. Even his ministry has made necessary changes in its hydropower policy in view of the environment-related concerns being raised by various quarters, he said.

He mentioned that a broad range of issues like the local area development, compensation to the project, jobs

to the local people and setting up of training institutes for developing skills of local youths and their absorption in the power projects, etc, have been committed by the power developers engaged in the state.

Mohammad Hamid Ansari inaugurated Regional Seminar on Right to Education

Gangtok, October 29: The Vice President, Mr. Mohammad Hamid Ansari launched the souvenir and inaugurated the Regional Seminar on “Right to Education with special reference to Sikkim and its impact on legal awareness campaign” organized by High Court of Sikkim who is celebrating its golden jubilee at Chintan Bhawan in the capital.

The Vice President on the occasion acknowledge that he merger of the state with the Union of India in 1975 has strengthened the functioning of the High Court and subordinate Court structure in Sikkim. It has also reinforced the separately of judiciary from executive and ensured speedy dispensation of justice. It is a momentous occasion for the High Court and the people of the state, he added.

Talking on the subject of the seminar, the Vice President accredited that it is of topical relevance as Sikkim is a progressive state and one of the first in the country to recognize the importance of human development.

In keeping with the new development paradigm and focusing on broader development measures, Sikkim has produced its human development report as far as 2001 under the guidance of Chief Minister, Mr. Chamling, he informed.

The products of our education system are the future citizens of the country. A rudimentary legal awareness of their rights and

duties are citizens and of the basic political, constitutional and legal scheme of things in the country are imparted in schools. However empowering citizens in more meaningful manner can only be done through specific and specialized legal conducted by the Sikkim State Legal Service Authority, the Vice President stated.

The Governor, Mr. Singh in his address pointed out that the growth of tomorrow's India depends on today's action taken in the education sector. Action is needed in several areas like good infrastructure and quality education, there is a need to take up this task in a mission mode by all stakeholders, he added.

Our aim is to make Sikkim fully literature by 2015 and the speedy progress which the state has made gives us confidence to achieve this target, said the Governor. Mr. Singh also called for more commitment from teachers and positive attitude from the parents.

The Chief Minister, Mr. Chamling in his address thanked the High Court and the Chief Justice in particular for holding the Seminar in the State. Highlighting on how his government has given top priority to education Mr. Chamling acknowledged that from day one, government has taken education on topmost agenda of priorities by making it free upto the college level with additional incentives to make it widely accessible and highly affordable for all sections of population.

Every village now has a school within walking distance. The annual budgetary support to education has reached an impressive 20 percent this year. The teacher-student ration of 1:16 is one of the best available in the country. The number of school going girl children is slightly higher than the boys with very positive outcome in terms of increased enrolment in schools and far more improvement seen in school retention, he informed

The Chief Justice, Sikkim High Court Mr. Aftab Hussain Saikia in his address termed the occasion as a 'great day' for Sikkim judiciary particularly the High Court which is currently celebrating fifty years of dedicated service to the people of Sikkim.

Earlier, the Seminar began with the welcome note presented by Justice of the Sikkim High Court, Mr. A.P. Subba. The day's proceedings ended with the vote of thanks by High Court Judge, Mr. S.P. Wangdi.