

## **CHAMLING LAYS FOUNDATION STONE OF 130 FT TALL CHENREZIG STATUE AT SANGA CHOELING MONASTERY**

**“Our reverence for the Gods will keep Sikkim peaceful and prosperous”**

**CM ANNOUNCES THAT MONKS WILL NO LONGER BE MADE TO WAIT ON V.I.P. RECEPTION, THEY SHOULD BE SHOWN MORE RESPECT, HE SAYS**

**PELLING, 25, Nov:** Chief Minister Pawan Chamling today laid the foundation stone for the 130 feet tall Chenrezig statue at the Sangha Choeling Monastery above Gyalshing in West Sikkim. The statue is to come up around a 100 feet above the old monastery.

Congratulating the devout on the new project, Mr. Chamling highlighted that the Chenrezig statue project completes the troika of offerings of the State Government to complete a grand celebration of Sikkim's Buddhist ethos.

“Every altar in Sikkim has at least three statues-one each of Guru Rimpoche, Buddha and Chenrezig. Your Government started with the construction of Guru Rimpoche's statue at Samdruptse, is currently completing a Buddha Park in Ravangla and has now begun work of this ambitious project,” he remarked.

He reminded the audience that the Chenrezig statue here, when it is completed, will be the tallest statue of Chenrezig in the world. The project, he announced today, will be completed in three years time.

He also announced that even as this third project gets underway, more infrastructures are being added to the Guru Padmasambhava's statue complex at Samdruptse and at the Ravangla Buddha Park.

“With the construction of these statues, we are seeking to purify the State of negative forces and reinforce the sanctity of the land. These statues

announced our commitment to maintain continued peace and prosperity in Sikkim, “he explained.

The Chief Minister, it may be recalled, had visited Sanga Choeling monastery on 21 February earlier this year when he had decided on the spot to commission a 130ft tall Chenrezig statue at the complex.

Given the religious significance of today's events, in the audience were a large number of monks and the Chief Minister made another announcement which will further elevate the respect with which the Sangha is treated in Sikkim.

Addressing the gathering, the Chief Minister pointed out that monks were possessors of Sikkim's unique wisdom and educated on Buddhist tenets.

“Irrespective of which faith we belong to, the monks of Sikkim deserve our respect. In pursuance of my government's conscious commitment to ensure this respect for the monk body. I announce today that henceforth, no monks will be called upon to lead or join welcome processions for politicians or other dignitaries. They are holders of wisdom and it should be us who approach them with folded hands, not the other way round, “he announced to a loud applause.

With three districts of East, South and West Sikkim covered with the statues projects mentioned earlier, the Chief Minister announced that North Sikkim is not being ignored either in the State Government's plans to add to the Buddhist nature of the State.

A mega project under which an entire monastery will be sculpted into a rock face is being planned for North Sikkim, he announced today. This monastery hewn into rock will be a first such project undertaken in modern times, he pointed out.

On the upcoming events planned by the State Government, the Chief Minister announced today that the Janata Melas will be held across the State in January, 2010. But this time, the Rs. 20,000 house construction assistance will not be handed out, instead, the people will be provided with homes, he announced.

He also updated the people on the State Government's decision set up Livelihood Schools in every constituency to impart constituency-specific skill development training.

Sharing the achievements and future plans of the State Government, the Chief Minister also rued that there were still some sections which wished him and his government ill.

“My only appeal to such people and groups is to keep aside their prejudice of Pawan Chamling as an individual and look at what the State

Government has achieved and given to the people of Sikkim for the past 15 years and what plans lie ahead. Remember what the present freedom and development across the State has grown out from," he said.

Earlier, the Secretary, Buildings & Housing Department, presented the basic report on the Chenrezig statue here. The statue will be 130 feet tall and the base will spread over 33 sq feet. Statues of six different gods and deities will surround the main statue. There will be space earmarked in front of the statue where chaams and prayers can be performed and a public gallery will surround the ground. The facility will also keep wheelchairs for the service of the aged and the disabled who wish to take a darshan. Among the infrastructure being developed around the project will be a cafeteria and car park.

While the Rural Management & Development Department has been given charge of bringing a road to the projects site. PHE is working on water supply and also on the anvil is a ropeway to the spot.

The first phase of the work began today with an outlay of Rs. 68 Crores. The total cost of the project has been posted at Rs. 113 Crores.

Earlier the welcome speech was delivered by the Sangha MLA and the vote of thanks was presented by Yangthang MLA PL Subba.