

VP commends Sikkim's 'vibrant and progressive strides' in education

Gangtok, 29 Oct: Vice President Hamid Ansari inaugurated a seminar on “Right to Education with special reference to Sikkim and its impact on Legal Awareness Campaign” here at Chintan Bhawan today. The seminar is part of the golden jubilee celebrations of the High Court of Sikkim and the inaugural session was also attended by Governor BP Singh, Chief Minister Pawan Chamling, Chief Justice AH Saikia, HRD Minister NK Pradhan, Justice AP Subba and Justice SP Wangdi.

The Vice President was appreciative of how the education scenario in Sikkim was making “vibrant and progressive strides” and commended the policies and programmes of the State Government to make Sikkim a 100 percent literate State by 2015.

On the event being celebrated, he said, “The 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 separation of judiciary from executive and ensured speedy dispensation of justice. It is a momentous for the High Court and the people of the state and I extend my congratulations”.

Commenting on the education sector in the State, he commended that the “literacy outcomes in Sikkim have also been very impressive.”

“The increase in literacy has been particularly impressive in the 1990s as the government emphasized

rural and female literacy”, he observes, and remarked that it was to the State’s benefit that Sikkim had “a long tradition of religious, monastic and missionary education”.

He also made special mention the State Government’s focus on “education for all” which encompassed “quality, access, improvement in material and human resources and encouraging vocational education and education for weaker sections”.

As a word of advice, he pointed that with this “impressive record in the field of education, the question for the state is to assess whether formal enrolment has been translated into meaningful education out comes.”

“We need to question if our children have acquired skills commensurate with their schooling and whether they have access to vocational and technical skills and life skills that are necessary once they leave the portals of the school,” he shared.

On the national scenario, he highlighted that it had taken Free India 6 decades to provide, as a right, free and compulsory education to its young aged between 6 to 14 years. The Right to Education Act passed by the Parliament last month, he stressed, was a historic step which empowerment citizens to demand education so that every citizen can develop her potential to the fullest.

Remarking that “products of our education system are the future citizens of the country,” he shared that a rudimentary legal awareness of the rights and duties of citizens and legal schemes of things in the country should also be imparted in the schools.

Accepting that “more meaningful” empowerment of citizens “can only be done through specific and specialized

legal awareness programmes of the kind conducted by Sikkim State Legal Services Authority,” the Vice President conveyed hope that the “existing synergy between civil society and the government would continue to further legal awareness in the state”.

“The narrative of education reform,” he stressed, “must begin from the premise that every citizen has the right to a dignified life and that it is the duty of the state to make it possible.”

The inaugural session was also addressed by the Governor who pointed out that the high dropout rate of Sikkim was a matter of concern.

This, he said, should be the area where the State Government and the legal awareness services should get most involved. Apart from the rapid infrastructural development for education and training of teachers being taken up in Sikkim on a war-footing, what the State Government should be concentrating more on was inculcating dedication and responsibility among teachers and generate a proactive and positive approach among the parents.

“The need of the hour is to have education that can empower the learning masses who can judge governance within their state and exercise their freedom of speech,” the Governor observed.

While mentioning that the state legal services was working “sincerely” to facilities “a litigation –free state”, he said that the need was now for the policy makers, teachers, parents, private sector and NGOs to develop quality education where he highlighted that the change in

curriculum, availability of quality teachers and action oriented implementation of policies was necessary.

Earlier, in his address the Chief Minister Pawan Chamling had shed light on the initiatives and pro-education policies and initiatives undertaken by his Government which has dedicated its fourth term in power to reinvigorating education in Sikkim.

He stressed that education had been accorded top priority by the State Government.

“We are also trying to reorient our general policy to further enhance the quality of education,” he shared, adding: “Through our own limited resources and in our own humble way, we have taken initiatives to make quality education widely accessible and affordable in the State. In the process, we have been able to smooth out disparities to a large extent resulting from uneven household income and lack of other relative opportunities caused by historically demonstrated social condition across the State”.

He concluded with the remark that the issue of reforms in a sector like education was a “continuous process which must be thought over and over again, discussed and debated always and everywhere.”

The Chief Justice in turn said that the topic of the seminar was a befitting one since education was the basic foundation of a vibrant democracy.

“Liberation of Education and Education for Liberation,” he highlighted, was the objective behind the seminar which also showcased the High Court’s contribution to the field of education and towards generating awareness for the past 50 years.

The Vice President also released the Golden Jubilee Souvenir of the High Court of Sikkim today.