

Foreword



Dr. Pawan Chamling
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Chief Minister of Sikkim

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Dr. Pawan Chamling
Hon'ble Chief Minister, Sikkim

I am happy to learn that the Forests, Environment & Wildlife Management Department is bringing out State of Environment Report (SoER) on Sikkim. Besides the benchmarking of our present endeavours, this report will give us a sense of added direction and purpose in the overall environmental conservation drive in the State.

We are concerned with development of this State but at the same time we can not lose sight of our concern for Environment. Nature has given its fruits for utilization without which no being can survive. Our Mission has always been harmonious Human-Nature relation to the best advantage of both. We take care of our nature and the Nature takes care of us. The developed Nations have used the Natural resources to its maximum thus impinging upon our survival. In view of this, the State Government has reminded ever vigilant and keen to play a responsible role in conserving our Environment and Nature. Over the decades, we have evolved a balanced strategy of pursuing a comprehensive goal of development in the State through sustainable utilization of our natural resources.

In Sikkim, our Mission has always been to initiate comprehensive conservation measures including ban on use of non-biodegradable materials, ban on grazing in reserved forest, ban on felling of green trees and ban on killing of wild animals. Our effort has been to make Sikkim a total organic state which also secures survival of all living organism so vital for man and the entire Nature.

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We have already addressed Environment issues. Environment Commission and Glacier Commission have been constituted in the State with mandate to study and recommend remedial measures to the Government. With development stress on eco-tourism, horticulture, floriculture and apiculture, we are already pursuing a development model based on the principle of 'low carbon economy' that the world is constantly trying to adopt. In the global context, we subscribe to the principle of clean development mechanism and qualify to claim compensation under carbon trading for our contribution to contain CO₂ emission.

*Amidst these burgeoning global concern and the disturbing reports worldwide, Sikkim as a Himalayan State, has always played its responsible role with sustained commitment contributing towards global effort in whatever way possible. Publication of this **State of Environment Report 2007 of Sikkim** is yet another milestone in promoting environmentally sound development in the state.*

Let me congratulate everyone involved in this noble mission and wish them all success in their future endeavour.



Dr. Pawan Chamling
Hon'ble Chief Minister, Sikkim

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S. B. Subedi
Hon'ble Forest Minister, Sikkim

The word “Environment” is an expression of very wide amplitude. It takes into account all those factors which directly or indirectly have a bearing upon the natural surroundings of human beings. In fact, there exist a close relationship between man and his environment in the absence of which a human being cannot survive.

The problem of environment pollution and degradation in today's world is not a new one. Therefore, it's very important to not only control pollution and environmental degradation but also to evolve remedial measures to meet the hazards of pollution and environmental degradation.

In today's world information is the key for any development activities. Publication of this state of environment report, the first of its kind for Sikkim, is yet another milestone in our journey to provide ultimate environment related information in the state.

I congratulate Forest, Environment & Wildlife Management Department and its ENVIS team for bringing out this first report on State of Environment of Sikkim. I hope this report will contribute towards achieving sustained and equitable development which remains the greatest challenge of humanity today.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Subedi".

S. B. Subedi
Hon'ble Forest Minister, Sikkim

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A rugged land mass with tall mountains and deep gorges and narrow valleys, forested slopes, interlaced hills, criss-crossed by fast flowing rivers and cascading springs, nature has moulded Sikkim into an amphitheatre that is at once unique, unparallel and crafted to ideally suit a utopian's dream of nature's paradise. Sikkim's beauty is at once captivating breathtaking and simply awesome. Nestled in the lap of the mighty Mt. Khangchendzonga, the world's third highest peak, this landlocked horse-shoe-shaped state is a hotspot of Himalayan biodiversity.

Environment conservation is a priority thrust in Sikkim. Our policy and focus have all along been to protect the potency and vibrancy of our environmental sanctity. The hills and the Himalayas are the veritable storehouse of our glaciers, sources of river systems, source and inspiration of our spiritual quest and in fact the epitome of all natural, moral and material high point.

Sikkim enjoys a stable and enviably green Nature, thanks largely to the farsightedness, policy formulation and spearheading a people's movement for retention of strong ecological base vis-a vis development under the present government led by the greenest Chief Minister, Dr. Pawan Chamling. Long term perspective policy pronouncements, a foolproof legal envelope, an informed public, an aggressive conservation campaign are some of the highlights that have enabled us to actually increase our forest cover and a prosperous environment. Natural resources are our main engines of a strong economic growth. In fact a rich forest cover serves a multitude of functions promoting activities in sectors like animal husbandry, agriculture, hydro-power and ecotourism.

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Sikkim has always been in the forefront of environmental movement, whether it is placing a ban on the use of plastic or banning commercial felling or launching people specific pro-environment programmes such as the State Green Mission. Policy and planning conceived at the right level and propagated vigorously through the active participation of the people have resulted in providing for an enabling ambience for long term developmental investments in the state on a firm and strong footing. Smriti vans, herbal gardens, urban beautifications, avenue plantations etc. that the state has undertaken on a large scale are all means and measures to enrich further and enhance the natural beauty of Sikkim. We have a vibrant forest cover both in the valleys and in the hills to steadfastly anchor our environment, hold the mountain soil in place. Forest is major land use making as much as 46% of the land area. The last decade and half has seen a significant increase in green initiatives towards achieving the national goal of 66% coverage. In terms of area-wise coverage, we have a record forest land of over 83% including highland pastures and the peaks.

Some of the other highlights of our environment thrust areas aimed at resurrecting the fragile eco-systems include constitution of Environment Commission 2005, inclusion of wetland in National Wetland Conservation Programme, transformation of Sikkim into a Total Organic State by 2015, adoption of low carbon economy, ban on grazing in the forest floor, ban on green felling, ban on the use of non-biodegradable materials like plastics, polybags, bio-medical and chemical waste. Other steps that deserve mention are the constitution of a high-level team for the study of the status of high altitude glaciers in the light of the prevailing global warming scenario.

*The story of environmental movement in Sikkim is a decade and a half long. During these eventful years, the government has pioneered a host of policy interventions, administrative and legal initiatives that have enabled fostering a sustainable environment and which supports all kinds of developmental investments. **The State of Environment Report 2007**, it is hoped, fulfills the objective of projecting some of our achievements and accomplishments.*



S. T. Lachungpa, IFS
PCCF-Cum-Forest Secretary