



**Pawan Chamling**  
Chief Minister, Sikkim, India

**SPEECH**

**North East India  
Investment Conference**

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Bring with me the warmest Greetings of the people of our State Sikkim and Country India to the people of the United States of America and the members of the Pravashi Bharatiya fraternity. Our greetings carry in them the fragrance of rhododendrons and orchids, serenity of the pristine Kanchenjunga mountain, holiness of priceless cultural heritage and affections of hill folks with rich social values.

Sikkim is one of the most fascinating eco-tourism destinations in the world. We depict the real story of continuity amidst change. We take pride in being the living example of unparalleled and the most successful sustainable practices.

With a unique political history, Sikkim today has a robust democracy that has trickled down to every hearth and home and every individual. Democracy has climbed the remotest valley. We are therefore, declared as the third best state in the Panchayati Raj implementation in the country. With a consistently maintained very low level of crime rate and proven record of socio-political stability, Sikkim boasts of having the highest per capita availability of peace perhaps in whole of Asia. Our State is terrorism and insurgency free. Peacefulness and tranquility are inbuilt in Sikkimese ethos. Unlike many parts of the world, we have redefined the concept of border state as a bridge between States and Nations to foster friendship, cooperation and mutual understanding. This is our hallmark and this is our priceless brand name also.

We have one of the best social indicators and have achieved unprecedented success in areas like environment, tourism, horticulture, decentralisation and cross border interactions. We have published very many state of the art reports and volumes including *Sikkim Human Development Report* and *Sikkim: the People's Vision*.

We started very late in the modern development interventions. Widely successful Green Revolution is yet to reach Sikkim. Mega industrial ventures do not exist there. We have not seen much of mainstream technologies. Yet, Sikkim has one of the highest economic growth rates in the country. Our State was declared the best State in the whole of Eastern and North Eastern India by reputed

fortnightly magazine *India Today* in 2006.

Our development foundation is mainly based on eco-tourism characterized by amazingly fabulous and charming natural resources. Our growth is triggered by traditional farming practices that produce a magnificent variety of horticultural, floricultural and ethno-medicinal items. With a negligible use of chemical fertiliser, we have been the harbinger of organic farming in the country. I very warmly invite all the distinguished commercial corporate establishments here in the US to Sikkim for investment and development interventions. Our investment laws are most liberal. Our labour laws are incredibly investor friendly. Most importantly we have rich hydro-power potential. A range of reputed independent power producers are already working in our State. By 2015, we plan to generate over 4000 MW.

I keep reading about the ever increasing craving for ethnic food, ethnic medicines, ethnic services and ethnic values among the American and European people. To say in the American parlance, we pretty much remain the storehouse of all the ethnic values, ethnic practices and traditional beauties. Look at our natural heritage. With over 4000 species of striking varieties of plants and shrubs and around 700 species of rare orchids and rhododendrons, we are one of the top bio-diversity hotspots in the world. We are storehouse of very rare medicinal and aromatic plants. I am told that the American people pretty much like *Ringad* (wild fern and what we locally call *Nigro*) and water crest (what we locally call *Simrayo*). We traditionally grow both of these in highly organic condition. Our passion fruits, ginger and cardamom are of unparalleled quality and flavour.

All these provide space to both traditionalist and modernist. We are a playground for both ethno practices based tourism activities and a modern pharmaceutical research based commercial harnessing of our intellectual property resources. Perhaps nowhere they coexist in such a harmonious and complementary manner. Therefore, I am here before this very distinguished gathering to invite the American people, Pravashi Bharatiya community and traders, investors and corporate houses to take advantage of all these.

You will have an unparalleled advantage. The Government of India has now reopened the old trade route through Nathu la pass in Sikkim with the Tibet Autonomous Region of China. This means connectivity and market access to the entire eastern Himalayas and the huge and unexploited region of entire western landmass of China. In very near future, this route is likely to be a normal trade route that will function under the most favored nation (MFN) arrangement. Our exports could be anything varying from people centric commercial services to energy and from construction materials to traditional incense sticks used in monasteries and temples. This is the shortest and most viable land route to access Chinese market from anywhere in South Asia.

We have the crystal vision of integrating trade and tourism in the very near future. With the Buddhist relics of Bangladesh, Bhutan, Myanmar, Nepal and India being integrated, Nathu la will be the fountain head of magnificently unparalleled eco-tourism panorama and treks. This makes us play a very critical role in India's "Look East Policy". Our contribution in steadily converting a hard border into a soft one and emerging as a bridge between two diverse civilizations of India and China is in fact being now replicated within India and outside.

Therefore, Sikkim provides a huge scope for making investments in Hotels which are beyond the traditional landmark of 5 stars. We have opened the State with very attractive incentives for golf courses and amusement parks. Ours is perhaps the only State in the country, which provides licenses and other provisions for opening casinos. Required land is easily forthcoming on the basis of 99 years lease arrangement from Government to Private Developers.

Empowerment of people is the core content of our political philosophy. If individuals are happy, communities are contented and institutions are sound, we believe that the country will be in a fast forward progress mode. Social mobilisation in the nation building process then will be easier and smoother. We are doing exactly this in Sikkim. Look at our gender development index which is perhaps the highest in the country. Besides the well researched and

jealously maintained traditional liberal social practices, Sikkim is the only State in the country which has had women in the post of the Speaker of its Legislative Assembly and introduced 40 percent affirmative share at all levels of rural governance for women. Per capita average annual earning of our government employees is the highest in the country. Well known NGOs and international development agencies have a strong presence in the State. For a noted Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation also, Sikkim has been a model state.

Very distinguished guests in this august gathering,

What Sikkim requires today is modern technological and managerial intervention in the harnessing of its natural resources based comparative advantages. With over 45 percent of the total geographical area under forest cover, total ban on use of plastic bags and popular statewide Green Mission in operation, I was given the honour of being declared as the “Greenest Chief Minister” in the country in a nationwide poll conducted by *Down to Earth* Magazine published by Centre for Science and Environment in New Delhi. This is why we are declared as the best maintained State in the arena of Total Sanitation Campaign under the *Nirmal Rajya* programme. In other words, Sikkim provides comprehensive security to the mainstream India.

We need institutions and corporate houses that bring a comprehensive package from field to market ventures. We invite actions that connect producers of cardamom, tea, orchid, ethno-medicines, carpets, hydel power to the American and other markets. We will be delighted to host those exclusive investors that specialize on harnessing the beauties of our serene lakes and furious waterfalls. We keenly look forward to agencies and houses that sell the idea of cross border Buddhist circuit to the orthodox lovers and modern fans of eco-tourism spread across the globe.

Our strength also lies in a variety of service sector activities including education, health, construction, communication, energy, tourism, transport, trade, banking and insurance. In all these we have the best of facilitating agencies, investment

friendly legal and institutional norms. For instance, there is a huge scope for energy efficiency technology dissemination, bio-technology, organic certification, patents designing, hospitality business, cross border trade in services and, of course, modern communication techniques. We are always ready to tailor our norms and practices to the needs and aspirations of investors.

After seeing what is happening in China and other South East Asian countries, Sikkim has realized that there is a huge scope for opening Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in our State. This is an area the American investors particularly the Indian diaspora here must explore. In the last two years I personally led delegations of our State abroad. This included visits to the South East Asian countries including Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand and to six European countries including Germany, Switzerland, Italy, France, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. Given the geography, liberal investment environment, rich human resources and special natural resource endowments, these visits have generated a lot of enthusiasm and corporate interests to invest in Sikkim.

Once you are there in Sikkim, it is a place that dazzles your spirit, enlightens your mental faculty and emboldens your decisive culture. We welcome you heartily. We have had very well known corporate houses from Europe, South East and East Asia visiting us in the last three years. Many of them are now finalizing their ventures and participation in the State. I assure all of you that Sikkim with ever smiling faces and warm hearts will be a destination worth considering in terms of a sustainable and gainful partnership.

While our concerns on globalisation remain as acutely as what famous American Economist Joseph Stiglitz has elaborated in his widely read book "Globalisation and its Discontents", we remain doubly reassured by our Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh's unflinching commitment to maximize on the advantages of globalisation. His dictum of "inclusive development" as the theme of the ongoing 11<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan could bring a massive transformation in the flourishing economy and diverse society of today's India. I am deeply delighted

to notice the presence of Dr Montek Singh Ahluwalia in this august gathering. He is one of the chief architects of India as an emerging global power and represents a new generation of India's astute policy thinkers.

Let me also mention that Sikkim being a small state of hardly 600000 people also has the privilege of hosting a national university created by an act of Parliament. We are now designing a range of both traditional and non-traditional courses in the University. We plan to have very specific courses on mountain ecology, border management, bio-technology, military sciences, disaster management, migration, development communications, bio-diversity, natural resources management and hydrology, human security and environment. It is a new University where we intend to make both national and international recruitments. We shall have students from all over. I take this opportunity to invite the American educational institutions to collaborate with us in making this national University mutually beneficial.

I thank you all for giving me this rare opportunity to make my presentation before you. I warmly congratulate all the members of the Indian diaspora here for their love and dedication to their country Mother India. I extend my deep gratitude to our distinguished American friends for their gracious presence here in this gathering. I also thank all the Ministries of Government of India and distinguished officials from India for making this superb arrangement for us to interact with the American people.

We have a very resourceful mission and a highly dedicated team of diplomats and officials here in the US led by one of our very knowledgeable, versatile and seasoned diplomats Mr Ronen Sen. I am sure our Mission here would be of tremendous support to facilitate your visit to initiate corporate activities in Sikkim. We remain there to welcome you as our honoured and valued guests. Sikkimese hospitality is known all over for its warmth and highly cultured services. Please visit us soon to see what we can do for you.

Thank you once again

Jai Hind



**Pawan Chamling**, b. 22 September 1950 has been the Chief Minister of Sikkim since December 1994. He was elected to the high office of the Chief Minister for the third consecutive term in 2004. Active in social works from his early teens, Pawan Chamling's political journey had its formal beginning in 1977 as the Vice-President of Sikkim Prajatantra Congress. Since then he has emerged as one of the most prominent regional political leaders in the country. A media savvy Chamling has always been in the forefront of development discourse in the North Eastern

India. Known for introducing a large number of reform measures and also putting Sikkim to a high growth regime, Chamling's vision of opening India to the East and consolidating India's South East and East Asia linkages has now started bearing fruits.

In 1982, he was elected unopposed as President of Yangang Gram Panchayat. In 1985, he was elected as the Member of State Legislative Assembly and held the post of Chairman, Sikkim Distilleries. In 1989 election, he was re-elected with a record 96.6 % of total vote cast. He became Cabinet Minister in charge of Information and Public Relation and Printing Department in the Sikkim Sangram Parishad Government.

A relentless worker for the poor and downtrodden, Pawan Chamling formed his own Sikkim Democratic Front party on March 4, 1993 and initiated a statewide campaign against the autocratic rule of the then government. Widely hailed as the "dark horse" by national and international media, Chamling, as the lone opposition MLA, created history by searching for democracy with a lighted candle in his hand inside the State Assembly Hall on September 9, 1992. His party won Assembly election in 1994 and formed the popular *khalikhutte ko sarkar* (government of the bare foot people).

In recognition to his tireless effort at emotional integration of Sikkimese people into the mainstream, he was awarded the coveted "Bharat Shiromani Award". Also voted as the "Greenest Chief Minister of India" in a country wide poll conducted by the prestigious Centre for Science and Environment, New Delhi, Chamling has consistently and extensively contributed to the environmental conservation of the Eastern Himalayas. He has served the poor and downtrodden with evangelical zeal.

Chamling was honoured with Doctor of Philosophy (*Honoris Causa*) by the Manipal University in 2003 for his dedication to the public service. A man of popular literature, Pawan Chamling has many volumes of poetry to his credit, some of them already rendered into English and Hindi. He writes powerful poetry with consummate simplicity and revolutionary overtones on themes centered around human dignity and equality. Some of his writings include Antahin Sapana Mero Bipana, Ma Ko Hu, Perennial Dreams and My Reality, Excavating Self, Crucified Prashna and volumes of Speeches. He has been the Editor of *Nirman*, a literary magazine since its inception in 1977.

He brought several national and international laurels to his State and the country. Sikkim was adjudged the best state among the East and North East States of India by *India Today* in 2006. Sikkim was also declared the third best State in the country in the implementations of Panchayati Raj system. It was under his stewardship that the historic Nathu la trade route was reopened after full 44 years in July 2006. Thus he is credited to have brought the two great powers India and China together in a cooperative framework.

**Phone: 91-03592-202536/202304/221122/202575.Fax: 91-03592-202245/204710**

**E-mail: cm-skm@hub.nic.in; Website: pawan-chamling.org**