

English rendering of PM's address at Sikkim@50 event

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Governor of Sikkim, Shri O.P. Prakash Mathur Ji; the popular Chief Minister of the state and my friend, Prem Singh Tamang Ji; my colleagues in Parliament, Dorjee Tshering Lepcha Ji and Dr Indra Hang Subba Ji; other public representatives present here; ladies and gentlemen!

(Greetings in local language)

Today is a momentous day, marking the Golden Jubilee of Sikkim's democratic journey. I had earnestly wished to be amidst you all, to witness this celebration, this spirit, and this remarkable 50-year journey. I desired to stand shoulder to shoulder with you in this celebration. I departed from Delhi early this morning and arrived in Bagdogra, and although the weather carried me to your doorstep, it prevented me from proceeding further. As a result, I was unable to meet you all in person. However, I am witnessing this grand occasion—what a magnificent sight lies before me! People can be seen in every direction; it is truly a spectacular scene. How wonderful it would have been to be present amidst you all. Unfortunately, I could not reach you, and for that, I extend my sincerest apologies.

Nonetheless, as the Honourable Chief Minister has graciously invited me, I assure you that as soon as the state government finalises the date, I shall certainly visit Sikkim. I look forward to meeting you all and becoming a witness to this golden 50-year journey. Today is a day to celebrate the accomplishments of the past five decades, and you have organized a splendid programme to mark the occasion. I have been closely observing and listening, and I must say that the Chief Minister himself has shown tremendous dedication in making this event truly memorable. He has even travelled to Delhi twice to personally extend his invitation. I heartily congratulate all of you on the 50th anniversary of the formation of the State of Sikkim.

Friends,

Fifty years ago, Sikkim chose a democratic path for its future. The people of Sikkim aspired to connect not only with Bharat's geography but also with its very soul. There was a deep conviction that when every voice is heard and every right is protected, equal opportunities for development are assured. Today, I can confidently state that the confidence of every Sikkimese household has grown ever stronger. The country has witnessed the outcomes of this belief through Sikkim's remarkable progress. Today, Sikkim is the pride of Bharat. Over these fifty years, Sikkim has become a model of harmonious development with nature. It has blossomed into a vast garden of biodiversity. It has attained the distinction of being a 100% organic state. It has emerged as a shining symbol of cultural and heritage-based development. Today, Sikkim is among those states in the country with the highest per capita income. All these achievements are the result of the hard work and unity of the people of Sikkim. In these five decades, many bright stars have emerged from Sikkim, illuminating the Indian sky. Every community here has played a vital role in enriching the culture and growth of the state.

Friends,

After assuming office in 2014, I declared – Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas. Balanced development across the nation is crucial for building a developed Bharat. Development must not be confined to one region while leaving another behind. Every state and region of Bharat possesses its own unique strengths. Guided by this vision, over the past decade, our government has brought the North East to the forefront of development. We are advancing with the resolve of 'Act East', driven by the spirit of 'Act Fast'. Recently, the North East Investment Summit was held in Delhi. Major industrialists and investors from across the country took part. They announced significant investments across the North East, including in Sikkim. This promises to create substantial employment opportunities for the youth of Sikkim and the wider North East in the coming years.

Friends,

Today's programme also provides a glimpse into the future journey of Sikkim. Several development projects related to the state have been inaugurated or had their foundation stones laid. These projects will enhance facilities in healthcare, tourism, culture, and sports. I extend my congratulations to all of you on the commencement of these vital initiatives.

Friends,

The entire North East, including Sikkim, is fast becoming a luminous chapter in the narrative of a new Bharat's development. Where once geographical distance from Delhi posed a barrier to progress, now new avenues of opportunity are being opened. The most significant catalyst for this transformation is the improvement in connectivity – a change that all of you have personally witnessed.

There was a time when travelling for education, medical treatment, or employment was a major challenge. However, the situation has changed drastically over the past ten years. During this period, approximately 400 kilometres of new national highways have been constructed in Sikkim. Hundreds of kilometres of rural roads have been built. The Atal Setu has improved connectivity between Sikkim and Darjeeling. Rapid progress is also being made on the road connecting Sikkim to Kalimpong. Moreover, travel to Sikkim will become far more convenient with the development of the Bagdogra-Gangtok Expressway. In the near future, this route will also be linked to the Gorakhpur-Siliguri Expressway.

Friends,

Today, the campaign to connect the capital city of every North-Eastern state with the national railway network is progressing at a rapid pace. The Sevoke-Rangpo railway line will soon link Sikkim to this network. In areas where constructing roads is not feasible, we are also working to establish ropeways. A short while ago, one such ropeway project was inaugurated, which will significantly improve convenience for the people of Sikkim.

Friends,

Over the past decade, Bharat has been advancing with renewed determination and fresh aspirations. Among our highest priorities has been the goal of improving healthcare. In the last 10 to 11 years, major hospitals have been established in every state across the country. AIIMS institutions and medical colleges have seen significant expansion. Today, a 500-bed hospital has been inaugurated here for your benefit. This hospital will ensure access to quality treatment, even for the poorest families.

Friends,

On one hand, our government is focused on building hospitals, and on the other, it is committed to providing affordable and high-quality healthcare. Under the Ayushman Bharat scheme, more than 25,000 people from Sikkim have received free medical treatment. Now, all senior citizens aged 70 and above across the country are entitled to free treatment up to Rs 5 lakh. Henceforth, no family in Sikkim needs to worry about the healthcare of their elderly loved ones—our government will take care of their treatment.

Friends,

A 'Viksit Bharat' or developed India will be built upon four strong pillars: the poor, farmers, women, and the youth. Today, the nation is consistently strengthening these pillars. On this special occasion, I wholeheartedly commend the farmers of Sikkim. Bharat is witnessing a new trend in agriculture, and Sikkim is leading the way. The export of organic products from Sikkim is also on the rise. Recently, the famous 'Dalle Khursani' chillies began to be exported for the very first time. In March, the first consignment was dispatched abroad. In the future, many such products from Sikkim will be exported to international markets. The central government is working in close coordination with the efforts of the state government to make this possible.

Friends,

The central government has taken another significant step to enrich Sikkim's organic produce. The country's first organic fisheries cluster is being developed in Soreng district. This will provide Sikkim with a new identity both nationally and globally. In addition to organic agriculture, Sikkim will now also be recognised

for organic aquaculture. There is a growing demand for organic fish and fish products worldwide. This development will open new avenues in fish farming for the youth of Sikkim.

Friends,

Just a few days ago, the Governing Council of NITI Aayog convened in Delhi. During the meeting, I emphasized that every state should develop at least one tourist destination of international repute. The time has now come for Sikkim to transform—not merely as a hill station but as a global tourism destination. The potential of Sikkim is unmatched. It is a complete tourism package. It boasts natural beauty as well as spiritual heritage. With its lakes, waterfalls, mountains, and peaceful Buddhist monasteries, Sikkim offers a truly holistic experience. Kanchenjunga National Park, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, is not only a treasure of Bharat but a pride of the entire world.

Today, as a new skywalk is being constructed, the Golden Jubilee Project is being inaugurated, and a statue of Atal Ji is being unveiled—each of these developments symbolises Sikkim's aspirations for a new horizon.

Friends,

Sikkim also holds immense potential for adventure and sports tourism. Activities such as trekking, mountain biking, and high-altitude training can be easily facilitated here. We envision Sikkim evolving into a hub for conference tourism, wellness tourism, and concert tourism as well. The Golden Jubilee Convention Centre is a step in this direction—part of our preparations for the future.

I envision a day when renowned artists from across the world come to perform in the scenic valleys of Gangtok, and the world proclaims: "If nature and culture exist in perfect harmony anywhere, it is in our Sikkim!"

Friends,

We brought the G-20 Summit meetings to the North East so that the world might witness its capabilities and appreciate its immense potential. I am pleased that the NDA government in Sikkim is swiftly translating this vision into reality.

Friends,

Today, Bharat stands among the world's leading economic powers. In the years to come, Bharat is destined to become a sporting superpower as well. In realising this aspiration, the youth of the North East—and of Sikkim in particular—will play a crucial role. This is the land that produced football legends such as Bhaichung Bhutia. It is from Sikkim that Olympians like Tarundeep Rai have emerged. Athletes such as Jasral Pradhan have brought immense glory to Bharat. Now, our goal is to see champions rising from every village and every town of Sikkim. We must move beyond mere participation in sport towards a resolute commitment to victory. The new sports complex currently under construction in Gangtok will, in the years to come, be a cradle for future champions. Sikkim has been accorded special priority under the 'Khelo India' initiative. Support is being extended at every level—from identifying talent to providing training, technology, and competitive opportunities. I am confident that this vibrant energy and enthusiasm among the youth of Sikkim will help Bharat secure its place on the Olympic podium.

Friends,

All of you in Sikkim are fully aware of the power of tourism. Tourism is not merely a form of recreation; it is a celebration of our diversity. However, the heinous act committed by terrorists in Pahalgam was not simply an attack on Indian citizens—it was an assault on the very soul of humanity, a blow to the spirit of unity and brotherhood.

The terrorists not only devastated the lives of numerous families; they also conspired to divide the Indian people. But today, the world can clearly see that Bharat is more united than ever before. Through our unity, we have sent a firm and unequivocal message to the terrorists and their supporters.

They shattered lives by wiping the sindoor (vermilion) from the foreheads of our daughters, but we responded with Operation Sindoor—a decisive and powerful reply to their cruelty.

Friends,

Infuriated by the destruction of its terrorist bases, Pakistan attempted to retaliate by targeting our civilians and soldiers. Yet even in that, Pakistan's duplicity was exposed. In response, we destroyed several of their airbases, demonstrating to the world what Bharat is capable of—how swiftly, how precisely, and how decisively we can act.

Friends,

This occasion, marking 50 years of Sikkim's statehood, is a source of inspiration for us all. The journey of development will now accelerate. Ahead of us lies the year 2047, when our nation will celebrate 100 years of independence.

At the same time, Sikkim will mark 75 years as a state of the Indian Union. Hence, today is the moment to set our collective goal: what vision do we hold for Sikkim at that 75-year milestone? What kind of Sikkim do we wish to see? We must chart a roadmap—step by step—for the next 25 years. We must periodically assess our progress, gauge the distance yet to be covered, and determine the pace at which we must advance. We must move forward with renewed courage, fresh enthusiasm, and boundless energy. We must intensify the growth of Sikkim's economy. We should strive to transform Sikkim into a wellness state. In this pursuit, our youth must be central—they should be afforded expanded opportunities. We must prepare the youngsters of Sikkim to meet both local requirements and global demands. To that end, we must establish new opportunities for skill development in sectors where there is high international demand for the youth.

Friends,

Let us all pledge that over the next 25 years, we shall elevate Sikkim to the pinnacle of development, heritage, and global recognition. Our aspiration is for Sikkim to become a green model state—not only for Bharat but for the entire world. A state where every citizen lives under a solid roof; a state where every home is powered by solar energy; a state that leads in agro-startups and tourism startups, and earns global acclaim for the export of organic produce. A state where every citizen engages in digital transactions; a state that raises our identity to new heights through the transformation of waste into wealth. The next 25 years are a time for realising these and many more ambitions—for propelling Sikkim to unprecedented heights on the global stage. Let us move forward with this resolve and continue to carry the legacy ahead in this spirit.

Once again, on behalf of the people of Bharat, I extend my heartfelt best wishes to all the people of Sikkim on this significant milestone of 50 years, on this momentous occasion.

Thank you very much!

MJPS/VJ/IG

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