

SIKKIM EXPRESS 19-09-2021

State Disaster Risk Reduction Day observed

GANGTOK, September 18 (IPR): Land Revenue & Disaster Management minister Kunga Nima Lepcha graced the programme of State Disaster Risk Reduction Day as the chief guest here at the conference hall of NIC, Tashiling Secretariat, Gangtok today.

The programme which was organised by Sikkim State Disaster Management Authority (SSDMA) had the theme 'Making Sikkim Disaster and Climate Resilient by 2030'. This day also marks the 10th year anniversary of the 2011 earthquake in Sikkim which caused devastation on a huge scale and also took several lives.

The main objective of the programme was to take various measures to get an early warning system and build resilient infrastructures in the face of natural



disasters in Sikkim.

A short video of the topic was also presented which included activities of SSDMA. During the programme, handing over of rescue equipment to members of State Disaster Response Force (SDRF) was conducted. The programme also included announcement of the winners of school essay competition and video competition on the topic of climate change and natural disaster.

The minister was accompanied by Relief Commissioner-cum-Secretary, LR & DMD, Sarala Rai, Vice Chairman, SSDMA, Professor Vinod Sharma, Inspector General of Police, Home Guard and Civil Defence, Khilburna Gurung, HoDs from various line departments in the districts and officials of LR & DMD.

The minister was joined in the meeting through virtual medium by member, National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), Kamal Kishore, SEEDS India Co-Founder Dr. Anshu Sharma, Director, Climate Action Network for South Asia (CANSA), Sanjay Vashist, Professor, Kelo University,

Japan, Dr. Rajib Shaw and ITBP personnel.

The minister in his address acknowledged the fact that Sikkim lies in one of the most complex topographical and geological settings which makes it vulnerable to natural hazards. With recent changes in the climatic condition, Sikkim is more vulnerable to natural disasters, he said.

The minister talked about construction of houses under the housing schemes for urban and rural areas which will be engineered to have natural disaster resilient features. Disaster resilient villages in 16 model GPUs will also be built in the coming days. Furthermore, to deal with natural disasters, Sikkim will have its own Integrated Control Rooms and projects on climate funding and climate proofing.

Lepcha thanked NDMA for continuous support to SSDMA. He expressed hope the stakeholders will take full advantage of information provided by the experts today. He assured the department that all assistance from the government will be given to make Sikkim a disaster and climate resilient State.

Secretary, LR & DMD, Sarala Rai gave a brief history of SSDMA and how it came to being after the 2011 earthquake in Sikkim. A general report of activities and sensitization process by SSDMA was also given during her speech. She also thanked NDMA for continuously striving to make Sikkim a natural disaster resilient state.

Vice Chairman, SSDMA, Prof Vinod Sharma expressed his joy at seeing stakeholders at the meeting as this was an important subject in terms of the future of the region. He said that the recent climatic changes will lead to frequency of natural disasters in the State and the need of the hour is to build/

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modify infrastructures which are resilient to natural disasters.

NDMA member Kamal Kishore in his speech emphasized on changing infrastructure of the State to cope with disasters by using nature-based solutions. He highlighted the importance of making the State resilient to disasters not just for a few years but for decades to come as the menace of climate change looms on the horizon.

SEEDS co-founder Dr. Anshu Sharma stressed on the fact that we need to inculcate nature-centric thinking in schools and village communities. In his PowerPoint presentation, he delved at length on various issues such as managing complex disasters in Sikkim, understanding local natural challenges of the State, need of Local Weather Advisory and Artificial Intelligence Humanitarian Assistance in predicting disasters.

Director, Climate Action Network of South Asia, CANSA, Sanjay Vashist in his

power point presentation gave a brief report on preparation of Code Red in Sikkim, IPC report verdict on climate change, recent climatic events which led to natural disasters throughout the globe, climate projections for 21st century and recommendations for reducing risk of natural disasters.

Professor, Kelo University, Japan, Dr. Rajib Shaw, pointed out the fact that there was no sense of urgency towards climate change like the way it was for Covid-19 pandemic. He talked about having the same unity and urgency against climate change as we have against the Covid-19 pandemic as climate change is a greater threat against humanity. He further gave various recommendations to tackle challenges faced by government and community at local level. Sikkim is on the right path by implementing measures which will successfully help the State in tackling natural disasters and climate change in the near future, he added.