

**GOVERNOR'S SPEECH FOR
CONFERENCE OF GOVERNORS
RASHTRAPATI BHAVAN, NEW DELHI
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Respected Rashtrapati, Uprashtrapati Ji, Pradhan Mantriji, Hon'ble Members of the Union Cabinet, Hon'ble Governors and Lt. Governors, senior officers of the Government of India and Rashtrapati Bhavan, ladies and gentlemen, I feel privileged to be with you all this afternoon and would like to express my gratitude to respected Rashtrapati for providing us this opportunity to represent our respective States at this august forum of annual Conference of Governors.

Uttarakhand, the holiest land of Bharatvarsha, called the Devbhoomi rightly so because there is something spiritual and divine in this land which attracts great men and saints like Adi Shankaracharya in Badrinath, Guru Gobind Singh in Hemkund Sahib, Swami Vivekanand in Mayawati Ashram in Champawat etc. to find peace and enlightenment. Many great writers and thinkers like Ruskin Bond, Shivani, Jim Corbett, Ashapurna Devi etc. came to Uttarakhand to find inspiration.

The nature has endowed the State with abundance of natural resources to use, cherish and share with the world.

Climatically and geographically, Uttarakhand is the most varied State in the country where one can find snowcapped alpine mountain in higher Himalayas to sub-tropical climate in Haridwar and Udham Singh Nagar. This variation comes with variation in other properties like soil type, temperature, rainfall/moisture, snowfall etc. which result in wide variety of fauna and flora to grow and develop giving the state huge economic potential to harness and sustainable development of the State.

The nature has also endowed the State with large forest cover and abundant water resource. The State has approximately 71% forest cover of the total geographical area of the State and 4.77% of India's total forest cover whereas the State has only 0.83% share in all India population resulting in very high per capita forest cover which is in fact one of the highest in the country. Himalaya is considered as the third pole of the planet Earth and Uttarakhand is considered as the water tower of the country. Himalayas in Uttarakhand is the store house of glaciers which feeds the holiest and the reverential, perennial Ganges river system. This forest and river system gives so much ecosystem services to the nation that it is difficult to imagine Indian civilization without Uttarakhand. The large forest area, not just sequester carbon and purify air but also store water, prevents soil erosion and provides refuge to wide

variety of fauna and flora, which is essential for maintaining biological variation. The large river system of the State has huge economic implications not just for Uttarakhand but for the whole nation. It produces clean hydro energy, recharges our aquifers, brings alluvial soil to Indo-Gangetic plain that make this plain one of the most fertile region in the world, irrigates around 11.53 lakhs hectare land directly from canals emerging from rivers in Uttarakhand and in some way or other this river system touches lives of 40% of Indian population economically and more than a billion Hindus and other religious sects spiritually. This stewardship of sources of ecosystem services makes Uttarakhand one of the most important region of the world to protect, preserve and incentivize not just for present generation but also for posterity.

Because of the climate, topography and spiritual ambience, Uttarakhand is home to a large number of institutions of national and international repute like Indian Military Academy, Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration, Forest Research Institute, The Doon School etc.

Further, it is also pertinent to mention here that this holy land is also India's "Veer Bhoomi". The people of Uttarakhand are not just protecting natural resources through various movements like Chipko Movement, but also

protecting our borders and laying their lives for the protection of people of this country and our beloved motherland. The State provides highest number of soldiers per lakh population in the country, which shows their patriotism and fearlessness, when it comes to protecting our motherland.

The State of Uttarakhand has grown leaps and bounds since the formation of the State. In year 2017-18 the nominal GSDP growth rate was 12.86% and real GSDP rate was 7.90%. Since then the growth rate has declined a little bit due to various reasons like COVID-19, but we are still growing at a rate more than the national average. Our per capita income has grown approximately 12 times since the formation of the State and now stands at Rs.1,76,744/-. The Government of the State understands its strength and weaknesses and making strategies and action plan accordingly for the overall development of the people and the State. Building on the high literacy rate (~ 90%), high tourism potential and horticulture potential, the State has taken measure to make state 'Atmanirbhar' through special tourism plan, promotion of self-employment and giving special emphasis on marketing by launching brand for the marketing of the products of Self-Help Groups, Hilansh. As envisioned by our Hon. PM Shree Narendra Modiji, Redevelopment of Shree Kedarnath and Shree Badrinath, Chardham All Weather Road, Rishikesh – Karnprayag and

Tanakpur – Bageshwar Rail line may prove to be a gamechanger for Tourism and Economy of the State.

As during COVID-19 outbreak, the people of the State have faced hardships both health wise and economically, apart from Atmanirbhar Package, Income support and Ration support provided by Government of India, the Government of Uttarakhand have shown great sensitivity and decisiveness in giving both income support to people who have lost their source of livelihood and sectoral package for various sectors to tide over the present crisis. Another important factor, which is playing an important role in the recovery of the economy is free and fast immunization against COVID-19. Uttarakhand is about to achieve 100% immunization and people of the state thank the Hon'ble PM his personnel intervention in the immunization process. Considering the macro-economic status and micro planning in the Government, the State is poised for very high growth in terms of GSDP and prosperity for the people.

I once again, thank the Hon'ble Rashtrapati ji, Up-Rashtrapati ji, Pradhan Mantri ji and all dignitaries for this opportunity to represent Uttarakhand before this august gathering.

Thank you,

Jai Hind!