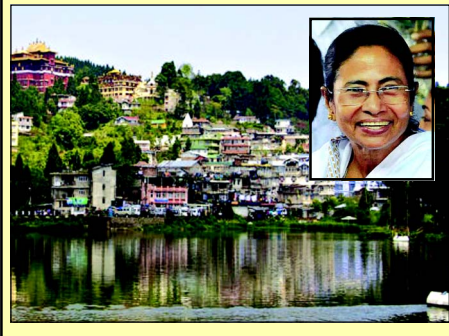




It's official: Mirik becomes sub-division



EOICORRESPONDENT

DARJEELING, MARCH 30 /- With the promise of providing land rights, developing the tea and tourism sectors of the area, and support to entrepreneurs, chief minister Mamata Banerjee today officially declared Mirik as a new sub-division.

When she last visited the hills on February 14, the chief minister declared Kalimpong sub-division as the 21st district of Bengal. Her promise to look into land rights is significant given Mirik with nine municipality wards is a notified area and surrounded by three tea gardens, Okaiti, Phuguri and Thurbo. Several areas of Mirik fall under these tea gardens. "I have come to know that many residents of Mirik live in the town area. I thought and talked with my (state) chief, home and land secretaries who have accompanied

"I cannot do everything as I am neither Ishwar, Allah or God but I assure you whatever is possible I will definitely do for you, as I love the hills and the people here. If you want to start an IT centre, food processing unit or cactus or orchid cultivation, then tell me or come to me. We will extend all help"

Mamata Banerjee

me today. We will conduct a survey and then take an official decision to allot you an address with holding numbers or land rights," Banerjee said. Terming Mirik a neglected area of the hills, the CM said her government would develop it with support from the tea gardens. "The Mirik Lake is dirty and the tourist cottages are in a shambles but nothing has been done to repair these assets. But we have plans to develop the tea and tourism sectors of this area like other places of the hills. We will also construct a government

With the municipality election around the corner, the TMC president did not let go of the opportunity to woo voters, highlighting the failures of the Gorkha Jannukti Morcha run GTA. "I thought the GTA was a government and it would work for the people. We (state) gave funds to the GTA to develop the hills but nothing has happened. The GJM neither works nor lets me. I want to do so many things here but cannot as we don't have the municipality," Banerjee said.

During the programme held at Alley ground, the CM laid the foundation stones for sub-stations at Sonada, Bagdogra, Kawakhali and Purbakara Barir Chat and a SIDA guest house in Maitigara at a cost of Rs38.52 crore and inaugurated projects worth Rs186 crore including a fair price diagnostic MRI at Darjeeling district hospital.

GTA to move apex court over Tiger Hill construction project

EOICORRESPONDENT

DARJEELING, MARCH 30 /- Opposing the ongoing construction work by the state government of lodges for tourists at Tiger Hill in Darjeeling sub-division, the Gorkhland Territorial Administration has decided to move the Supreme Court, asserting the work was being done without taking into consideration the environmental implications on the area and the religious significance of the place.

The Gorkha Jannukti Morcha, which runs the GTA, has even threatened to call a 24-hour general strike in the entire hills in protest. The state tourism department has pumped in Rs40 crore for the project at Tiger Hill, 12km from Darjeeling town, to build four cottages, a 20 double-bedded lodge and a 20-bed dormitory. The GTA has objected to the state government's decision to construct the tourist lodge at Tiger Hill saying the project flouted environmental guidelines and norms and was a danger to the flora and fauna of the area. The place is also revered for the Ma Senchel Dham (Durga Temple) by locals and tourists.

Today, GJM assistant secretary Binay Tamang said the land measuring 31.85 acres in Tiger Hill where construction work was taking place, belonged to the GTA. To drive home his point, Tamang showed official documents and said, "The total area (31.85 acres) was handed over to the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council in 2002 as per a state government order. In addition, the land, property comprising two damaged buildings and seven cottages were also transferred to the DGHC. As per order No. 1217-DT/ST-28 dated June 13, 2002 of the directorate of tourism of the West Bengal government, the property under the name and style of Tiger Hill Tourist Lodge located at Senchel Pasture (catchment area) of Tiger Hill, Darjeeling, on an area of 31.85 acres of land, out of which 02.0 acre belongs to the tourism department, and the remaining 29.85 acres under the administrator of Darjeeling Improvement (DI) Fund, has been handed over to the DGHC. The order also states that two damaged structures - a Club House and Chalet and seven staffers of the West Bengal Tourism Development Corporation (WBTC) posted at Tiger Hill lodge had also been transferred to the DGHC. "As per chapter II (serial number 26) of the GTA act of 2011, the management and settlement of land including markets and market shed controlled by the DI Fund come under the new council since it is a transferred subject. So how has the state government taken an unilateral decision without consultation to start construction on the Tiger Hill land that belongs to the GTA?" asked Tamang. He also said the earlier proposal for a nine-hole golf course at Tiger Hill estimated to cost Rs27.92 crore, which had the state tourism department's approval, and the foundation stone for which was laid by chief minister Mamata Banerjee in 2013 in Darjeeling, had to be shelved because of opposition from the Darjeeling Forest Office, Wildlife Division. "The proposal for the golf course was opposed by the wildlife DFO on the argument that Senchel was notified as a wildlife sanctuary under the Wildlife Protection and Reserved Forest Acts of 1972. Our question is how is the state government now undertaking heavy construction work, which is also a catchment area?" Tamang questioned, who is also the GTA Sabhasad in charge of the information and cultural affairs department. The GJM leader said GTA chief executive Bimal Gurung today sent a letter to the chief minister in this regard seeking the state government's response. "The GTA chief executive has written to the CM and copies have also been sent to the Union environment and climate minister and the Darjeeling MP. If we do not get any reply from the state government, the GTA will file a case in the SC. And if required, our party will also observe a 24-hour bandh," warned Tamang. The state government's decision to construct the tourist lodge at Tiger Hill has also drawn opposition from various schools, NGOs and social organisations including senior citizens of Darjeeling, who have taken to social networking sites to vent their annoyance.

2 killed in hotel fire; owner, manager arrested

KOLKATA, MARCH 30 /- Two persons were suffocated to death while 31 others were rescued after a fire broke out in a hotel at upmarket Ho Chi Minh Sarani in the city today. Police have arrested the owner and the manager of the hotel. A senior police officer said the fire broke out at 3.25 AM, probably in the ground floor kitchen of Golden Park hotel in the city's high-security zone. The US Consulate and the British Deputy High Commission are also located in the area. "Smoke from the kitchen spread to the other parts of the hotel through the ducts of the centralised air-conditioning system. Most of the guests were sleeping when the fire broke out and the panic-stricken people were clueless as regards how to get out," the officer said. Ten fire tenders brought the blaze under control while the firefighters rescued 31 people, including guests and hotel staff, he added. Acting on a complaint lodged by a Fire Service department official, police from the Shakespear Sarani station arrested the hotel owner, BS Gujral, and manager Gautam Majumdar. Both have been booked under the WBPSA as well as IPC sections 304 (causing death by negligence), 308 (attempts to commit culpable homicide) among other relevant provisions. Eyewitnesses said guests on the second and third floors of the hotel tried to jump out of the windows in panic. Firefighters and disaster management personnel had to break

open the glass windows of the hotel to let out the thick smoke, the officer said. Besides, ladders and sky lifts were used to rescue those inside the hotel, he said, adding that the fire was brought under control after nearly three hours. The two deceased were identified as Anup Agarwal (53) from Gujarat and Chamar Kishan (52) from Odisha. "Both were declared brought dead by doctors at the nearby SKM hospital. Going by the nature of their death, it seems they died due to suffocation caused by the thick smoke. The post-mortem report is awaited," the officer said. "Initially, we could not identify Kishan and mistook him



for another guest. Later, his identity was established from the hotel records," he added. Two other guests of the hotel are being treated at a private hospital and three others, including a security guard of the hotel, were discharged from SKM hospital after treatment. State Fire Minister and city Mayor Sovan Chattopadhyay and senior Kolkata Municipal Corporation (KMC) officials visited the site of the fire mishap. "We are checking whether the hotel had a proper fire-fighting arrangement. As per our officers, the fire alarm did not work during the incident. We are checking it," a KMC officer said. (PTI)



(T-B) Broken window panes of the hotel that caught fire. Fire brigade officials bringing out an injured person from the hotel on Ho Chi Minh Sarani — Shyamal Maitra

Jaitley invites suggestions to make political funding cleaner

New Delhi, March 30 /- Finance minister Arun Jaitley today threw an "open invitation" to the opposition in the Lok Sabha to suggest steps to make electoral funding cleaner and more transparent. "I have an open invitation to all, please suggest to me a better system which will ensure clean money and transparency to the extent possible," he said. Jaitley said although the opposition was opposing the provisions of the Finance Bill related with electoral bonds, but they have not come out with a "single suggestion" to deal with the

issue. "I am only hearing adjectives like it must be clean, it must be transparent. Please give me ideal combination of the two. We are willing to consider it. I will wait for a specific suggestion," he said while replying to a debate on amendments proposed by the Rajya Sabha to the Finance Bill 2017. These were later rejected by the Lower House. The Opposition accused the Government of running roughshod by opening doors for "political extortionism" and passing "draconian" provisions in the Finance Bill. (PTI)

Taslima questions Srijato, Mandakranta's 'selective' stand

KOLKATA, MARCH 30 /- Exiled Bangladeshi author Taslima Nasreen today said she supports the poets who were vilified for their criticism of Yogi Adityanath, but questioned their silence when she was "bundled out" of West Bengal in 2007. She said that she had always fought for freedom of speech, but at the same time one cannot be "selective" while exercising that freedom. Her remarks came a day after a case was registered against unknown persons for threatening eminent Bengali poet Mandakranta Sen with gangrape for expressing support to Adityanath. Low poet Srijato who recently was

embroiled in a controversy after writing a poem allegedly hurting Hindu sentiment. "Where were these two when I was forced out of West Bengal by 'fundamentalists' for my writing in 2007?" Nasreen asked in a telephonic interview. She said, "I stand before his views... and Mandakranta too. I have been vocal for freedom of speech and that's why I support both of them. But one cannot be selective in asserting one's freedom of speech... Where were they when I was forced out of West Bengal in 2007?" A Hindutva group had lodged a police complaint against Srijato for posting a 12-line poem on Facebook on March 19, the day Yogi Adityanath was sworn in as the chief minister of UP allegedly hurting "Hindu sentiments". Referring to the recent killing of Tamil Nadu

atheist and Dravidar Viduthala Kazhagam activist H Farook, Nasreen said, "Where were they when Farook was killed? I have not seen them spending a single word on that incident. Where were these people when so many persons, bloggers were hacked to death in Bangladesh?" Farook, a 31-year-old daily wage labourer, was hacked to death in Coimbatore last week, a fortnight after he had posted a photo of one of his children holding a placard with the handwritten slogan "Kadavu illai, Kadavu illai, Kadavu illai (No God, No God, No God)". (PTI)



AT A GLANCE

Bengal to Bangla: state irked over centre's objection

KOLKATA: The state government has expressed its dismay at the objection of the union government to the proposed name of Bangla for West Bengal and it is going to write to the central government requesting to reconsider its decision. The state assembly passed a resolution last year to rename the state to Bangla (in Bengali, Bengali-English) and Bangal (in Hindi). But the MEA recently wrote to the state government asking it to "reconsider the decision" and "Bangla" would be too similar to neighbouring "Bangladesh". "We wrote letters to the union government and consulted scholars for the name change. Still the centre has insisted to it which we think was an act of political vendetta. We will again write to them to reconsider the decision," Partha Chatterjee, state minister for parliamentary affairs today said. (EOIC)

Sushma over attacks on Indians in US

NEW DELHI: Every attack and death of Indians in the US should not be considered as "hate crime", external affairs minister said today after members in the Rajya Sabha voiced concerns over recent incidents of violence. Replying to queries, Sushma Swaraj said, "We should not consider every attack or killing (in US) as hate crime," she told the members.

Oppn attacks govt on political extortionism

NEW DELHI: The Opposition in the Lok Sabha today accused the government of running roughshod by opening the doors to "political extortionism" and passing "draconian" provisions in the Finance Bill. The Opposition criticism came as the lower house today passed the Finance Bill 2017 to consider the five amendments carried out by the Rajya Sabha yesterday. Finance Minister Arun Jaitley moved the amended Finance Bill for consideration in the Lok Sabha. Deependra Hooda (Cong) said this was a "historic" occasion as never in the past had the Rajya Sabha amended the Finance Bill.

39 Years of Excellence

MOST RELIABLE, OLDEST & SPOTLESS AGENCY

Wanted for M/s Hemaya Security Services for Govt. Dept. Doha Qatar

✓ Male Security Guards (QR 1400+ O.T.+ Weekly off)

✓ Female Security Guards (QR 1500+ O.T.+ Weekly off)

Excellent Facilities. FREE: Accommodation / Medical / Transportation & Nominal Charges

Age: 21 : 35 English Skill Essential Quick Visa processing after medical report

WALK IN FOR PRE-INTERVIEW IMMEDIATELY

Contact:

YAKTHUNG

Siliguri: Phasidewa More, Amarpally, Siliguri- 734013

Phone: 9002744505 / 9002644506 / 9800287505

Email: hr@yaktung.org

Assam: Near Pensioners Bhawan, Chandmani Colony Guwahati-781003, Assam. Phone: 03961699945, 08402929421. Email: info@yaktung.org