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ADB sanctions \$180 million to improve Nepal's major highway

KATHMANDU, OCT 7/--/ The Asian Development Bank has sanctioned a soft loan of USD 180 million for the upgrading Nepal's 1,000 km-long East-West Highway, the main domestic and international trade route in country's Southern plain bordering India.

Landlocked Nepal's road network, which includes eight north-south and three east-west corridors, carries more than 90 per cent of the passengers and goods in the country. The project will improve and rehabilitate about 87 kms between Kanjanpur and Kamala on the East-West Highway, and will upgrade the highway section to a four-lane dual carriageway to cater to the projected increase of traffic demand, including a new road surface and drainage, the ADB said in a statement here. "The highway's road surface-Nepal's busiest route-is in fair to poor condition and does not segregate oncoming traffic or slow-moving vehicles and pedestrians," said ADB staff Johan Georget, who looks after the transport sector. The project road carries an average of 8,600 vehicles daily, with more than a quarter of them heavy vehicles, according to an estimate. The average is expected to grow to 25,400 vehicles per day by 2033. According to the ADB, improvement of the road will boost the efficiency of Nepal's transport system.

"Improving the road will boost the efficiency of Nepal's transport system, strengthen national and regional connectivity to promote growth and trade, and improve road safety," he said. The project will also finance civil works and equipment packages to improve road safety along the entire 1,027 km of the East West Highway, and support road safety campaigns. The construction is expected to start in the first quarter of 2019 and will be completed in 2022. The total project cost stands at \$ 256.4 million, of which the government will provide \$ 76.4 million. The loan will also finance preparation of detailed designs for future road projects along the corridor. The ADB will also provide technical assistance grant of \$ 750,000 to help prepare a national road safety policy and action plan, strengthen the road safety council, carry out a road safety assessment of the corridor, and promote gender equality measures in the transport sector. PTI

IN BRIEF

Assam gov't announces bonus for tea workers under ATCL

GUWAHATI: The Assam government has announced a bonus of 20 per cent for workers of tea gardens under the Assam Tea Corporation Limited (ATCL). ATCL has 15 tea gardens and around 16,748 workers.

Maot extremism to be wiped out in 3 years: Rajnath Singh

LUCKNOW: Home Minister Rajnath Singh Sunday said the menace of Left Wing Extremism (LWE) will be wiped out from the country in about three years. Singh said their action should be rapid and quick but never reckless. PTI

GJM burns Ahluwalia's effigy in Darjeeling

EOI CORRESPONDENT

DARJEELING, OCT 7/--/ The political picture is hotting up in the hills ahead of the 2019 election with the Gorkha Janmukti Morcha and BJP taking on each other in a show of strength in Delhi and Darjeeling. The subtle presence of the Bimal Gurung faction of the GJM can also be felt. In Darjeeling, on Sunday, senior GJM leaders alleged party president Binoy Tamang was stopped from addressing supporters in south Delhi on the occasion of the 11th foundation day celebration.

In a retaliatory move, GJM activists burned the effigy of Surendra Singh Ahluwalia, the Darjeeling MP in Chowk Bazar. GJM alleged the BJP leader had a hand in denying Tamang to celebrate the party's foundation day in Delhi. "Our unit in Delhi had organized the foundation day program in the NCUI auditorium and convention center. Our party was stopped and not allowed to head to the venue. We have information that Ahluwalia used his powers as a Union minister to ask the police contingent to stop Tamang from speaking against the Center," alleged GJM central committee youth spokesperson Arun Chhetri. Posters were also pasted in the

town-walls against the Darjeeling MP who is already facing public criticism for his reluctance to visit the hills during the 104-day long strife last year. "BJP and others talk of lack of democracy in the hills," he said, in reference to the Bimal Gurung faction of the GJM. But, we wonder that if we cannot speak in Delhi then where we would find democracy. The manager of the NCUI center was also threatened for allowing our programme," alleged the youth president.

GJM Darjeeling sub-division spokesperson Sandip Chhetri warned the M.P. would not be allowed to come to the hills. "The BJP can stop dreaming about winning from the hills anymore. If the Union minister who won by our votes does not allow our leader to speak in Delhi then we will ensure that he (Ahluwalia) is not able to visit the hills," he said. Earlier, this year BJP state president Dilip Ghosh faced hostility when he visited Darjeeling to interact with party supporters. The Darjeeling M.P. on the other hand has confined his visits to the plains of Siliguri. "Those who support the BJP should not instigate and try to create unrest in the hills. The BJP will have to take responsibility of any untoward incident in the hills," the GJM sub-division spokesperson said, in a veiled reference to Bimal Gurung.



The burning of the effigy --- Pranab Chhetri

North District asks for immediate steps to protect Mangan town from landslides

DEEPAK SHARMA

MANGAN, OCT 7/--/ District authorities of North Sikkim have told State Chief Secretary A. K. Srivastava that immediate intervention was necessary to save Mangan town from recurrent landslides and sanction of funds from the Union Home Ministry was necessary to take the required measures. Srivastava is on a two-day trip of North District during the week-end.

The District Collector North Karma R. Bonpo apprised the Chief Secretary that the detailed project report for the protection of Mangan town was currently under process with the National Disaster Management Authority. Srivastava assured that the issue would be taken up with the Home Ministry and necessary measures would be taken. The Chief Secretary also took a tour of lower Mangan Bazaar where recent landslide had caused damage to many buildings. Srivastava also inspected the land-



The view of a road near Mangan town --- EOI Photo

slide-prone areas of Rafong Khola, Lanthey Khola, Nadey, Meyong and Wong Khola which have turned into perennial trouble spots on the North Sikkim Highway. The North Sikkim Highway maintained by GREF had seen huge destruction during this monsoons season causing disturbance in movement of traffic to the border areas of Lachen and Lachung. The Chief Secretary assured that the issue would be taken up with the Border Roads Organization for the restoration of the damaged portions of the highways.

The Chief Secretary visited the 1200 MW Teesta Urja Power House at Ringdang where he inspected the powerhouse. The project is running since February 2016. The power project is currently generating about 800 MW of power which is being supplied and traded on the Indian Energy Exchange (IEE). About 100 engineers mostly from the state of Sikkim are currently employed in the project.

Culture front of SDF to hold essay competition on topical issues



Sikkim Sanskritik Manch news conference --- Shekhar Khawas

SUJAL PRADHAN

GANGTOK, OCT 7/--/ Sikkim Sanskritik Manch, the cultural wing of the ruling Sikkim Democratic Front party has decided to organized an essay, story and poetry writing competition for students of schools and colleges.

The event has been conceived to inculcate the culture of reading and writing amongst students as the young generation, now heavily inclined towards gadgets, is losing the reading habit, informed Chandra Khaling who heads the cultural front of SDF, in a news conference on Saturday. Besides competitions in the written segment, there would also be a painting competition to be held as a parallel event, said Khaling. The competition will be held in three broad categories: from the secondary level to the college and university levels. At the university level, it would be an open competition. For the secondary level the topic on which the competitors would have to write would be "Sikkim Ma Paryavaran" (Environ-

ment in Sikkim). For the senior secondary level, the topic would be "Jaiwik Kheti Jiwandayee Kheti" (Organic Farming is Life Giving Farming). For the college and above, the competitors would have to write an essay on Samajik Nyay Ra Sikkim (Social Justice and Sikkim).

Speaker Sikkim Legislative Assembly K N Rai is the Chief Patron of the competition. It was also informed that the entry will be accepted till November 30. By December 20, the results would be declared, Chandra Khaling informed. The cash rewards for the secondary level will be Rs 25,000, Rs 20,000 and Rs 15,000 for the first, second and third positions respectively. For the college level the prize respective amounts would be Rs 30,000, Rs 25,000 and Rs 20,000 for college level and for the open competition Rs 40,000, Rs 30,000 and Rs 20,000 along with consolation prizes. It was also informed that formal letters will be sent to schools, colleges and universities by October 25 for registration.

School children clean Himalayan Zoological Park, Bulbulay

EOI CORRESPONDENT



Children assembled in the cleaning drive --- EOI Photo

GANGTOK, OCT 7/--/ Lingding Junior High School initiated on Friday a cleanliness drive under "Swachh Bharat Abhiyan" at Himalayan Zoological Park, Bulbulay as in accordance to the nation-wide Swachh Bharat Cleanliness Campaign. Students from class V to VIII participated in the campaign. DFO C.P. Sharma, ACF T.T. Bhutia along with other officials were present. C.P. Sharma said every year India celebrated wildlife week from October 2 to 8 to honour the vast variety of wild flora and fauna. The theme of wildlife week this year is "Big Cats Predators Under Threat." He stated that the big cats of the world today face threats to their existence because of hunting, poaching and endangered habitats. People should be aware of the importance of these species in our fragile ecosystem. He said Himalayan Zoological Park was proud to participate in the conservation efforts of these species by serving as a centre of education and awareness. Principal of Lingding J.H.S School principal Binay Chhetri along with teachers and students were actively involved in the cleanliness drive. He said that the main objective was to generate awareness about the importance of the cleanliness.

Submarine cables to connect Andaman and Nicobar: BSNL Chief

RP SHARMA

PORT BLAIR, OCT 7/--/ Connecting Andaman and Nicobar Islands to mainland India with an optical submarine cable has been a long-time aspiration of the people of these Islands. After hanging fire for long, the Centre has finally cleared the project to boost mobile and internet connectivity in these remote Islands and to ensure direct communication link through a dedicated submarine Optical Fibre Cable (OFC) between Chennai and Port Blair. The Ministry of Telecommunication, Govt. of India has already sanctioned Rs 1232 crore for the project. Speaking to EOI, CGM, BSNL, A & N Telecom Circle, Mr V Jagadeesan said that the project was awarded to a Japanese Company, Nippon Electric Company

(NEC) in July this year. The survey of seabed, rock and land on the cable route have been taken up by technical engineers of Nippon Electric Company (NEC), a Japan based multinational company which will execute the ambitious project. After completion of the sea and land survey, physically work of laying the undersea cable will start within the next four months. A team of Japanese experts have already visited Port Blair to study the technical details of the project.

Once completed, the project is likely to usher- in a new era of sound telecommunication network, connecting remote and isolated Islands of the A&N archipelago with other parts of India and world. This project aimed to equip the Islands with appropriate bandwidth and telecom connectivity

will ensure robust implementation of various e-governance initiatives of the Centre. According to reports, Japanese based company NEC Ltd. has a vast experience in such project. The company has already completed the undersea cable laying project from Tuticorin in Tamil Nadu to Colombo in Sri Lanka.

One of the most challenging tasks the executor of the project has to face is ensuring that the existing cable line from Chennai to Singapore is not disturbed. The same Japanese company will also manufacture the optical fibre cable which will be laid beneath the sea. As part of the project, a Beach Manhole Joint will be developed in Corbyn's Cove for which necessary permission is being obtained from the District Administration. Letters has already been written to the Forest de-

partment for necessary CRZ clearance. Further, land has been acquired in Rangat for setting up infrastructure facilities to connect this part of the islands with the other telephone exchanges. Work has been taken up on war footing so as to complete the project simultaneously.

The project will connect from Chennai to Port Blair from where it will be further extended to Havelock, Rangat, Kadamtala, Baratang, Mayabunder, Diglpur, besides the southern group of islands. The contract is also for a system that includes a segment with repeaters from Chennai to Port Blair and seven segments without repeaters between the islands of Havelock, Little Andaman (Hut Bay), Car Nicobar, Kamorta, the Great Nicobar Islands, Long Island and

Rangat. The total cable length will be approximately 2,300km and carry 100Gb/s optical waves. The system will also assist educational institutes in the sharing of knowledge and will play a significant role in driving the "Digital India" vision, a campaign launched by the Centre to ensure that government services are made available to citizens electronically.

After completion of the OFC project, 25 TBps speed will increase, which will be five times the internet speed in Delhi and Mumbai. BPO/IT hubs will be set up at Port Blair and elsewhere in the Islands which will provide employment opportunities to the educated youths in call centres. It will also open doors for tele-education and tele-medicine besides boosting the tourism sector.