



Pradyot Bikram Manikya Debbarma in a news conference in Gangtok --- Shekhar Khawas

After Arunachal, Congress concern over protection of identity in Sikkim

SUJAL PRADHAN

GANGTOK, OCT 9/--/ Soon after Congress in Arunachal Pradesh Nabam Tuki had underscored the importance of protecting the unique identity of Arunachal, on Monday All Indian Congress Committee secretary in charge of Sikkim Pradyot Bikram Manikya Debbarma said Congress was committed to protecting the special status of Sikkim and fighting for the rights and privileges of the Sikkimese people.

Observers said with the Lok Sabha polls in 2019 approaching, it could be an election strategy of Congress to underscore the importance of regional and local identities in the north-east where these were always an emotive issue. Such a strategy could also help Congress in forging electoral alliances with regional parties in the north-east for most of whom the question of identity was the uppermost. Tuki, for instance, emphasized that for protecting the identity of Arunachal the removal of BJP from power was important. With Assam and a few other states under its belt, BJP is on a strong wicket in the north-east.

"For now we will first try to address the problem like influx in the state and protection of the state's

safeguarding article 371 F," Debbarma said. Agreeing that Congress had, somewhere down the line, had some of its credibility to the people of Sikkim, he said: "I agree that there was no attempt made to address the local issues and try to win the hearts of the people. I want to assure that from now on we will work for the state of Sikkim and its people like never before." It was the Congress, he claimed, which had provided the constitutional guarantee in the form of Article 371 (F) to protect the interests of the three ethnic communities --- Bhutias, Lepchas and Nepalese --- though he did not mention that this was in the wake of the controversial merger deal with the Indian union and the Chogyal had taken an active interest at that time to protect the interests of his subjects. Debbarma also promised that the Congress would also work for restoration of lost Nepali seat in the Sikkim assembly. Congress fully supported the reservation of seats for the Sikkimese Nepali community in the Assembly and was committed to raising this issue in Parliament and restoring this political right of the Sikkimese Nepalis which was essential for strengthening the social fabric of the Sikkimese society. Debbarma said two weeks from now he would start his tour of different parts of the State.

Pawan Chamling stresses on sustainable development

EOI CORRESPONDENT

GANGTOK, OCT 9/--/ Inaugurating The Eastern & Northeastern Region Policy Dialogue on "Making Liveable Cities: Challenges and Way Forward" at Chintan Bhawan in Gangtok on Tuesday, Chief Minister Pawan Chamling described Sikkim as the cleanest hill station and the most peaceful and the greenest state in the country.

Welcoming the gathering of scientists, experts, technocrats, architects and officials from different parts of the country, he said the initiative of a regional policy dialogue on "Making Liveable Cities" will greatly facilitate in finding solutions for making livable, sustainable cities in the north eastern and eastern regions. He said the dialogue was significant in regards to the recently concluded conference on "Cities and Climate Change Science", of the "Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change-IPCC", held in Canada early this year. With globalization and the growth in communication and improved accessibility to different means of livelihood villages were transforming to towns and towns developing into cities. This, in many ways, was straining the carrying capacity of urban townships and cities. It called for the need for framing effective policies and programmes to make growth sustainable in urban centres.

Chamling highlighted the need for a clear understanding of the rapidly altering urban scenario and its effect on the eco-system and stressed that rising consumerism, reckless use of

natural resources and dependence on chemically grown food invited hazards to humans as well as the natural environment. Climate change and its issues must be addressed with utmost urgency. Mountains were increasingly being embedded with townships and cities which posed danger for the fragility of the mountains and that there was a grave necessity to balance development and an increasing population along with the protection of the eco-system in a sustainable manner. He said the impact of urbanization on biodiversity was an issue of major concern. City planners and scientists must maintain long-term data on urban development and their impact on climate change. The Chief Minister briefly outlined policies and programmes implemented by the Sikkim Government since early 1995 which had helped in mitigating potential risks that came with rapid development. Underlining the stresses brought on by the burgeoning tourism sector in Sikkim he said the Sikkim State Tourism Policy 2018 was framed towards ensuring sustainable and long term urban tourism. He highlighted the achievements of Sikkim like having distinction of being India's first 100 per cent organic farming State, the cleanest state of India and being home to India's 100th airport at Pakyong. Organized by The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI) New Delhi, the dialogue was held primarily to bring together policy makers, academics and experts under one roof to discuss various challenges faced by broadening urban development and its hazards on the environment.



Chief Minister being welcomed at the conference --- EOI Photo

Sikkim shortlisted for organic farming award in Rome

EOI CORRESPONDENT

GANGTOK, OCT 9/--/ Sikkim has been shortlisted as finalist for the World Future Council award which would be presented in Rome later this month, Director COLABORA, Germany, Bernward Geier informed at a seminar on 'Exploring the op-

portunities and identification of areas of co-operation in organic dairy development in the State' held at Krishi Bhawan in Tadong on Monday. This award is the highest recognition in the organic world. Former agriculture minister of Germany Rebate Kuenast shared her experiences in the practice of organic farming. She suggested that a policy of quality production rather than mass production be fol-



Participants at the seminar on organic dairy development --- EOI Photo

lowed. Principal Director Horticulture and Cash Crops Development Department Dr K. Bhandari addressing the seminar said the State was progressing well in an organic way not only in the agriculture sector but in the dairy sector as well. He suggested that an on-going training and exchange programme should be introduced for further

development of organic sector in the State. Barbara Scheitz from Molkerei Andech, Germany, an expert in organic dairy farming in her power point presentation elaborated on the organic methods she has been practicing in her dairy farm. Additional Director Animal Husbandry Department Dr. B.M Chhetri spoke on the initiatives the departments had taken in adopting organic practices.

Short of rations, Kumaon villagers buy foodgrain from Nepal

PITHORAGARH, OCT 9/--/ Short supply of government rations appears to have forced tribals in some border villages of Uttarakhand's Kumaon region to depend on Chinese foodgrain bought from Nepalese markets. "The quota of rations supplied by the state government falls short of our requirements. So much so that some of the villagers have had to depend on Chinese foodgrain bought from markets in Nepal," tribal leader Krishna Garbiyal told PTI Friday. He was part of a delegation of Vyas valley villagers who met Dharchula SDM Friday to demand an increased supply of rations under the Public Distribution System (PDS). Villagers cross a bridge over Kali river near Garbiyal which connects India with Nepal and buy rations from the markets of Tinkar and Changru villages of the neighbouring country to fulfil their needs, he said. "The government allocates five kgs of wheat and two kgs of rice per month to each family which is far from enough. We have demanded several times to increase the ration quota for families residing in high altitudes as these areas do not grow grains like wheat or paddy," Garbiyal said. The villagers said apart from the insufficient quota of ration, even their allotted amount has not reached them in time. They had received their last rations before the onset of monsoon. A 49 km-stretch from Mangti to Gunji was being repaired for nearly six months which made the practice of sending rations on mules to the villages very difficult this year. "Over 72.5 quintals of ration were sent to Vyas valley villages by helicopters before the Monsoon began. The ration for October, November and December are yet to be sent to the villages," Dharchula SDM RK Pandey said. With the road route under repairs, the administration has to depend on helicopters to transport rations to Vyas valley villages, he said. He said the administration is also in contact with the Army to avail its helicopters for the purpose. Absence of a proper road route is also likely to delay the winter migration of Vyas valley villagers to lower areas, Garbiyal said.

Army commanders' conference to focus on operational challenges

NEW DELHI, OCT 9/--/ Operational challenges and various reform initiatives are the subjects of deliberation a week-long conference of army commanders that started in Delhi on Tuesday. An official statement said a host of issues ranging from operational, administrative, logistics and human resources would be discussed in the conference that would continue till October 15. Commanders and directorates at the Army Headquarters will in a collegiate deliberate on important studies that have been ordered to meet future operational challenges, it said. There are four studies examining the operational and optimisation issues of the Army and the headquarters as also human resources

management aspects. These studies aim to improve the teeth to tail ratio, with the purpose of strengthening the structures within the army, to make it combat ready for the future, the statement said. Various issues related to reform initiatives in the force will also be discussed during the conference, sources said. Last month, army chief Gen Bipin Rawat and top commanders held detailed deliberations on ways to make the force "leaner and meaner", which included carrying out an extensive organisational restructuring and downsizing of the force. The Defence Ministry has already announced redeployment of nearly 57,000 officers and other ranks as well as ensuring better utilisation of resources. PTI

IN BRIEF

Gujarat attacks a very dangerous trend: Mamata

KOLKATA: West Bengal Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Tuesday described the attacks on Hindi-speaking migrants in Gujarat as a "very dangerous trend" and accused the BJP government in the state of failing to control it. PTI

Bomb scare in Malda

MALDA: A bomb scare gripped the English Bazaar area after an unclaimed briefcase was found near a puja pandal, a little away from the office of former minister Krishnendu Choudhury on Monday night. But the police found nothing suspicious within. EIOC

Relax. The mock drill is just an imagined situation

EOI CORRESPONDENT

GANGTOK, OCT 9/--/ More than seven years after Sikkim had experience a major earthquake, the State is going for a mock drill on a large scale to assess the state of preparedness in case of such an emergency again. The tremor, 6.9 on the Richter scale, had taken a heavy toll of life and property. A 'Table Top Exercise' (TTEX) for the execution of earthquake mock drill on Wednesday was held on Tuesday at the Mini Auditorium, Manan Bhawan, an IPR release said.

Chaired by Chief Secretary A.K. Shrivastava, the TTEX had the participation of Secretary Land Revenue & Disaster Management Department cum State Relief Commissioner Tsegyal Tashi, officers of the Army, Air Force, National Disaster

Management Authority, National Disaster Response Force, State Disaster Response Force, nodal officers of various Departments, Sikkim Police, Fire & Emergency Services, Civil Defence, Members of NGOs, NYK, and Central Referral Hospital. A massive mock exercise will take place on Wednesday following an imagined earthquake scenario. Strong tremors felt across Sikkim had triggered situations of landslide, fire, toppling of building and stampede at various locations in the State capital, it would be imagined. The State Disaster Management Authority under will play out the mock exercise in conjunction with the NDRE, NDMA, the army, the air force and all concerned agencies. This exercise will be held simultaneously in all the Districts of Sikkim as well as

in some districts of West Bengal. The mock drill will begin at 11:15 am, it was informed.

The areas identified for the mock drill exercise in the capital are Sichey area, Vajra Cinema Hall area, MG Marg, Khadi Office Deorali, Nar Bahadur Bhandari Degree College Tadong, STNM Hospital and CRH Manipal. In the East District, the mock drill exercise will be held in Rangpo Mining Ground and Rangpo Bazaar, while in other districts the drill will take place at various locations in the district headquarters. The staging area for the State level exercise will be Paljor Stadium and the control room or the emergency operation centre will be at Manan Kendra.

Central observers from the army will be deployed. They will prepare and submit their reports



Top civil and military officials at TTEX --- EOI Photo

to the chief observer for feedback during the final de-briefing session at the State level. It will evaluate the preparedness of the State in the event of an earthquake and the lessons learnt from the mock exercise and the gaps identified will help in strengthening the disaster response mechanisms

in the State. A detailed response presentation on the mock drill exercise was made by Senior Consultant (ME&IRS), NDMA, V.K. Datta. He touched upon all aspects of the mock exercise and the role of each of the stakeholder and the composite task forces comprising of army, police, fire brigade,

and medical response teams, rescue, evacuation and relief. He also explained the structure and hierarchy of the Incident Response System (IRS) for the mock exercise both at the State and District level. At the State level, the Chief Secretary will be the responsible officer and the State Relief

Commissioner will function as the Incident Commander, while in the districts, the respective DC is the responsible officer to execute the mock drill exercise.

Chief Secretary A.K. Shrivastava in his address urged the nodal officers of all Departments and all stakeholders to participate sincerely in the mock drill exercise. He stressed that the exercise of this magnitude will help the State assess its preparedness and also find ways for improvement. He emphasized that adequate public awareness is generated and any panic-like situation is avoided during the mock exercise.

After the TTEX, Tsegyal Tashi took a debriefing session of all the districts through video conferencing and assessed their preparedness for the mock exercise.