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PHONE : 0353-2521544 • FAX : 0353-2521545 • E-MAIL : nbechoofindia@gmail.com/contact@echoofindia.com

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An SDF ward level rally --- EOI Photo

## As poll approaches, Sikkim parties develop ward-level contacts

SANJAY AGARWAL

RANGPO, NOV 1/--/ With the assembly elections in Sikkim scheduled to be held early next year, political parties in the State are busy building mass contacts. Different political parties are holding ward level meetings in all parts of the State in a bid to explain their policies and promises and to get a feel of the pulse of the voters.

Last Sunday, the ruling Sikkim Democratic Front organized one such ward-level meeting at Duga Deorali ward under West Pandem constituency and discussed developmental activities undertaken by the SDF government. The assembled people spoke about problems faced by residents of the ward. Sitting MLA Gopal Baraily stressed on the projects undertaken by the Government. He said he was aware of the issues and problems facing the people in the ward and assured that he had already discussed these

with the concerned departments of the Government and these would be taken care of in phases.

Last week, the opposition Sikkim Krantikari Morcha, too, had held ward level meetings in the North District, discussed local issues, highlighted the failures of the Government and explained to the voters the policies of the party. As the crowd attending these meetings are small in number and hail from the respective localities, the ward-level meetings offer a platform for personal contacts between the candidate and the voters. SKM has formed a ward-level committee for Chadey and Dochum wards under Khamdong Singtam constituency in east Sikkim. Under the guidance of party leader Sanjay Regmi the committee started functioning from Wednesday. SKM has plans to form ward-level committees in all the wards in this constituency before Diwali, it was learnt.

## Chenrezig statue stands tall in Sikkim, with those of Buddha and Guru Rinpoche

SUJAL PRADHAN



The Chenrezig statue decorated for inauguration --- Shekhar Khawas

PELLING, NOV 1/--/ With world's tallest Chenrezig Singkham Riwo Potala statue bestowing its blessings on Denzong, Sikkim is now the perfect Buddhist pilgrimage destination. Chenrezig is one of the three most important deities of Buddhist pantheons. The statue was inaugurated by Chief Minister Pawan Chamling at Pelling, West Sikkim, near Sanga Choeling Monastery on Thursday.

The construction of the Chenrezig statue started in 2010. Built at a cost of Rs 70 crore, the Chenrezig statue has now finally converted Sikkim into the 'Tsolung Turlum', a Buddhist altar; with the other two statues being one of Guru Rinpoche at Samdrupse, Namchi, and the other of Lord Buddha at Tathagata Sthal in Ravongla. While Chenrezig is Avalokiteswar, the patron deity of Sikkim, Guru Rinpoche was the founder of Buddhism in the Himalayan region. Among other giant statues of the Buddhist pantheon in the Eastern Himalayas are two of Lord Buddha, one at Thimphu, the capital of Bhutan, one at Tawang, the last Indian town on way to China border in Arunachal Pradesh. Sikkim would now have the distinction,

however, of having mega statues of all the three principal deities of Buddhism in one area and would attract Buddhist pilgrims from all over the world. The State is now all set to get connected with the Buddhist pilgrimage circuit. Before inaugurating the statue the Chief Minister also laid down the foundation stone of ropeway from Sanga Choeling monastery to Pelling which is being constructed by the State Tourism Department. The project is worth Rs 108 crore and will be completed in two years' time. The work is being done in association with the French Company M/s POMA Limited which will import all the necessary equipment.

Later, Pawan Chamling in his address said: "It has been the dream of SDF party since its inception to convert Sikkim into 'Tsolung Turlum'. Now with the inauguration we have been able to fulfil our dream." He also said Sikkim had now become the 'Devbhoomi' (Holy place). "I want to dedicate this to the people of Sikkim." The statue of Chenrezig was just the first phase of the project planned at the place; in the next phase, there would be an open air theatre, a skywalk and a meditation centre. "We will sanction the funds in the next budget session," he said.

## Pressurised coaches for world's highest railway track in Leh

NEW DELHI, NOV 1/--/ The Railways plan to use aircraft-like pressurised coaches in its trains for the Bilaspur-Manali-Leh line along the India-China border, which will be the world's highest rail track, so that passengers do not have breathing difficulties on board. Aircraft cabins are pressurised because the air is very thin at the altitude planes fly. To prevent complications, the cabins of many aircraft are adjusted to near sea-level pressure, which makes breathing almost the same as at sea level. At a height of 5,360 metres above the sea level, the 465-km strategically significant line to be built at a cost of Rs 83,360 crore, will see railways' first pressurised coaches which are currently used only in the Qinghai-Tibet Railway Line in China. "Special pressurised rolling stock to deal with lack of oxygen will have to be used in these trains as passengers might feel uneasy because of the high altitude. These will be like the pressurised cabins used by aircraft to maintain the oxygen levels inside," said Chief Engineer (Construction), Northern Railway, DR Gupta.

The Chinese coaches, manufactured by Canada's Bombardier Inc, which also makes small planes, are specially designed to carry passengers in an oxygen-deficient atmosphere. In order to do this, the train cars have to be pressurised, to ensure that the passengers do not finish their journey with severe cases of altitude sickness. Gupta explained that in the Tibet train, two kinds of systems were used to maintain oxygen levels - one is through the main controls

which maintained standard oxygen levels and got switched on at high altitude areas and the other was through oxygen ports equipped for each passenger to use when they feel that they lack oxygen. It is, however, not clear if these coaches will be produced in India or they will be procured from outside. The Integrated Coach Factory which is in expansion mode is already pepping up to produce both metro coaches as well as coaches for the Ahmedabad-Mumbai bullet train and could be roped in to make

coaches for the Bilaspur-Manali-Leh line as well, an official said. The line, once completed, will connect important locations between Bilaspur and Leh like Sundernagar, Mandi, Manali, Keylong, Koksar, Darcha, Upshi and Karu and other important towns of Himachal Pradesh and Jammu & Kashmir en route. The project will include 74 tunnels, 124 major bridges and 396 minor bridges, according to the first phase of the survey. Final location survey for the project is currently underway. PTI



The railway in Tibet plateau (File Photo)

## Chittagong port a boon for the Northeast: Conrad Sangma

SHILLONG, NOV 1/--/ Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad K Sangma has hailed the decision to open the Chittagong port in Bangladesh to facilitate trade with India's Northeast. Sangma said last week the decision will boost trade in the region and Meghalaya in particular, which shares a very long

international border with Bangladesh. This is a big step towards ensuring that we, in the Northeast, have port connectivity and accessibility, Sangma said while addressing the 6th edition of the 'Young Leaders Connect' in Shillong. "It will reduce transportation cost for goods and allow exposure for the northeastern

states to the international markets, he said. The Bangladesh government had earlier this month approved a draft agreement to allow northeastern states of India to use Chittagong sea port and Mongla river ports, primarily aimed at restoring repatriation logistics for the entire northeast region. PTI

## NE Youth Conclave held in Gangtok

EOI CORRESPONDENT

GANGTOK, NOV 1/--/ The three-day North East States Youth Conclave and Amalgamation 2018 was held at Manan Bhawan, Gangtok, from Sunday. Organized by the Sikkim Department of Sports and Youth Affairs, the three-day event aimed at the promotion and encouragement of sports and all sport related activities in the north east region. Sports and Youth Affairs Minister R. B. Subba spoke on the significance of sports in the lives of the youngsters and how it would enhance their lives and future. The North East States Youth Conclave has a number of activities, both competitive and non-competitive, lined up such as painting competitions, quiz and cultural events.

## BPM in Tawang

NEW DELHI, NOV 1/--/ With an aim to "enhance mutual trust" and promote border peace and tranquility, the armies of India and China held a meeting at Bumla Pass in Tawang, the Army said on Wednesday. The Border Personnel Meeting (BPM) is a common exercise between the two armies that facilitates interaction between the forces and helps in defusing tension, especially when there is no agreement on border demarcation. The armies of the two countries were engaged in a 73-day stand-off in Doklam last year that had led to escalation of tensions between India and China. "A Border Personnel Meeting (BPM) between Indian Army & People's Liberation Army was hosted by Chinese side at Bumla Pass in Tawang.

## Compensations disbursed for hydro dam site explosion



Disbursement of the cheques --- EOI Photo

DEEPAK SHARMA

DZONGU, NOV 1/--/ Compensations were disbursed on Wednesday for damage to houses which occurred due to an explosion at the dam site of a hydroelectric project at Lower Lingzya in Sikkim on March 24, 2018. Cheques totalling over Rs 98 lakh were handed to 85 af-

ected families at Lower and Upper Lingzya and Laven ward under Lingthem gram panchayat unit through individual account payee cheques by MLA of Dzongu and Deputy Speaker of Dzongu Sonam Gyatso Lepcha in the presence of District Collector, North, Karma R. Bonpo.

## IN BRIEF

### A. R. Rahman live concert rescheduled to Feb 2, 2019

GANGTOK: The A. R. Rahman live concert at Gangtok has been rescheduled to February 2, 2019, from the scheduled date of November 17 this year because of a tragedy in the family of the organizer, according to an IPR release in Gangtok. A. R. Rahman, music director, composer, singer and song writer was declared brand ambassador of Sikkim during the Red Panda Winter Carnival of 2017-18. (EOIC)

### NeVA workshop on Sikkim Assembly

GANGTOK: A two day orientation workshop on National eVidhan Application will be held by the Union Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs in Sikkim assembly on Friday and Saturday to provide training and knowledge transfer, an IPR release said. (EOIC)

## Assam student bodies protest against Citizenship Bill

GUWAHATI, NOV 1/--/ The influential All Assam Students' Union on Wednesday announced it would launch a series of agitational programmes from November 8 with 28 other fellow organisations to oppose the controversial Citizenship Bill and accused the Assam government of inflicting "mental torture" on the people by remaining silent on the issue. A joint meeting of All Assam Students' Union (AASU) and the ethnic community students' organisations questioned why the Assam government could not take a decision when a BJP-supported government in Meghalaya took a cabinet decision against the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2016. "After this (BJP) government came to power (in 2016) in Assam, it is imposing mental torture on the people of the state. There is fear among the people whether Assam will remain a state of indigenous people or of Bangladeshis because of the Bill granting them Indian citizenship," AASU chief advisor Samujjal Bhattacharya told reporters. "Eighty-five per cent of the people of Assam voted for the BJP alliance hoping they would protect the interest of the local people. "We want to know clearly whether Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal is for or against the Bill. He says he will protect the interest of the indigenous people but is silent on the bill," the AASU leader said. "The BJP-supported government in neighbouring Meghalaya took a cabinet decision against the Bill. Why can't the Assam government take a similar decision," he asked. A 12-hour bandh organised on October 23 across Assam against the Citizenship Bill had evoked widespread response. AASU president Dipanka Kumar Nath said the agitational programmes include a protest day on November 8 for dropping of the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2016. The student leaders feared the proposed legislation would make illegal Bangladeshis in Assam Indian citizens. Solution of the burning foreigners' problem in the state was among the clauses of the historic Assam Accord, 1985. On November 9, members of AASU and the 28 ethnic organisations would visit the homes of ministers, MLAs and MPs of all political parties to urge them to oppose the Bill in the interest of the people of Assam, Nath said.

## People warned against venturing into Siang after Tibet landslide

ITANAGAR, NOV 1/--/ Authorities in Arunachal Pradesh have asked people not to venture into river Siang flowing through Upper Siang district following a landslide in Tibet which could trigger possible floods in the state. The possibility of floods in river Siang looms large if the artificial dam, formed by the landslide in the Yarlung Tsangpo river at 10 a.m. Monday breached, according to officials. The Yarlung Tsangpo river is known as Siang in Arunachal Pradesh and Brahmaputra in Assam. Upper Siang DC Duly Kamduk said in a circular on Tuesday that the Department of Disaster Management had informed the Upper Siang district administration about the landslide at the Milin section of the Yarlung Tsangpo river and the possibility of floods in the Siang. The circular also stated that there had been an unprecedented decrease in the volume of



water in river Siang at Tuting since Monday night. Advising people to take precautionary measures, the DC asked them not to panic or create panic. Central Water Commission Superintending Engineer of Guwahati-based circle office, Ravi Ranjan said: "The External Affairs Ministry on Monday night informed the Central Water Commission (CWC) about the landslide that occurred in the Yarlung Tsangpo River at the same place where another landslide had occurred a fortnight ago." There was nothing to panic as only 1.44 meter of water volume had decreased since 10 p.m. on Monday to 8 a.m. on Tuesday, Ranjan said. According to the hydrological data of the CWC, the water level of the Siang River at Tuting is falling at the rate of one cm per hour. Since it is winter season, the volume of discharge of water in the river would come down by 40 to 50 per cent, the DC said. PTI